eVolution staff development project enhancing staff knowledge

Summary

A bespoke staff development programme at Weston College, called eVolution is revolutionising the way teachers are learning about new technology. The programme led by Learning Technologists Louise Hutson and Amy Palmer has really enabled staff at the college to up skill their knowledge and utilise technology to a greater effect within their teaching practice.

About Weston College

Weston College is a further education college, located in Weston-Super-Mare. It has an A-Level pass rate of 97% and a 99% pass rate for degree courses, which is well above the national average. Vocational programmes are just as successful, with 99% pass rates across levels 1, 2 and 3.

90% of all their apprentices on work-based learning programmes are offered permanent jobs at the end of their program.

There are approximately over 7,500 students at the college, studying a range of courses; including BTEC, ECDL, A-Levels and degree programmes.

The college also has a pupil referral until for students excluded from mainstream secondary schools for ages 15 to 16.

The challenge

Staff development at Weston College has always traditionally been provided via group sessions for teaching staff. The learning technologist’s team found that it was a challenging process to keep staff interested in using new technology due to a lack of classroom support. So whilst staff were initially engaged and inspired, if the technology did not work during the lessons, or there was an issue, then they would not use it and lose interest.

This culminated in a lack of take-up in training and many staff did not come back for further training.

The learning technologist’s team additionally had difficulty measuring the impact of their training and there was a general feeling that they needed to do something differently in order to maintain staff interest.
It was a challenge to devise something that would engage teaching staff and encourage them to adopt more technology. So a big part of this process was to create something that would enable staff development in a way in which staff could see the long term benefits.

**The activity**

Before the eVolution program was launched, Amy and Louise ran a pilot phase to see if it was effective with teachers. A-Level and Health & Social Care teachers had an opportunity to trial the range of support and technology offered to them through the bespoke eVolution program. After the success of the trial phase, the eVolution program was launched with an official campaign.

In terms of the process involved in the eVolution staff development training program, there are four stages, which are;

- An initial meeting with the teacher to discuss ideas to identify potential technology to enhance their teaching
- When the technology has been assigned to the teacher, the learning technologists provide a one-to-one training session on how to use the technology
- A date is set for when the teacher will then use the technology and may include supervisory support from the Learning Technologists
- A review meeting to talk about strengths and weaknesses and to highlight any further training/development and support needed

The process is very much all about the individual member of teaching staff and their aims and objectives for their lessons. The requirements are therefore different for every meeting, so the learning technology team can complete individual plans.

“The training is moving away from big impersonal training with big groups of people to individual one-to-one bespoke training around their lesson plans, it’s like employing your own consultant.” Louise Hutson, Learning Technologist

As part of the eVolution project the college marketing department launched visually appealing posters to put up around the college and produced branded products to reinforce the project and heighten staff awareness.

The whole process from the initial meeting to the member of staff using the technology in the classroom is detailed and logged, so that an accurate account of the support provided is catalogued.

To help market and widen the awareness of the eVolution project the college produced some branded materials, including an attractive logo and campaign.

![Example screenshot of the great logo to help promote the campaign for eVolution](image-url)
The outcomes

The eVolution project has significantly helped staff to immerse with new technology and provide them with more options for their lessons. Not only that, but by having bespoke training, staff are better equipped and more informed.

In comparison with before the eVolution project was introduced when staff were losing interest and not taking up technology, now the learning technologists are finding that staff are approaching them and asking for training. This shift in actively seeking support is one that has really pleased both Amy and Louise.

“I had some training last week on Prezi and they came back the next week and wanted to show me their Prezi’s that they had created. And they’re so proud of themselves, which is obviously great.” – Amy Palmer, Learning Technologist

Teachers also have more confidence in their own skills and abilities and more options available to them in terms of the pedagogic and delivery of learning.

One of the important factors with the project is the bespoke nature of the training, so it’s geared up to support individual teacher needs.

“You have to approach different people differently as well, some people you’ve got to be really soft with, but the more they go along; genuinely their confidence increases, more so than I thought when we started the project.” – Amy Palmer, Learning Technologist

The fact that more technology is now being used in the classroom really helps the students because they want to use new technology and it’s something that they expect and are familiar with.

“They’ve got someone there to help them and I think they find that very helpful and it makes them a lot keener to try new things.” – Louise Hutson, Learning Technologist

Students are more enthusiastic about learning and more engaged as a result of the eVolution project staff also have more confidence in the classroom.

Amy has seen a real improvement in the amount of technology being used in the classroom, with many staff now using voting pads for assessment purposes as well as quizzes. Video cameras are being used more extensively and students are accessing the VLE using their mobile devices.

The impact

Staff are much more enthusiastic and confident with using technology in their lesson, as Louise describes;

“By increasing the enthusiasm for all the training and technology that we offer and that’s evident not only through the evidence that we’ve been gathering for the project, but also the increase in the borrowing figures for all the technology.” – Louise Hutson, Learning Technologist
In terms of impact, Louise and Amy have accurately logged quantifiable evidence in comparison to the previous year, which shows that technology uptake has increased. In fact the iPads are being loaned out twice as much as the previous year, with 286 loans compared to 106 in 2012/13 term. Laptops and technical equipment have both seen a rise in use, which highlights just how well the eVolution project has improved staff training and awareness of technology.

"Students love technology in classrooms, so when a teacher sees their students are enjoying it then it just gets the ball rolling." – Amy Palmer, Learning Technologist

There has additionally been a big increase in the use of the LibraryPlus Moodle page as resources are being accessed far more since the inception of the eVolution project.
The example infographic shows just how much higher the Moodle pages for LibraryPlus have been accessed.

Perhaps the best way to sum up this project can be highlighted using an excellent image of the four eVolution impact statements below.

Students and staff are empowered by the eVolution project

www.jiscrsc.ac.uk/case-studies
Lessons learned

The only real aspect that the Learning Technology team would have done differently would have been to not heighten the scale of the project so much, which some staff can find daunting in terms of wanting to get involved. So rather than pitching to staff that they could be part of the eVolution project, they have had more success by being more informal in terms of offering the training and classroom support.

Useful links

Weston College
Jisc RSC South West
Staff development on the Jisc RSC website
Jisc information on staff development
Staff development packs on the Jisc TechDis website

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