

CASE STUDY



Providing post-implementation support for schools.

Bedfordshire Local Authority.



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to transform teaching and learning in your school or LA.**

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Choosing a Learning Platform is just the beginning of a journey not the end. In order to ensure that effective use is made of a school's Learning Platform, post-implementation training and support at a school level is essential. Support at this stage provides teachers with the necessary skills, knowledge and motivation to successfully use the Learning Platform.

Bedfordshire Local Authority made Netmedia's Learning Platform available to their 220 schools in September 2007; after a year long pilot assessing the functionality of Netmedia against other Learning Platforms. From the very beginning, the LA's approach was to empower the schools and the school workforce, and schools were told that they would be ultimately responsible for 'driving the way forward' with their Learning Platform. The LA would introduce the Learning Platform to schools but at a time chosen by the school, when they were able to dedicate sufficient time to implementation and focus on the project. This collaborative approach had immediate benefits as the schools did not perceive this to be just another 'initiative' to implement to the LA timetable. For example, one school delayed implementation so they could first successfully complete an OFSTED inspection.

To facilitate this staged roll-out, the LA and Netmedia has worked together to provide schools with a variety of tools and support to make the introduction and activation of the Learning Platform as easy as possible.

Introductory Project

Once the school identifies when they are going to roll-out the Learning Platform they are asked to identify an initial project for this purpose. In this way the Learning Platform can be immediately introduced to a specific group or groups within the school for



a specific purpose, again providing a defined reason for using the Learning Platform. This project can be either administratively based (for example, setting up a School Noticeboard) or curriculum based (for example, using the Learning Platform to help with a particular event such as an Italian Exchange Programme). Each school is required to complete a 'Project Template' which allows them to structure the project, outline the key objectives and most importantly the outcomes. Where schools didn't have an obvious project to implement, Netmedia trainers were on hand to provide schools with ideas and advice on suitable projects based upon their experience.

When the LA receives this information from the school they work with the Netmedia trainers to tailor initial training to provide the knowledge necessary to support this project. Using the example above, the school would be trained on how to use the Noticeboard Property and how to make effective use of the feature. Schools are also directed to appropriate resources within the online Knowledge Exchange to support their staff. This approach has proven so successful in engaging schools with the Learning Platform that the LA is now looking at linking together schools who have undertaken similar projects for collaboration and sharing of ideas.

In-school training

Training plays a critical part in ensuring that the Learning Platform is fully embedded. A set number of hours have been allocated for each school to undertake their Learning Platform training and they can decide how and when they want to use the time. As Bedfordshire has two dedicated Netmedia trainers, they have developed a strong relationship with the schools and provide very customised help. Netmedia also books the training sessions with each school on behalf of Bedfordshire and the trainers. The take-up of training has been significant, with over 420

sessions run since September 2007. A testament to the quality of the training provided can be summed up by the experience of one school:

"Here at Moggerhanger Lower School I have been extremely pleased with the training that has been provided to my staff on the use of the Learning Platform. Graham Offler and other members of the team have always been flexible and conscientious and have ensured that all of the learning my team has received has been tailored specifically to the needs of our school and our individual team members. The trainer was informative and gave us practical and useful tips to help us get the Learning Platform up and running in our school."

Sarah Thomson,
ICT Co-ordinator,
Moggerhanger Lower School

Twilight Training Sessions

In addition to these more formal sessions, the LA also runs a number of informal twilight sessions. Held termly at various locations throughout the LA, these workshops are open to all teachers and support staff to get some hands-on support with using the Learning Platform. Representatives from Netmedia's training and Knowledge Exchange teams are always on-hand to support the LA with these sessions and provide the teachers with best examples of use. This enables staff from across the whole county to get access to a practical session where they can see what the Learning Platform is, get help for specific problems or simply share ideas and experiences with colleagues.

Knowledge Exchange

As well as providing training on the functional aspects of the Learning Platform, Netmedia also provides curriculum

support through its Knowledge Exchange. This freephone and online support service is designed to guide schools up and over their learning curve and to help schools truly embed the Learning Platform. The Knowledge Exchange is popular within schools and used on a regular basis.



"We have worked with the Knowledge Exchange since we were involved in piloting the Netmedia Learning Platform. As well as providing our school with the initial training and guidance on how to introduce the Learning Platform to our school, they have been on-hand every step of the way providing us with help and advice to ensure we get the best out of our Learning Platform."

Lucy Towers,
VLE Administrator at
St. John Rigby Catholic
Lower School

Open Days

In July 2008 the LA ran their first 'Learning Platform Open Day'. The Open Day was designed to provide a forum for schools to show what they have been doing with their Learning Platform, share their experiences with colleagues and publicly celebrate their successes. The day was split into sessions suitable for both secondary schools and primary schools. One school even brought their pupils along to conduct a presentation. Netmedia provided an update on future developments for the Learning Platform to provide the schools with an idea of what to expect. In-school trainers and the Netmedia Knowledge Exchange were also on hand to help individual schools with any queries. The Open Day was so successful with schools that the LA will be running further events throughout the 2008-09 academic year to continue to develop expertise amongst staff from across the whole county.

To increase 'instant' awareness of the service, the LA has 'fixed' a Property to the desktops of all staff with a quick link to the KX. This Property also publicises the twilight sessions

as well as provides access to the **Netmedia Monthly Newsletter**, which provides schools with information on different features and Property types, highlights good practice and offers solutions to common problems to enable them to continue to develop their Learning Platform use.

Super Users: Helping the LA

To ensure the LA are able to provide the support to schools as and when they need it, they are taking on a number of school 'Super-Users' who will be seconded to the LA one day a week. These experienced users will be able to draw on their experiences and ideas to share with colleagues in other schools.

Planned Projects – Looking to the future

The LA has already identified a number of projects to continue to move the use of the Learning Platform forward. These include:

- Identification and tagging of created Properties to ensure consistency across the LA and aid greater collaboration between schools.
- Using the Learning Platform as a bridge to aid transition, further develop inter-school relationships and encourage learning communities to develop.
- Providing further CPD training sessions to continue to extend the knowledge of those who have been using for more than a year.
- Engaging with the School Improvement Service so they are aware of the Learning Platform and how they can use it to support their work.

Going above and beyond

The key to success of the Learning Platform within Bedfordshire is that the teachers and schools have themselves led the development while the LA and Netmedia stood behind to encourage them every step of the way. A 'tool kit' of project ideas and templates is the starting point from which the schools can kick start use of the Learning Platform. The size of the project is not the most important factor – instead, it is the potential impact of the project and the school's ability to execute on its requirements. The ultimate objective of the project, no matter the size, is to get the school comfortable with the Learning Platform. The LA understood upfront that schools will need ongoing

support once they have started using their Learning Platform and took steps to ensure support was well in place when and where schools need it. Forward-planning, collaboration between Bedfordshire LA and Netmedia, and tailored support to schools has resulted in a high uptake of Learning Platform usage and some exciting projects within schools:



"We recently ran an exchange visit to Italy where we had planned to show our partner school the Netmedia Learning Platform. The children in Italy were all able to respond to their e-mail partners using their Netmedia accounts and our children were very excited to open their responses when we returned to Kempston. The level of customer support provided by Netmedia was exceptional and enabled us peace of mind when planning for this visit."

Debra Brown, Springfield Lower School, Kempston

Through the continuing partnership between Bedfordshire LA and Netmedia confidence in school use of the Learning Platform will continue to grow and ensure that staff and pupils are able to take full advantage of the learning opportunities it provides.

If you would like to speak to the Bedfordshire LA Implementation team, please contact Louise Oliver e-Learning team manager on 01234 836112 (louise.oliver@rhouse.co.uk) in the first instance, who will be happy to support you.