

New beginnings!

Develop your school website

Across the country, September in schools has always been a time of new beginnings, fresh ideas and renewed enthusiasm and, of course, many new challenges. Looking back, it seems that the children's September excitement was about new school books, new teachers and new friends. Even though much has changed, that excitement still remains making

■ new beginnings, fresh ideas, renewed enthusiasm ... new challenges

seas and with their local community. There are a number of different stages in the development of a website, many of which do not involve using the computer at all! It is best undertaken collaboratively, involving teachers and children and should reflect the ethos of the whole school, not just one class. The school website could be a project 'managed' by 5th and 6th class children who can then work with other classes in gathering the content but in also deciding on an appropriate theme for their website and in managing the ongoing update of the site.

Currency is an

important

aspect of any website but this does not mean that items need to change every day! It can be useful to begin

with a brainstorming activity

with the children and then develop a short questionnaire for all teachers and other classes to agree what information the school should present on the site. Some questions to consider:

1. Who do you think will access/look at our school website? This question is targeted at determining who the 'audience' for the site will

be and therefore the type of content and content areas of the site.

2. Are there important school events which need to be highlighted on the site? e.g. match results, large-scale project work, Christmas concert etc.
3. Should we have a poetry section?
4. Look at some school websites and decide what makes them attractive or interesting:
 - (a) What do you like about the design/colour/images?
 - (b) Navigation – Is it easy to find things on the site and to 'navigate' your way around the contents?

In analysing the responses, children should be mindful of what is feasible to implement. In addition, they need to agree on a 'design metaphor' and branding for their website; the school crest might be a good place to begin for ideas on branding.

Website design and development taps into different learning styles. There are different skills required: graphic design, writing, information flow and organisation, discussion and agreement on what to include and exclude. It presents children with an interesting platform to share their work which can sometimes go unnoticed on the school walls. (By using the digital camera they can still exhibit their work on the classroom walls and around the school but also on their website, thereby extending their learning activities beyond the school day).

How do I learn about website design?

The NCTE has developed courses on website development and these can be accessed via the Education Centres and the ICT Advisor in your area can also help you out. For further information on courses avail-

able, check out www.ncte.ie/ICTTraining/Courses/.

To develop a website you need to use particular software. There are a number of different software packages available, some of which are more technical than others e.g. *Dreamweaver*, *Frontpage*. *WebsiteX5* is one such package which many Irish teachers and children find suitable for their needs. You may also want to explore the development of a blog or a wiki as an alternative to the website.

There has been a significant increase in Irish primary school websites over the last year and below are some examples which you might wish to explore for some ideas before you begin building your own school website.

Scoil Náisiunta an Inbhir,

Co Mhaighéo:

www.iol.ie/~bmullets

St Senan's Primary School, Wexford:

www.stsenansps.ie

Geevagh NS, Sligo:

www.softwarecentral.ie/geevaghns

Timahoe NS, Laois:

www.softwarecentral.ie/timahoens

St Joseph's NS, Dublin:

www.stjosephsterenure.ie

Scoilnet's Schools Online:

www.scoilnet.ie/Schoolsonline/

Some other website which may be useful in September

www.naturedetectives.org.uk

www.scoilnet.ie

www.scispy.ie

www.iamanartist.ie

www.teachnet.ie

www.planetaqua.ie

www.primaryscience.ie

www.ncte.ie

Anne White, National Coordinator, National Centre for Technology in Education www.ncte.ie

ICT professional development



NCTE

The NCTE delivers a range of ICT professional development courses to teachers through the network of Education Centres. Courses can also be customised and arranged to take place in your school.

Further information available at: www.ncte.ie/ICTTraining/Courses/

Support groups

NCTE support groups aim to provide an infrastructure for teachers, living in the same

locality, to meet and discuss ICT topics that they wish to explore in greater detail.

If you wish to organise or join a support group, contact your local ICT Advisor at: www.ncte.ie/ICTTraining/AdvisorNetwork/

ICT AND SPECIAL NEEDS

Special Needs and ICT – The basics

Provides practical sessions to build confidence in using ICT and gives exposure to a range of ICT uses with special needs students.

Special needs and ICT – learning support

The course is intended to provide teachers with information on ICT use in learning support as well as specific strategies, tools and resources to use in the integration of ICT into the curriculum.

Special needs and ICT – autistic spectrum disorders

Explore ways ICT can be used to support individual students' needs using on-line resources/software and learn about the use of these resources and strategies to assist with their integration into the curriculum.

Other special needs and ICT courses

- ICT and Special Needs – Mild General Learning Disabilities.
- ICT and Special Needs – Moderate, Severe/Profound General Learning Disabilities and Multiple Disabilities.
- ICT and Special Needs – Deaf/Hard of Hearing.
- ICT and Special Needs – Introduction to ICT and Visual Impairments.

INTERNET AND WEB DESIGN

Internet and email for learning

This is a hands-on course to enable participants to develop the knowledge and skills to use the internet and email effectively in teaching, learning, communication and research.

Website design and development for learning

To understand the rationale behind and develop the skills required to design, construct and develop an educational website using web authoring, image editing and FTP software programs.

Advanced Web Authoring for Learning

Learn advanced techniques for improving the layout and presentation of a website as well as developing effective techniques for using graphics, applets and sound.

GENERAL

Using ICT as a teaching and learning resource

Encouraging a hands-on approach to learning, each module begins with a curricular exemplar, followed by cycles of 'learn and practice' and finishing with an in-depth discussion on classroom implementation – from curricular as well as classroom management perspectives.

DIGITAL MEDIA AND NEW TECHNOLOGY

Introduction to digital media

Learn to use scanners, digital cameras, digital recording/editing and the internet in the classroom.

Digital Video for Education

The course is intended to provide teachers with the necessary skills to take advantage of digital video as a

pedagogical tool in the classroom.

Empowering Minds - Programmable Bricks

Learn how to build structures which, using motors and sensors, can be programmed to behave in certain ways or take readings from light, touch and temperature.

NEW – AUTUMN 2007

ONLINE COURSE: The internet – A teaching and learning resource

A highly interactive online course covering areas such as, searching for educational content on the web and how to use this to enhance your teaching; how to successfully implement internet and/or email projects; how to deal with the area of internet safety in the classroom. It also looks at future trends in ICT hardware and software.

Integrating internet safety into teaching and learning

The

course will provide advice and strategies in developing safe approaches to teaching and learning while using the Internet and suggest classroom activities, practical resources and easily accessible support materials.

Introductory ICT Modules

- Creating presentations and worksheets using ICT.
- Introduction to PCs and file management.
- Introduction to digital media.
- Introduction to the internet and email.

TECHNICAL COURSES

Computer networking (basic and client-server)

Practical activities to examine the hardware and software required to implement a computer network in a school.

Solving basic computer and software problems

To enable participants to identify and solve a variety of everyday technical problems associated with a modern computer and its operating system software.

Autumn courses are currently being scheduled and details will be published at:

www.ncte.ie/ICTTraining/CourseSchedule/

These courses are fully funded by the NCTE.