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Lipson Community College

In only 25 years, Lipson Community College has evolved and grown from a secondary school to a leading educational establishment which serves the whole of the city and provides excellent services around the clock for its local community. Lipson Community College has a history to be proud of as we celebrate 25 years of helping our students and Community members achieve their personal, social and career goals. 2009 - our 25th year has seen Lipson Community College become a Co-operative trust school and is looking towards a very bright future indeed.

Background

Lipson Community College's journey towards acquiring a VLE began five years ago, when they joined a consortium with two other schools to develop a bespoke VLE from scratch using the services of a commercial web developer. The experience was not a good one, although valuable lessons were learnt as a result which stood us in good stead when it came to choosing from a bewildering variety of off-the-shelf products. It was by sheer good fortune that Frog came into our field of vision, it was at the time starting to expand from its base 'oop North' but still virtually unknown in the South West, a situation that has dramatically changed recently.

Of all the VLEs that were investigated, Frog clearly stood out from the crowd in terms of functionality, appearance and ease of use. As the Network Manager I had a definitive list of requirements which included integration with our network database for automated account creation, an interface with our Management Information System, local hosting of the VLE and ample tools, templates and building blocks to enable us to develop a school website as well as the VLE as easily as possible ourselves. Frog met all these specifications and many more besides. A feature often overlooked is customer support and during the whole research, purchase and implementation process it was reassuring to always be able to talk directly to the people responsible for these processes. Ongoing support, both technical and non-technical continues to be excellent. Development of Frog goes on at a cracking



pace; the VLE is their business not just a small part of some wider corporation and their commitment to providing a first class product is obvious.

The Challenge

Embedding Frog into a college with some 1400 students and significant staff was a somewhat daunting task. Being one of the first colleges in the South West to purchase Frog, there was no model of a successful rollout programme, so the decision was made to develop a phase 1 strategy and create a hub of VLE champions (including Senior Management), who could develop the use of Frog within their curriculum areas. Phase 2 (in year 2) has led to whole staff training programs being set up and a consortium beyond our college of other Frog users being facilitated at our college. It is anticipated that more schools will join our hub to share good practice and develop further use of Frog.

The Solution

Through regular audits, we have been able to identify where the VLE has been embedded, and also where our energies need to be focussed. We feel as a college that the benefits of Frog can now start to be measured in terms of assessment for learning and revision. The ability to set assignments and create a learning dialogue with students has been a stepping stone in the success of the VLE. Homework and lessons are set using Frog and it has allowed teachers to broker meaningful dialogue and feedback to happen with even the most hard to reach students. Resources are now being hosted on the VLE, which has been of particular benefit to KS4 students who use the VLE to support their learning and revision beyond the classroom context. More recently we are now engaging students in webpage design on Frog, and tutor groups are in the process of designing and maintaining Tutor Group web pages.

Future plans

We have just embedded Inquizator (an education quiz maker with a gaming element) into the VLE. This we feel is another 'hook' that will further help to support students in an enhanced learning environment beyond the remits of daily college life.

More staff training programmes for next academic year are planned, as is an induction short course for new staff and year 7 students. One of our VLE champions is designing web pages and a universally accepted template to support staff in producing their own departmental web pages, and students are actively engaging in the design process of these.

Through regular meetings and audits, it is intended that we build on these stable foundations set for our VLE, and as result share our successful model for a rollout programme with other local schools embarking on the Frog journey.