School Empowers Teachers and Students with Self-Directed Technology Classes

Customer: President Kennedy Community School
Web Site: www.pks.coventry.sch.uk
Country or Region: United Kingdom
Industry: Education
Number of Students: 1,500
Number of Staff: 100

Customer Profile
President Kennedy Community School is located in Coventry, United Kingdom. Its 100 staff teach more than 1,500 students. The school gained specialist humanities college status in 2005.

Software and Services
- Microsoft IT Academy Program
- Microsoft Office 2003 Professional

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Chris Jupp, E-Learning Manager, President Kennedy School

President Kennedy School gained specialist status in 2005. At the same time, it invested in computer hardware and software, but soon realised that its teachers did not have the IT skills and confidence to use these new resources to their full potential. To help its people learn how to use technology to support their work, the school joined the Microsoft® IT Academy Program. As a result, staff have been empowered, and students have improved learning opportunities.

Education Needs

What does a school do when it invests in information and communications technology (ICT), but does not match that with investment in its people? This is the problem that faced Coventry-based President Kennedy School.

Founded in 1966 and named in memory of the assassinated United States president, its 1,500 students aged 11 to 19 are taught by its 100 staff. It became a specialist humanities school in 2005, which brought significant financial investment—and tough targets set for the school's academic progression and interaction with the community.

Chris Jupp, E-Learning Manager at President Kennedy School, says: "The pace of ICT development has been rapid. Three years ago, we had 100 computers in the entire school. Now, there are more than 500 on site, and every member of staff has a portable computer. Our Microsoft Learning Gateway portal went live in September 2006 and has already had 1.8 million hits—mainly from students."

However, the full benefit of investments in new technology in schools can only be realised when matched by investments in the teachers and other employees at the school. Like staff at many schools across the United Kingdom, the teachers at President Kennedy School lacked

ICT skills and experience and were unable to use the new equipment to its full potential.

Chris Jupp says: "We initially gave training in specific software packages on a 'just-in-time' basis to meet the skills gap as and when new software was introduced to the school. Staff felt panicked by this, and we needed a new approach to ensure they felt confident about using these new tools to support their work."

Solution

Chris Jupp found a solution on a visit to Microsoft in 2005. While attending a Microsoft Learning Gateway seminar, he saw a presentation for the Microsoft IT Academy Program. This global learning programme helps academic institutions offer training in Microsoft technologies, develop certification opportunities, boost staff skills, and increase productivity.

President Kennedy School decided to offer staff the Microsoft Office Specialist training and certification pathway through the Microsoft IT Academy Program. Chris Jupp says: "Most teachers use Microsoft Office PowerPoint® for presentations, and the majority of data analysis across the school takes place using the Capita SIMS management information systems (MIS) package and Microsoft Office Excel®. The Microsoft Office Specialist pathway was a perfect fit for our needs—it didn't make sense to look elsewhere."

The school began by putting two members of staff through the Microsoft Office Specialist pathway, which took six months. It then rolled out a trial internal staff development course in the following academic year. Now, the Microsoft IT Academy Program is fully integrated into the school performance management programme for all members of staff—including teachers, office workers, caretakers, support workers, and receptionists.

Each person agrees on an ICT target in their individual performance objectives. They agree to complete three milestones during the academic year, one per term. First, they sign up for the Microsoft IT Academy Program and begin with a dedicated ICT training day, which is boosted with ongoing support and resources offered through the staff Microsoft Learning Gateway portal. During the second term, they are expected to take the exam and put what they've learned into practice in the summer term.

Benefits

The Microsoft IT Academy Program has helped improve general skill levels across President Kennedy School. Now, staff are empowered and confident they can expand their skills through self-directed learning, while using ICT more frequently and effectively to enhance teaching and learning. In addition, students are increasingly gaining opportunities to develop their own ICT skills across the whole curriculum.

Teachers Put What They Learn into Practice

By integrating the IT Academy Program into performance management, every teacher puts what they learn into practice in their lessons. Chris Jupp says: "The Head of Geography has learned about the reviewing feature of Microsoft Office Word and is marking a current student project on flooding by inserting comments that the students have to respond to—using the Track Changes function to show their working—and learn from it as they review their own work. It's the little features that make the biggest difference when teachers and students put them into practice like this."

Teachers Drive School Innovation

The increase in teachers' ICT skills and confidence has driven a spirit of "bottom-up" development across the school. Jupp says: "The Microsoft IT Academy Program has helped several teachers gain the confidence to pick up

and run with innovative ideas. We have four development groups across the school, including e-portfolios and podcasting."

Students Encouraged to Further ICT Skills

President Kennedy School has also embedded the IT Academy Program into the school curriculum, giving students the opportunity to improve their ICT skills. The school produced a video for students showing how to log on to the school portal and develop their own learning portal at their MySite. What's more, two or three students from each year group are registered on the Microsoft IT Academy Program. In total, 17 students are taking the same Microsoft Office Specialist qualification, with more expected to join in the future.

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