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Introduction

If we work with offender learners in custody, we don’t need to allocate time to discuss all the barriers to learning they face. We are already all too familiar with the operational barriers\(^1\) and the cultural barriers\(^2\). These very real barriers must be broken down in order to get our learners into class. However, we know many barriers can be overcome and much discussion is given, almost daily, on how to do so.

This paper is instead focused on what we do with our learners once we get them into class. It is written from the perspective of understanding the relative autonomy we have in terms of what we deliver\(^3\) and asks bigger questions about how we deliver in light of emerging learning theory while bearing in mind the security restrictions of where we work. It goes on to consider examples of offender learners being allowed access to digital technology and a secure internet.

Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants

If you speak to many experienced, talented teachers, it is almost certain you will hear comments about the type of learners coming through our classes in 2011. There will be comments about the learners’ inability to focus for any length of time (often attributed to ADHD or ADD), poor spelling (often attributed to poor prior teaching), astonishing lack of basic numeracy skills and surprise at the apparently increasing difficulty learners are having in sequencing logical arguments for, say, a persuasive essay. We’ve heard these comments for years, but in recent years the comments have become louder, more frequent and teachers testify that the base level

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\(^1\) Operational barriers include lock ins, inmate movements, participation in other programmes when learners are timetabled to be education, etc.

\(^2\) Cultural barriers include learners’ existing negative attitudes to learning due to prior unpleasant experiences of school, the cultural clash between staff who are rightly focused on safety and security and others whose job it is to focus on facilitating rehabilitation through learning, etc.

\(^3\) The Adult Education and Vocational Training Institute (AEVTI) is Corrective Services NSW’s own registered training organization (RTO). It uses the same framework as TAFE NSW – the Adult Employment, Education and Training (AEET) framework which offers considerable flexibility and in terms of content and creative ways to assess competency.
of skills seems to be lower than ever. We know most offender learners are intelligent enough, but their apparent incapacity to learn spelling rules, for example, is rather baffling. What is wrong with these learners?

Emerging research is telling us that our current learners are, in fact, very different to those we have been trained to teach. The term coined to describe the differences in these learners is ‘digital native’ – a learner who has never known a world without computers, tvs, videos, games consoles etc. A helpful definition is:

“Digital native” is a term for people born in the digital era, ie Generation X and younger. This group is also referred to as the “iGeneration” or is described as having been born with “digital DNA”.4

Those who are older, born pre-1960, are known as ‘digital immigrants’. What is striking is that even if we think of learners born after 1990 as being truly digitally native, they are now 21 years old5. Digital natives are already here. We’re already teaching them and they are already not responding or behaving quite like students we’ve seen in the past.

The latest scientific research and evidence in neurology clearly shows that “there is no longer any question that stimulation of various kinds actually changes brain structures and affects the way people think, and that these transformations go on throughout life...The brain constantly reorganizes itself all our child and adult lives, a phenomenon technically known as neuroplasticity”6

What has this done to a digital native’s brain and capacity for learning? Marc Prensky, a respected theorist and author suggests:

As a result of growing up surrounded by this incredible array of new technologies, the under-40 generation’s minds have literally been altered. “Rewired” is the popular term often used by many whose frame of reference is technology.7

Prensky also cites William D Winn, director of the Learning Centre at the University of Washington’s Human Interface Technology Laboratory, who says that learners raised with the

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5 Even those who are considered digital natives because they are born in 1960 or later, are now 51 years old.


7 Ibid, p8.
computer “think differently from the rest of us. They develop hypertext minds. They leap around. It’s as though their cognitive structures were parallel, not sequential”.

We need to know what a digital native looks like and how their experience of life may differ to that of older digital immigrants. We need to know how and why they learn in order to be able to best meet their learning needs. Appendix A provides a more detailed comparison of preferences and perceptions, but to summarise key learning preferences of digital natives are:

- They don’t like handwriting (they use a keyboard most of the time), so can’t see the point in doing handwritten drafts.
- They don’t like showing their working out in maths and can’t see the point of learning their times-tables or long division when the calculator on their iphone does it quicker.
- They like to work on different tasks at the same time, flicking (often rapidly — often known as ‘twitchspeed’) between them.
- They Google or use their social media network if they need to know something.
- They are used to ‘intuitive’ technology. Digital natives are not used to being ‘told’ how things work or to follow a procedures/instruction manual. For them, anything that requires such a process is already obsolete. They like to try it themselves and expect to be able to work it out by trial and error, consulting message boards/forums if they get stuck.
- What appears to be isolated and anti-social behaviour spending hours in front of a computer is in reality being connected to a vast network of contacts, learning experts and friends via online gaming, message boards/forums and social media like Facebook.

Digital natives flick incredibly quickly between socializing, playing, and working. More than choosing to work this way, they are actually wired to work this way because of their constant exposure to technology since birth. We have to be careful not to interpret this constantly shifting

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9 Digital learners would never produce a handwritten drafts in the ‘real’ world,( in the same way as there is no handwritten draft of this paper). It is irrelevant to their digital world.

10 For them, “knowledge no longer comes primarily from library books and the lecture podium...Knowledge, truth and facts are no longer accessed via the ‘all-mighty’ Britannica Encyclopedia, but instead are being co-created and continuously revised on Wikipedia and similar sites” (Zur & Zur, On Digital Immigrants and Digital Natives, p8).

11 Intuitive technology acts in the way we think and move, such as touch-screen (ipod, ipad and smartphones) or gesture based gaming technology such as X-box Kinect which is motion-sensor based (like a Nintendo Wii but without even having to hold any control, you just move as if you are really bowling/playing tennis and the games console ‘knows’).
attention as some sort of attention deficit disorder. There is no attention deficit here – quite the contrary, it demonstrates an admirable capacity and preference to work on many tasks simultaneously rather than sequentially.

**Learning Theory: Connectivism**

There is no doubt, then, that digital natives experience their world differently to digital immigrants and that their experiences have shaped their brains to think, learn and respond in different ways. This emerging theory of learning for digital natives has been coined ‘Connectivism’ and some of its principles are:

- Learning is a process of connecting specialized notes or information sources.
- Learning may reside in non-human appliances.
- The capacity to know is more critical than what is currently known.
- Nurturing and maintaining connections is needed to facilitate continual learning.
- The ability to see connections between fields, ideas and concepts is a core skill.
- Currency (accurate, up-to-date knowledge) is the intent of all connectivist learning activities
- Learning and knowledge rests in a diversity of opinions

The fundamental tenet of Connectivism is that ‘as knowledge continues to grow and evolve, access to what is needed is more important than what the learner currently possesses…The pipe is more important than the content within the pipe. Our ability to learn what we need for tomorrow is more important than what we know today’.

**Implications for Pedagogy**

There are many implications for pedagogy. To adequately respond to the needs of digital native learners, we need to:

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12 The term ‘Connectivism’ was coined in 2004 by George Siemens in his important essay *Connectivism: A Learning Theory for the Digital Age*, [http://www.elearnspace.org/Articles/connectivism.htm](http://www.elearnspace.org/Articles/connectivism.htm), retrieved 14 October 2011.


• Review the concept of content being given. Content is no longer as important as the process of finding information.\(^{15}\)

• Review the role of teacher – the teacher is a learning partner rather than the ‘fount of all knowledge’. Shift focus away from content to accessing, assessing the reliability, synthesizing and presenting information. The teacher/trainer is more a facilitator or guide in this process. This must result in a shift away from ‘chalk and talk’ or lecture-style lessons which are quite foreign to digital natives.

• Maximise access to technology and information for offender learners across all curriculum areas. Technology is not just for the ICT class. Learners need to be able to access information across all subject areas and have choices about how to present that information using digital technology rather than conventional written assessment tasks.\(^{16}\)

• Review the concept of curriculum – integrated, connected subjects rather than discrete. Digital natives specialize in making connections and understanding the connectivity of subject matter. To teach discrete subjects as if they do not relate to each other appears false and restrictive. Exploring connections beyond the immediate subject and determining what changes the new knowledge can make in the real world is essential for engaging digital learners.

• Embed multi-media technology as a matter of course in every lesson for every subject. If content is learner-determined to an extent, subject areas are fluid and integrated and technology (including internet) is accessible in every subject area, then it is a logical conclusion that classrooms will have a raft of information available that learners can choose to use at any given time.

• Package content in short, multi-media segments with the capacity for links to further information to be explored by the learner if chosen.

Most importantly, we need to work out ways of doing this in an environment where offender learners usually have very limited access to ICT hardware, restricted access to the internet (only through staff), no interactive whiteboards and where staff are unable to access the limitless free and excellent teaching resources available on You Tube or participate in educational forums/message boards. We need to think creatively around the security and budgetary

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\(^{15}\) For example, we no longer need to know historical dates because we can Google them. What is more important in a digital age is knowing how to look for information and finding out what we need to know.

\(^{16}\) Mainstream learners can now be spoiled for choice regarding the way they present responses in class. By choice, our 8 year old has presented multi-media Powerpoint presentations where he imported his own digital images (we don’t know when or where he learned to do this) for news. In addition, he wanted to do news on his Lego, but his collection was too big to take in to school, so he made a 3 minute animated film using his dad’s ipod touch using voice-recognition (we did not know the ipod could do this). Both the presentation and film were shown on the interactive whiteboard in the classroom. He is a digital native.
restrictions we have to facilitate learning for digital natives and to assess that learning in a way that allows digital natives to shine.

Using Interactive Whiteboard Technology in Offender Learning

There are interactive whiteboards (IWBs) and laptops for juvenile offender learners at Kariong Juvenile Justice Centre\textsuperscript{17} – but when they turn 18 and transfer into adult custody, this technology has disappeared. The effect of this for digitally native offender learners is quite devastating, in a way that digital immigrants simply can’t understand. We are very fortunate at the Intensive Learning Centre at John Morony Correctional Centre to have one IWB between 4 classrooms. While I am no expert in IWB technology and there does not appear to be any research about the effects of recent interactive or gaming technology with offender learners\textsuperscript{18}, our anecdotal evidence is that the IWB is a powerful, transformative tool.

Our learners are young, adult, male offenders aged 18-25 years of age – clearly digital natives. Using the whiteboard as a giant touch-screen computer, we can flick between Smart Notebook software, the internet, dvd and any other programme on a laptop in the classroom. At its most basic level, we can use the IWB as a giant normal whiteboard except at the click of a button on the tool bar, we can bring up a fresh screen when the previous one gets full and save these as a record of all lessons, printing out notes if we wish. As we have learned more about how to use it we can manipulate texts, draw graphs, design interactive games in any subjects for our students and, perhaps more importantly, allow the students to use the board to manipulate text, data or images, convert handwriting to text etc.

We have seen enough to know that IWBs are not going away because they are far too useful and too much fun. They are now standard tools in every school in NSW. To not have them in our classrooms is disadvantageous to our learners - digital natives who enjoy kinesthetic, interactive learning. Being able to manipulate date on the board or flick to Google to investigate a question that arises in the middle of a lesson is particularly well suited to them. Being able to flick between programmes and information at will also suits these learners.

Without exception, the learners’ response to the IWB has been positive and they wish we used it more. Furthermore, the staff agree it has rejuvenated our creativity and challenged us to think more critically about how we access the almost infinite raft of free excellent teaching resources available online, present lessons and work out how to provide access to digital technology.

\textsuperscript{17} Kariong is run by CSNSW, however because the inmates are under 18, there education is managed and funded by the Department for Education and Training, hence the investment in interactive whiteboards and laptops.

\textsuperscript{18} There is, however, considerable international discussion about the benefits of interactive whiteboard technology with mainstream learners that is well documented. This discussion has not yet extended to include offender learners, largely because, on the whole, digital technology has not yet managed to penetrate prison walls.
within the policy constraints of internet usage within custodial settings. (A more detailed discussion of its practical usage is given in Appendix B.)

Connected Classrooms

Digital technology also has the potential to transform the way education is delivered throughout Corrective Services, not just in New South Wales, but around Australia and also internationally. Our schools currently enjoy Connected Classroom technology, where a class can effectively ‘webcam’ with another class, or, as at our local public school, a real astronaut at NASA, and read on their IWB in Sydney what that astronaut is writing on his digital device in Cape Canaveral, while watching him on the screen. Digital natives already have this sense of connectedness – of being networked to and learning from their friends and experts through social media and online gaming technology. Connected Classrooms have the potential to explode our curriculum, to make any subject available to our learners and to build up a very real giant virtual offender learning classroom, without increasing staffing costs.

This potential is hugely exciting as it can also present some real cost savings to CSNSW. Imagine a rural or remote correctional centre struggling for literacy or art staff. A Connected Classroom solves the problem by linking the remote areas into a class that already exists. At the Intensive Learning Centre we offer full-time education to up to 30 offender learners, yet there are 5 full-time staff. Costs are high but so are learner achievements and completions, however numbers are restricted by building size. Imagine if we could offer that same intensive programme to learners at other centres? We could have 300 students, or more, which would represent much better value for money. We could make our programme available overseas, particularly to custodial centres in neighbouring countries around the Pacific Rim and beyond. We could even make money out of it if we charged a subscription fee!

Offender Learners and the Internet

Currently, our learners are required to be totally dependent on the teacher in the classroom or the Education Officer on the computer for their web-based information and learning. Clearly this is not conducive to developing skills of searching the net, assessing validity and reliability of information (key employment skills) or being part of a wider learning community. It is simply not in keeping with trends in education, training and employment in the community. In effect, by not keeping abreast of these developments, we are hugely disadvantaging our learners and given the strong, well documented link between rehabilitation and work and learning skills, it can be argued that we are placing barriers to throughcare and rehabilitation.

Of course there are very sound and obvious reasons why offender learners should not have unlimited access to the internet, and this is certainly not what is being suggested. However, there are working examples around the world where offenders learners access a secure internet which has clear, well-built firewalls to keep learners and the community secure. In 2009, the
National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (England and Wales) published a report on ‘E-Learning in the secure estate’ in which it documented many different projects around the country.¹⁹

Virtual Learning Campus

One of the most significant of these projects is the Virtual Learning Campus (VC). The VC is a highly secure web-based environment for offender-learner use, supported by staff recruited to a new type of Learning Support position (see Appendix C). Throughout 2011 the VC has been implemented in 50 UK prisons after a successful, carefully managed and scrutinised pilot project. The initial evaluation of the ‘Test Beds’ pilot programme described how:

Offender-learners felt disengaged from education due to delivery methods not being conducive to their needs or individual learning styles. Motivating offender-learners to participate in learning presents a challenge for ETE providers, particularly in prisons, where courses were historically delivered using traditional classroom-based ‘chalk and talk’ methods. In contrast, strategic stakeholders and operational staff considered the VC to be a modern method of ETE provision, demonstrating that the Prison Service was ‘keeping with the times’.²⁰

Of course the primary concern about allowing offenders access to the internet is its potential misuse – to access indecent material, information that supports can be used for terrorism; and information about an offender’s victims, however the most recent evaluation found that:

In reality these fears were unfounded. In the two years that the VC has been operational its security has been monitored remotely and locally at each site. As such, there have been no security breaches from any Prison or Probation sites. The VC infrastructure has also been subjected to rigorous phases of testing by external consultants. For example, ICT experts from the University of Greenwich have provided ongoing advice about encryption standards and were commissioned to try and penetrate the VC system – they were unsuccessful.²¹


²¹ ibid, p14.
Rather than dismiss the use of internet because of its potential to be abused, the UK government has invested heavily in developing the VC for offender-learners to create both hardware and software content that is secure: ‘the software solution ensures they only have secure access to a range of white-listed content, specific to their need whether in custody or on probation’\textsuperscript{22}. In addition, it requires that every offender-learner must pass through a registration process to ensure they are suitable to use the VC\textsuperscript{23}.

The VC includes Information, Advice and Guidance services and resettlement information. Designed for offender-learners to be able to access once released from custody, the implications for improved continuity of learning, throughcare and rehabilitation are obvious.

The VC has also been implemented ‘in more sites with additional cross-pathway content uploaded. This includes Open University courses that offer remote tutor support whereby any OU student registered can submit assignments directly to the OU regardless of the course they were working on’\textsuperscript{24}. The benefits of being able to access free online resources, a wide and varied curriculum, to continue that learning on release and to use digital technology to do so are clear for digital offender-learners:

Having spent three years evaluating the VC, I am of the opinion that for offender-learners to gain maximum benefits from ETE opportunities, and for ETE provision to have the widest possible reach within prisons, the use of technology to deliver learning is an essential part of the offender learning strategy. \textsuperscript{25}

\textbf{Cost benefits of web-based learning through digital technology}

There are significant costs involved in developing and implementing such technology – costs for hard and software, broadband capability and running costs etc, but these have to be weighed up against the real savings made to the government when services currently delivered are made much more efficient and far-reaching, and savings made to the community when reoffending is reduced. A 2008 UK study showed that ‘prison education and vocational interventions produce a net benefit to the public sector ranging from £2,000 to £28,000 per

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{22} Ibid, p16.
\item \textsuperscript{23} Ibid, p23. While most learners have access to the VC, there are 4 groups who are assessed as having too high a risk to use the system. These are: those with a high public profile; those with media interest, individuals convicted of terrorism offenders and learners in a witness protection programme.
\item \textsuperscript{24} Ibid, p18.
\end{itemize}
offender (or from £10,500 to £97,000 per offender when victim costs are included)^26. If the savings to be made in Australian prisons are similar and service delivery of education, training, programmes and probation made more efficient by digital technology and secure internet use, then cost cannot be a legitimate barrier to similar developments in Australia.

**Future Vision: I had a dream**

Imagine if we had the facilities for offender learners to access learning 24/7, as they can in the community. No longer would lock downs or inmate movements prove to be such significant barriers. Imagine offender learners having their own iPads (as many primary school children currently do – see Appendix C), so that they can search on secure internet sites for information that is of interest and relevance to them, without compromising security. Imagine we could truly cater for our ever-increasing numbers of digital natives in custody while ensuring they (and their teachers) keep pace with technological developments essential for employment and/or further learning in the community. Imagine if they could still be connected to family, community and learning even while incarcerated, facilitating real throughcare and rehabilitation.

This technology is here to stay. It will continue to develop at warp speed and our learners will continue to change and develop with it. We can’t ignore the impact technology has on the way they learn. We *must* overcome the barriers to widespread use of modern digital technology, the latest software and the internet in custody. We must rethink pedagogy to reflect this dramatic modern shift in learning to ensure we best meet the learning, throughcare and rehabilitation needs of our digital learners. We need to rethink the concept of social inclusion to incorporate the notion of *digital inclusion*^27.

These are exciting times:

The opportunity for change is tremendous. Opportunities to restructure organizations and society are rare. Yet periodically – in periods of substantial social, technological, or ideological change – we have the opportunity to remake our existence, to rewrite the inefficiencies of antiquated modes of operation.

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^27 There is even a body dedicated for digital inclusion, *The Alliance for Digital Inclusion*, who minuted a meeting in December 2008 to discuss ‘Tackling re-offending...how technology is being used to support ex-offenders’. They considered the prisons POLARIS project and recommended that a ‘digital inclusion action plan for prisoners and ex-offenders’ should be developed and ‘should consider big ideas such as a computer/thin client in every cell’, suggesting a pilot project in an open prison (p1).
With vision, foresight, and awareness of change, we can move forward with a model that will serve humanity well. We exist in such a time.²⁸

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Appendices

Appendix A

Table of traits and preferences – Digital Immigrants vs Digital Natives

Appendix B

Using the interactive whiteboard in the Intensive Learning Centre at John Morony Correctional Centre: a case study.

Appendix C

## Appendix A

### Table of traits and preferences – Digital Immigrants vs Digital Natives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Digital Immigrants (pre Generation X)</th>
<th>Digital Natives (Generation X)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prefers to talk on phone or in person</td>
<td>Prefer to connect via text, online chat, Facebook, online games etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer synchronistic communication, in real time such as in face-to-face or phone conversations</td>
<td>Prefer a-synchronistic or sequential communication, such as in email, Facebook, or chat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accustomed to and prefer instructional manuals with clear sequential steps...like logical and linear process of discovery</td>
<td>Cannot relate to manuals – solve problems ‘intuitively’...engaged in rapid ‘trial and error’ actions and prefer discovering via actions, experimentation and interaction rather than by reflection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer receiving information slowly: linearly, logically and sequentially</td>
<td>Prefer receiving information quickly and simultaneously from multiple multimedia and other sources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer singular processing and single or limited tasking</td>
<td>Prefer parallel processing, multitasking or task switching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclined to read a book from cover to cover</td>
<td>Inclined to read texts in short bursts, one paragraph at a time, hopping to other activities, such as texting or Facebooking, in between paragraphs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>See high value in deferred gratification and rewards</td>
<td>Prefer instant gratification and rewards, do not see value in waiting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rely on a traditional 5-day work week, followed by an off-work weekend</td>
<td>Work intermittently 7 days a week; alternate among play, work, socializing, etc. 24/7. No ‘end’ to the week – continuous flow, natural rhythm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer central brick and mortar work place, distrust telecommuting, need to control when and where people work</td>
<td>Prefer telecommuting and flexible hours, opportunity to make up work remotely, ie from a café on a weekend</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hang out in person – dinners with friends</th>
<th>Hang out both online (Facebook, texting) and also offline (concerts, parties)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Value ‘proper’ English</td>
<td>Use texting and instant message shorthand: cu l8r, r u going 2 the game</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use the internet to gather information to read, review or learn</td>
<td>Use the internet to socialize, play, have fun, watch videos, shows, create etc. View internet in terms of interaction and participation rather than as passive or one-directional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Think young people waste their lives online</td>
<td>Many aspects of life are happening only online</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Think of the internet and virtual world as not part of ‘real life’</td>
<td>Internet is as real, and often more pleasurable and tangible, than offline life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer more knowledge and ‘just in case’ approach</td>
<td>Prefer to learn ‘just in time’ and what is minimally necessary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer to have ‘quality’ interaction with one of few people rather than many</td>
<td>Interact/network simultaneously with many, even hundreds of others, as well as with best few friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality interactions can only occur with a tight circle of friends, who have known each other a long time and earned trust</td>
<td>Quality interactions can occur with complete strangers, in public, on Facebook, via Twitter and especially online gaming (some games have millions of players around the world). Natives are constantly meeting each other and getting to know one another, often having never met face to face</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B: Using the interactive whiteboard in the Intensive Learning Centre at John Morony Correctional Centre: a case study.

Following an Intensive Learning Centre (ILC) Steering Group Committee Meeting in which the request for an IWB was made, the Senior Correctional Education Officer, Ron Jacks, was included in a visit to a local primary school to see IWBs in action and discuss the usage with teaching staff. A business plan was then put forward to, and supported by, the General Manager of John Morony Correctional Centre, Marilyn Wright, who funded 1 IWB as a pilot project in the ILC which was installed just over a year ago.

The IWB is connected to the internet using a dedicated laptop that can only be used by the supervising teacher. There have been no breaches of security to date. Our learners seem to value the IWB and have not made any attempts to touch the laptop. They have been more than happy to interact with the IWB.

It has transformed our teaching and raised both engagement levels in class and the quality of work produced by our learners.

An example of ways in which we use the IWB is in a class on writing a newspaper article about Victoria’s Black Saturday bushfires. Before the IWB was installed, we were only able to download a few articles and a lengthy Wikipedia article and photocopy it (in black and white) for our digital native learners to read. Needless to say, the lesson seemed rather plodding and their work reflected this.

Now we can use an IWB, we can start with a series of You Tube clips caught on mobile phones by those who were escaping and those who lived through the fires, You Tube clips of professional factual presentations and analyses of the fires, flick to the ABC Black Saturday website and watch interviews with survivors and volunteer firefighters, flick to PowerPoint presentations and flick to the Smart Notebook blank pages to record our own thoughts, make teaching points about the structure of newspapers etc. We’ve been able to call up articles online for the students to look at on the interactive screen where we can play with the text, finding elements we need to be able to write our own articles.

Our evidence is only anecdotal, but ILC teachers can see a huge difference in the engagement level with the material. The immediacy of the You Tube clips is powerful and captures learners’ imagination about what it must be like to experience such horror, the interviews and mobile phone footage gives them far more accessible information than articles alone, their ability to manipulate the text of a newspaper article on the screen allows them to explore the structure and language of a newspaper article more readily and, unsurprisingly, their writing is much improved as a result. Furthermore, they are more willing to write. Because their source material is multi-media (audio visual as well as written), listening skills can also be assessed at the same time, thus maximizing accreditation opportunities without asking students to do any extra work. They recognize and value this.
What has also been surprising is the students’ increased willingness to read. In a lesson on short story writing which began with immersion in a number of short stories (the students were asked to read 3 out of a choice of about 8 short stories copied for them), they all chose a short story written from the perspective of a child refugee in an Australian detention centre, *Anhar – Iran to Woomera*. The story referred to continued religious persecution of Mandeans by fundamentalist Muslims even upon arrival in immigration detention in their new country. The students wanted to know what Mandeans were, so using the laptop connected to the IWB, we were able to demonstrate Googling for information about the Mandeans and source personal accounts of persecution, government reports, Wikipedia entries and newspaper articles on this issue. The students were very interested in the material and read it carefully off the big interactive whiteboard screen. It prompted much discussion and the learners’ empathy for those being persecuted while held in detention was clearly articulated. Interestingly, two students asked for a print out of some articles we read so they could read them more fully back in their cells.

It is highly unlikely that if we had issued each learner with 8 short stories (from which to choose 3) and then a selection of printouts of the information we Googled (all in black and white as we don’t have a colour printer), the students would have been overwhelmed with the volume of reading and reluctant to engage in the lesson as a whole. The ability to respond to a question by Googling in-class was invaluable for allowing content to become learner-centred, giving them space to explore information, showing them the steps we need to take to search for information and to assess whether that information is reliable. The information Googled was dynamic in that it was colourful and connected to other relevant sites, demonstrating connectivity while being engaging. Surprisingly, it also prompted further reading but when one understands digital natives, one realizes that they prefer to read on-screen than on handouts, so the information on the IWB which could be scrolled through suited them immensely. Rather than be overwhelmed with the amount of information presented, they were thoroughly engaged and sought more. This process of becoming engaged with the subject matter and searching for more because they know we can has been repeated in other lessons on other subjects too.

The quality of work achieved is also much better because the learners have been more engaged, are able to have a choice about how to explore a subject and then feel they have more ideas and are better prepared when they come to write. They are given as much access to Word as possible in order to plan, draft and write. Students who write directly onto Word are much more willing to think critically about their work and are more prepared to edit their work as they find the changes so easy to make compared with those who have handwritten their work and find changes far more time-consuming to make. Integrating Word into the literacy class more easily facilitates an understanding of the process of writing as it makes this process so much easier for our digital natives to undertake.

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The IWB is also used by the numeracy teacher who has downloaded and devised simple maths games which allows learners to manipulate information and icons on the screen, for example, flicking giant dice in a lesson exploring probability. The learners are engaged and don’t feel as if they are ‘doing maths’. They just feel they are learning. Even the physical dynamics of the room are different when the learners are standing at the board manipulating the information/data on screen while the teacher sits to the side or back of the class with the laptop – it gives the clear impression to learners that the lesson is all about *them* and it is their job to explore and investigate rather than the teacher’s role to impart knowledge.

We’re fortunate to have such a rare resource in Corrective Services. But I’m also lucky to have a great relationship with my children’s primary school where I have been able to extend the initial 2 hour training session we got when the interactive whiteboard was installed at John Morony Correctional Centre and have additional training at the school with DET staff. Electroboard, the distributor of our Smartboard (IWB), also has well developed online training modules and open tutorials where we can tune in every Tuesday at a set time and learn more about this tool and how to get the most out of it. We should be encouraging staff to develop links with more expert educational technology users in order to upskill. My local primary school has been invaluable and so welcoming, inviting me to training sessions they think would be useful for my work in Corrective Services with offender learners.

Making links with mainstream education has been inspiring, highly motivating, connected me to a whole network of professionals from whom there is much to learn and also opened my eyes to a whole new digital world that is already here.

The benefits of IWB technology are well documented. This is actually not a new technology any more – it has been around long enough for decent research to be done. All the reports confirm, however, that using interactive whiteboard technology occasionally is not that much different to using a normal whiteboard. Unless the interactive whiteboard is embedded in every lesson, it becomes a rather expensive gadget. So, we have 5 teachers at the Intensive Learning Centre competing for IWB time. In an ideal world, we’d have an IWB in every room so that all teachers could use it in every lesson. We know this would raise the level of professional development and skills levels of teachers, keeping us competitive with our counterparts in mainstream education. We have found using the IWB raises our motivation and reignites teachers’ creativity, particularly in an often resource-deprived environment like custodial education departments. It clearly suits the learning styles and needs of our highly kinaesthetic digital learners.

It is essential to have one in every classroom – and there are economies of scale if you buy 3 or more! The ILC IWB cost about $10k including installation, but 3 or more IWBs can be as little as $6.5k including installation.

Using IWBs still complies with CSNSW policy on restricted, supervised access to the internet only. Even though our learners don’t access the internet directly, teachers can model the process of searching and physically facilitate web searches during class when questions or interests arise. While staff can’t access You Tube, message boards/forums or Facebook at work, we have access at home where we can search and downloaded to encrypted USB sticks,
ready to use in class in future. The number and quality of free available resources, including ready-made IWB or You Tube lessons is impressive and it is wonderful to be able to use the IWB to take advantage of these. We simply couldn’t do without our IWB now!
Appendix C: Learning Support Practitioner for Virtual Learning Campus

Job details

Vacancy title: Learning Support Practitioner (Part Time) – Virtual Learning Campus – HMP & YOI Swindon Hall
Expiry date: 17/08/2011
Details:

Learning Support Practitioner (Part Time) – Virtual Learning Campus
HMP & YOI Swindon Hall, Lichfield, Staffordshire

Salary: £16,950 - £18,950 pro rata

Our client is currently the largest national Provider of Offender Learning in the UK; their highly qualified employees are fully trained in security arrangements in order for them to deliver a responsive curriculum within prisons across England 52 weeks a year.

The aim of the Directorate is to lead, manage and develop provision in order to reduce re-offending and contribute to social inclusion by providing a wealth of curricula experiences including a core curriculum of Skills for Life, Personal and Social Development and work related training.

Working within the secure estate offers a challenging but extremely rewarding environment for the right candidate.

They are currently looking to recruit a part time Learning Support Practitioner to be based at HMP & YOI Swindon Hall to cover 14.8 hours per week.

They are looking for an energetic, self-starting individual who will take this project from the grass roots level and grow it into a superb and effective learning channel, for the whole of the establishment.

You will facilitate the use of a secure web based portal within the Offender Learning Department therefore good IT skills and some knowledge of network security protocols would be an advantage. In addition you will have an understanding of the support adult learners need to work independently on a variety of programs at a range of levels.

To succeed within this role, candidates will need to have a pragmatic and non judgmental approach to their work and the flexibility to adapt to meet learner requirements when necessary.

All applicants must demonstrate in their application their ability to meet the qualification requirements which are listed below.

You must hold or be willing to work towards level 2 qualifications in literacy, numeracy within an agreed timescale and also hold or be willing to work towards a level 2 or 3 qualification for Learning Support Practitioners, again within an agreed timescale.

An understanding of how people learn and methods that can be used to enhance a learning experience is essential, as is a track record of working effectively with people presenting with challenging behaviour.

Please note that all salaries specified are the full time salaries and any part-time (fractional) roles will have the appropriate pro-rata salary.

Closing date: Wednesday 17 August 2011

http://www.blueoctopus.co.uk/VacancyDetails.aspx?VId=2227&cm=False 14/08/2011

31 The highlighted section emphasizes the nature of the position.
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