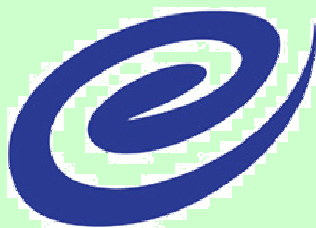


# Newsletter

November 2002



northern ireland  
**elearning**  
partnership

*This newsletter is provided for those interested in the early stages of the development of elearning in the education service in Northern Ireland.*

## In this issue:

**what** is elearning

**why** is elearning important

**why** have a partnership

**who** are the partners

**aims** of the partnership

**evaluation** framework

**action** research projects:

- ✓ Effective and elearning
- ✓ Supporting Professional Development online
- ✓ School leadership and management development
- ✓ Developing a methodology of online teaching for GCSE pupils
- ✓ Developing capability of student teachers for elearning

### What is elearning?

'**elearning**' refers to teaching and learning enhanced by information and communication technologies (ICT). The term is often used broadly to refer to **any** use of digital resources in the classroom, but in the context of this elearning partnership it means **teaching and learning online**, delivered 'anywhere, any place, any time' using communication tools, content and resources which can be accessed online.

### Why is elearning important?

Education Technology (ET) is changing patterns of learning all around us.

Learners, whether school pupils or teachers, increasingly seek and find worthwhile educational information, get significant teaching, homework and tutorial advice and join communities of learners online – wherever and whenever suits them best – and not just in school between 9am and 4pm.

At the same time, considerable public and private investment is going into the creation of online courses and resources, based upon the national school curriculum.

Through the ET Strategy and C2k, these new educational resources and services will be widely accessible in schools, and elsewhere, in the foreseeable future.

### Why a Partnership?

We need an open partnership to provide a mutual focus for the elearning interests of all the public and private sector partners in education technology in Northern Ireland.

The partnership been set up by the ET Strategy Management Group (ETSMG) as an umbrella initiative to evaluate strategic pilot projects, to advance our shared understanding of elearning, to grow our capacity to provide high quality elearning, and to establish a province-wide elearning service.

### Who are the partners?

Senior representatives of the following organisations steer the project and report to ETSMG:

- The Curriculum Advisory Support Services, including the School Library Service
- The Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment
- The Regional Training Unit
- The General Teaching Council
- C2k (Classroom 2000)
- The University Council for Educating Teachers
- The Education and Training Inspectorate
- The British Educational Communications and Technology Agency (Becta)

As the partnership develops there will be representatives from our commercial partners.

## Aims

The partnership aims include:

- evaluating the feasibility of using online tools for elearning
- identifying the quality measures and standards which should apply to elearning
- specifying the professional development needs of online educators
- developing the mechanisms needed to operate an elearning service in Northern Ireland.

**The Partners are committed to helping everyone who is interested in elearning to:**

- *share, mutually and openly, information, good practice, evaluation and advice*
- *avoid reinventing the digital wheel*
- *find out what works best, and is in the best interests of the learning community here*
- *identify and promote the highest standards in elearning*

The **Partnership** sets out to produce, in the first instance:

- a route-map for the development of elearning in Northern Ireland
- an evaluation framework and tools for elearning projects
- a specification for professional development for online educators
- an elearning quality and standards model
- exemplification of success indicators
- a business case for a partnership-based elearning service

and to encourage and to support some initial, high-quality exemplar elearning projects.

## Partnership Action Research Projects

A number of initial projects have been identified:

- Effective and elearning
- Supporting Professional Development online
- School leadership and management development
- Developing a methodology of online teaching for GCSE pupils
- Developing capability of student teachers for elearning

Further details are to be found on the last page.

## Evaluation framework and quality and standards model

Members of the partnership are working in alliance with **Becta** to produce an evaluation framework and to develop a quality and standards model. The Partnership will make the evaluation tools available for anyone who wishes to contribute to the goals of the Partnership.

### How can you find out more?

CCEA is developing a new web-service [www.elearningfutures.com](http://www.elearningfutures.com) for the NI elearning Partnership. This will open in the near future to provide a common point of reference to share our growing collective wisdom about elearning. In the interim, information about a number of online projects as part of the International Masters programme in Education Technology can be found on [www.imsctet.org.uk](http://www.imsctet.org.uk) while a comprehensive list of the wide range of elearning projects that are supported by the C2K consultants can be viewed at [www.cdar.org](http://www.cdar.org)

### Interested? What could you do to help?

The Partnership is working directly with a small number of the elearning projects and ventures currently underway in local schools, but is keen to find out more about what is going on. We provide an opportunity to share the evaluation of your pilot or experimental work, your references to worthwhile information or guidance materials, or simply your comments, questions and queries. If you would like to be involved, we are only 'one click away'!

Until our website is open for business, please contact **Richard Wallace**, elearning Associate to the ET Strategy, or **John Anderson**, ET Strategist at [info@elearningfutures.com](mailto:info@elearningfutures.com) in the first instance.

## Project Details

### 1. Effective and elearning

This course will connect current research on learning and teaching in the traditional classroom with the developing knowledge and skills of the virtual classroom. It will prepare participants to be the 'learning consultant' in their own schools. This course will also accommodate different learning styles and provide a basis for research into appropriate online learning methodologies. While being piloted in the NEELB and SELB, it will be relevant to teachers all over Northern Ireland, and not limited to one section or phase.

The mission of this course is to provide an online learning experience for selected primary and post primary teachers through which they can develop a shared understanding of effective learning as it relates to classroom practice and to the potential of elearning. This elearning course is relevant to the changing context of education in Northern Ireland and will explore some of the implications for learning of the CCEA Curriculum Review, the ET Strategy, C2K, the Burns Report and *Transforming the Way We Learn* (DfES), both in the classroom and electronically. Participants will be asked to develop an aspect of effective learning or elearning within their own classrooms, and to share their experiences and resources online.

At the conclusion of the course these teachers will be prepared for the role of 'learning consultant' within their own school and be able to act as 'change agents'. The course was oversubscribed within 24 hours of the schools receiving the course information.

Further information about the project can be found from Heather Thompson ([ThompsonHM@aol.com](mailto:ThompsonHM@aol.com)) or Vivien Kelly ([vivien.kelly@selb.org](mailto:vivien.kelly@selb.org))

### 2. Supporting Professional Development online

This joint initiative between RTU and the SEELB will pilot a Continuing Professional Development (CPD) opportunity for staff in the two organisations. The group, which will comprise participants from RTU and the CASS service in the SEELB, will work through an online course from Framingham College in Massachusetts. The course will be tailored for the Northern Ireland and delivered by online tutors on both sides of the Atlantic.

#### **Developing the capacity for online advisory support**

The SEELB is committed to exploring the opportunities afforded by on-line learning and aims to train the whole of CASS in on-line learning so that they will be in a position to develop future INSET and CPD courses for teachers. Initially, pilot courses for citizenship and leadership will be developed. Further information about this aspect of the project can be found from Anne Rowan ([rowan\\_anne@hotmail.com](mailto:rowan_anne@hotmail.com)) or Eibhlin Tinneney ([tinneney@rmpic.co.uk](mailto:tinneney@rmpic.co.uk))

#### **Professional Development for School Leaders**

RTU, working closely with its education partners, particularly C2K, is establishing a Virtual College for School Leadership. Work already undertaken in the Professional Qualification for Headship and MBA Programmes, and the scheduled Technological Leadership programme, provide opportunities for aspiring and existing Heads to begin to engage in supported online learning. In addition the Professional Qualification for Serving Headteachers, which will be offered during 2003, will have a significant elearning dimension. RTU aims to develop all of its professional staff to be critically effective in working online.

Further information can be found from Byron Evans ([bevans@rtu.nine.org.uk](mailto:bevans@rtu.nine.org.uk))

### 3. Schools of Thought

Too often, conventional staff development programmes fail to offer good value for money because teachers have no opportunity to use new skills or to try out new ideas as the environment in school is not ready for them to do so. The *Schools of Thought* programme will work with schools to help them to develop the supportive ethos that allows successful change to take place. Using management tools and activities held on the Blackboard virtual learning environment and supported by mentors, schools will define their own change priorities and plan to meet them.

Adeline Dinsmore and Jenny Brown, who have devised the programme, are working with C2K and a team from BELB under Brian Yeats. The emphasis will be on building a community among Senior Management Teams in 6 East Belfast primary schools to share critical reflection. Qualitative and quantitative evidence will be collected to measure the way in which the schools are able to manage change. The project will use a 'mixed-economy' of both face-to-face and online sessions; best practice in both environments will be monitored and recorded.

More information can be obtained from Adeline Dinsmore ([adins@aol.com](mailto:adins@aol.com)), Jenny Brown ([jenny@loanshiel.co.uk](mailto:jenny@loanshiel.co.uk)) or Brian Yeats ([briany@belb.co.uk](mailto:briany@belb.co.uk))

### 4. Developing a methodology of online teaching for GCSE pupils

This online course will build on three modules that were written and piloted last year with a group of GCSE pupils in Ballyclare High School. The GCSE ICT syllabus will be covered in 10 modules and will be designed in partnership with CCEA who are the examining body for the final award. The course will use Blackboard and other web based materials initially, and will be written in such a way that it can be transported to the C2K MLE.

One school in each Board area will be invited to nominate approximately 20 pupils to take part in the research pilot. The main aim of the project, as well as providing Northern Ireland's first online GCSE course, will be to develop a transferable methodology of online teaching for pupils taking high currency syllabuses. As the pilot progresses, it will incorporate and use the findings of other similar projects. Further details from Richard Wallace ([rwallace@manage.nine.org.uk](mailto:rwallace@manage.nine.org.uk)) or Richard Hanna ([rhanna@ccea.org.uk](mailto:rhanna@ccea.org.uk))

### 5. Developing the capability of student teachers for elearning

Three lecturers involved with International Masters Programme in Education Technology are already using laptops and Blackboard to deliver part of the PGCE course at Ulster University online. The pilot project will start after Christmas, when the current students are back in the university for a six-week teaching block. The continued contact with tutors will provide an appropriate induction period. By this stage, students, have one period of teaching experience behind them, will be more confident to undertake new work.

In the interim, the group will plan and prepare a sound rationale and implementation strategy for future work. Further information may be obtained from Victor McNair ([v.mcnaire@ulst.ac.uk](mailto:v.mcnaire@ulst.ac.uk))