Technology Advisory Group

Treloar College: Technology to support the RARPA process

The Organisation

Treloar School and College are specialist education providers founded in 1907 by Lord Mayor Sir William Purdie Treloar. Children from primary school age through to young people in their early twenties with severe physical disabilities come to gain a first class education and develop their independence, confidence and the skills to take up positive and productive roles in society.

Between them, our 160 students have over 40 different disabilities, the most common being cerebral palsy and muscular dystrophy. Over 90% use a wheelchair to get around and 40% have little or no speech. In addition, approximately 45% of students have been identified as having complex access to technology needs which require a multidisciplinary approach.

The Challenge

To ensure that students are actively involved in recording their own progress and achievements.

We use RARPA (Recognising and Recording Progress and Achievement) as a means of monitoring progress in predominantly non-accredited learning. We wanted to find a technology solution to involving students in stages 4 and 5 of the process, outlined below:

1. Course aims that address needs
2. Initial assessment of learners starting points and needs
3. Discussion and negotiation to identify the right challenging objectives
4. **Formative checking on progress and giving feedback**
5. **Final acknowledgement, recording and celebration of achievement.**

The solution

We identified methods of giving students the responsibility for collecting evidence to support their achievements, and considered ways in which we could use technology to provide feedback to them.

- iPads were allocated 1:1 to one of our year groups, and various apps were used to support learning, including Book Creator, Strip Designer, Aurasma, Dragon, Pinterest.
    - These enabled tutors to check on progress and provide regular feedback
    - Supported students to feedback to their peer group

- Students were encouraged to use their own equipment to film, record and take photographic evidence for learning and remembering
    - Ideal as after they leave this is the device they will continue to use
    - Created some challenges around staff confidence using a variety of platforms
    - Added advantage of supporting students' awareness of their timetable and one off appointments using diary functions (incidental learning)

- Green screening techniques (Green Screen by DoINK) were used to record evidence
    - Some learners don't want to be photographed themselves, but don't mind their work being captured for posterity
    - Other learners who would not talk about their work to a class full of students will happily be videoed and have this played back to their peer group

- Why we use these apps:

  - Our students often find the process of putting words onto paper slow and laborious – they use scribes, switch and/or eye-gaze technology, etc.
  - Book Creator, Strip Designer, Pinterest all are easy to use and very quick to produce something that is visually effective
  - Students love the way that their books and work look when displayed on the Interactive Whiteboard.
  - Book Creator is also an excellent tool for teachers to create student resources, whether this is step-by-step instructions for following a recipe etc, or easily adapting resources for students with different reading abilities or disabilities.
  - They're all free!

The outcome

- Mobile technologies, in particular the iPad, have changed the way our students engage with their learning. Using the iPad has led to fewer students requiring 1:1 support for certain activities and increased their autonomy as learners.

- Students have demonstrated more ownership of their work and the progress they have made. They now regularly reflect on their own work and experiences and record this in apps as they finish tasks, using the photographs and films they have taken.

- Mobile technology supports students to take their work outside of the educational environment, as it is easy to use in all areas of the college, including in the residential houses, and out in the community.

- Videos are a very effective way of showing learning. Tablet technology has enabled the students to film their own group without staff present, and they have shown increased confidence in sharing their ideas and interacting with other students.

- Learners have engaged so well with using apps that they developed an idea for a new app, 'VoiceIT'. This was entered into the Jisc Student Summer of Invention competition and has passed the first round.

- Staff are more confident about supporting students to use mainstream technology and apps than specialist devices and software.

The impact
- Students are empowered to have a central role in gathering and using data about their learning and achievements (linked to the college RARPA system)

- iPad resources are in constant demand

- Evidence to support students' targets and goals is more readily available (although training to ensure that teachers load it onto the MIS is crucial)

- Quality of evidence is improved, with more detailed and visual records

- There is an increase in the good to excellent use of iPads in teaching and learning

- The approach represents good value for money, particularly as the technology is so readily available and all the apps mentioned here are free to use.

Conclusion and Future plans

- Tablet technology is a motivating and innovative way for students to engage with the RARPA process

- Training for staff to ensure they are confident in using the technology and MIS is important

We plan to trial 1:1 iPad use in additional classes and then roll out Bring Your Own Device using a lease purchase scheme for students and families.

Jane Hayden
Treloar College
October 2015