

## The Digital Classroom

### The Change Agent We Have Been Waiting For

COVID 19 has had an enormous impact on the rate of change in our education system. A rapid upskilling of educators and their understanding of the potential use of integrated technology and digital skills in their classrooms, has led us to a real possibility that digitization is the missing link for re-engineering our education system. It has been an integral part of the progressive IB PYP and MYP program for many years, but could it help us all to prepare students for success in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century world?

### Time For Change

The worldwide revolution in education started with the global pandemic explosion in 2020: global change in education powered by a global pandemic which forced huge numbers of schools online. After an initial desperate scramble to digitally upskill teachers and integrate educational technology into everyday lessons, the education system was forced to innovate.

Faced with unprecedented demand for online schooling, schools and teachers who had previously relegated technology to the ICT suite to the IT teacher, rapidly expanded their digital capabilities. Schools who we are able to, began to incorporate technology into every lesson, and leaders and governments started to make the long overdue investment in technology and training to make it to happen.



## The 6 C's of effective 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills (Fanning Howey)\*

### Creativity and Innovation

Educators, who embraced a digital classroom, began to see the value in technology to support a new type of learning; learning that is relevant for the 21<sup>st</sup> century and can address the 6 C's of effective learning for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Learning, through the digital interface, which is how all business is now conducted. Teachers started to foster collaboration, and become skills and attitudes focused. The power of the internet was integrated into lessons, developing digital knowledge and skills.

Creative and relevant 21<sup>st</sup> century ways of sharing thinking and understanding through video and podcasts, shared online documents and digital animations, to name but a few. Teachers found that having to learn online or remotely, meant a greater focus on independent learning and personal resilience, and understanding could be shared easily with other class members.

### Critical Thinking and Communication

Nurturing critical thinking through the use of the internet with instant discussions about the sources of information and their reliability. Creativity in communicating understanding is limitless, in the digital classroom. Students can decide whether their learning is shared through video, spreadsheet or Power point or Prezi, to name but a few. They can learn important digital communication skills in context and in a way that is meaningful to them.

Teachers enable digital collaboration through apps such as Nearpod, Google Classroom, Microsoft teams and Zoom, and they and their students learn how to build digital community and responsibility. Teachers become learners again, and they develop digital skills alongside their students, in a collaborative learning community.

### Compassion and Character

Flipped classrooms give ownership of learning to students as young as seven, and teachers see that their students can do more than they believed they could. Assessment becomes more formative and open and collaborative, and in the challenging times of trying to assess online, the focus turns to assessing skills and attitudes rather than knowledge. Students give and receive instant feedback and learn how to support each other in the digital classroom.

## Community and Citizenship

A digital classroom is learning and evolving continuously. The teacher is a facilitator, learner and leader at different times during the class. Often the students are more digitally savvy than the teacher, so a mutual respect and understanding develops when the teacher learns from students, about new apps or new ways of learning. Learning in the digital classroom is not a one-way delivery model; it is multi directional, mutually respectful and an exciting place to be. A digital classroom speaks to the students in a language they understand – that of a digital native. The class can discuss digital responsibility and safety and these discussions have real meaning and are embedded into all aspects of their interactions with social media and the internet.

## Time For Change

Education was brought into the light of a new world with Covid 19. A world more relevant to the 21<sup>st</sup> century, where possibilities for collaboration, communication, creativity and critical thinking are endless and we can embrace the digital age to achieve it all.

For those of us who were in Apple and Google IB schools over a decade ago, where this “progressive” approach was embedded in our schools, it is exciting to see the change that is happening now.

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\*<https://fhai.com/insights/the-six-cs-of-education-planning-and-design/>