

Free Guide: Using a Learning Platform to Help Improve Exam Results

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Telephone: 01535 604026 | Email: info@webanywhere.co.uk | Web: webanywhere.co.uk

Harnessing the power of ICT to raise standards is a major priority in education. Results in certain subjects have been shown to improve by half a grade when pupils are able to make use of ICT to support their learning. Even in 2006, BECTA research was showing that the gains made in GCSE science alone represented over 50,000 pupils moving from grade D to C[1].

This guide illustrates how to make best use of a learning platform to raise levels of attainment, both indirectly by improving classroom processes, teaching efficiency and student engagement, and directly by enhancing coursework and exam preparation.

Engaging learners

Engaging learners with a subject is the ultimate aim of the teacher, and results in greater comprehension of and passion for a subject. This translates to improved exam results. Using a learning platform can be a powerful tool for teachers seeking to engage their pupils, facilitating memorable, interactive learning experiences that spark enthusiasm both inside and outside of the classroom.

Online technology resonates with today's learner; 'digital natives' (those who have grown up with the internet and advanced ICT as a ubiquitous part of daily life) are used for accessing information and interacting online, and are keen to find creative new ways to learn and collaborate through technology. It can also make an impact on hard to reach students, disinterested in traditional classroom based learning.

Using a Learning Platform to complement traditional teaching methods helps present knowledge in an accessible, familiar format. An example of this is the use of **educational games** within the learning platform. Webanywhere partner I Am Learning conducted an in-depth study on the impact of using their educational games as part of the teaching process during the 2010-2011 academic year. Having collated results from over 70,000 learners, a direct link was established between the use of their software and increases in levels of attainment. The average exam result improvement observed when using I Am Learning was 8.6%, and when learners made regular use of the educational games (at least one hour per week) that figure improved to 13.5%[2]

Other tools to engage with students through a learning platform include online quizzes, interactive presentations, video, audio and class forums / collaborative wikis.

The Flipped Classroom

Using a learning platform creates what has been termed the 'flipped classroom'. This means that introductory materials, including videos, documents, games and interactive quizzes are set for students to access online, outside of school. Having these learning tools accessible anytime, anywhere, allows theory to be digested at a learner's own pace. A learning platform can embed or signpost the best materials found online, or provide access to tailored resources uploaded by the teacher.

Time in the classroom can now be spent on practical work, student debate and experiential exercises. The role of the teacher is now to guide this activity and add clarity, rather than to introduce a topic, with the educator allowed more hands-on time and a greater ability to focus on differentiated learning and focusing on preparing for exams.

Teaching Efficiency

The concept of the flipped classroom feeds into the wider issue of improving teaching efficiency, and making the best use of classroom time to drive up standards. Using a learning platform to its full potential saves teachers time, prevents duplication of effort across classes or between staff, and allows teachers to focus on lesson plans and the individual needs of learners.

Webanywhere can integrate learning platforms with management information systems. This prevents duplication of effort, creating a single point of entry for marking, attendance, behavioural information etc, while allowing teachers to access data from MIS systems off site, allowing for more flexible working patterns.

Uploading lesson plans, teaching resources and management procedures to a learning platform creates a reusable archive that can be accessed from a central location, anytime, anywhere. Different schools can pool these resources and share best practise. This archive can also help improve the integration and orientation of new faculty members, and guide supply teachers when covering teacher absences.

Time saved in this way can ensure a teacher is better able to focus on imparting knowledge, and preparing students for exams and coursework tasks.

Revision & Exam Preparation

A learning platform can be used to focus directly to improving exam results. During the lead up to exams, a learning platform allows teachers to remain in constant contact to address concerns or clarify issues, and for students to collaborate and share tips (having the additional effect of improving moral and the sense of school community in the run up to examinations, a potentially stressful time emotionally).

A range of online revision tools can be embedded or signposted, and resources such as previous exam papers, suggested reading lists and guidance on exam technique can be added to the learning platform, accessible anytime by students to help them revise. A JISC study has found that students who take advantage of the option to take past exam papers for practice as many times as they wish online have an average exam mark 15% higher than those who did not, or who were not provided with the opportunity[3]

A Learning platform can make it easier for teachers to offer additional help to learners who struggle to display their true knowledge and understanding under exam conditions, and help them to achieve the best grades possible.

Conclusion

Learning platforms have been shown to improve exam results for schools, both anecdotally and by extensive studies by independent organisations. The improvements are provided by both tangible and intangible improvements to the way lessons are conducted, the way teachers teach, and how students are supported.

To make the most of this potential boost to attainment, the full potential of the learning platform needs to be realised, by creating a well-used, intuitive system fit for the needs of teachers and learners. Webanywhere have a proven track record in providing bespoke learning platforms to all types of school, based on a firm understanding of the potential that technology offers in education and the knowledge of how to make this a reality.

Webanywhere offer the full range of services for Moodle – the powerful VLE that is ideal for secondary schools, colleges and universities.

Specifically for primary schools, Webanywhere have developed Learnanywhere - a learning platform that is both fun and easy to use for teachers and pupils alike.

To learn more about how learning platforms can be integrated or improved at your school, please call 0800 862 0131 or 01535 604 026.

Alternatively, email info@webanywhere.co.uk

[1] Source: *Making a difference with technology for learning: evidence for local authorities* - BECTA (2006) retrieved from http://trustnet.learningtrust.co.uk/Documents/making_difference_evidence_la.pdf

[2] Source: *I am learning: Impact report 2010-11*, retrieved from <https://www.iamlearning.co.uk/evidence>

[3] Source: *Exploring Tangible Benefits of e-Learning: Does investment yield interest?* retrieved from <http://www.jiscinfonet.ac.uk/publications/camel-tangible-benefits.pdf>