

North Lanarkshire Council Report

Education and Families Committee

approval noting

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Digital NL Classroom – Learning for the Future

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Executive Summary

The digital future for North Lanarkshire schools and establishments is central to the vision of 'We Aspire – A Shared Ambition for North Lanarkshire' and the Plan for North Lanarkshire. North Lanarkshire has had on-going success in promoting digital learning in schools, but now wants to create a digital learning system across all its learning establishments.

This report outlines what the Digital NL Classroom will look like, and the impact it will have for children and families living in an increasingly digital North Lanarkshire. It also describes how the Digital NL Classroom arrangements will be tailored more closely to the needs of young people and aligned more effectively to key employment sectors. This will equip our children and young people with the skills, qualifications and experiences necessary in life beyond school. The report, furthermore, describes the scope of tests of change that are required to progress the preferred models to facilitate learning across schools through digital connectivity.

The report proposes a scoping exercise to explore the most effective way to build the Digital NL Classroom and pilot activity in 2019 – 2020. It shows that the establishment of a digital learning system is dependent on both the SmartNL procurement of infrastructure (for connectivity) and the implementation of the council's proposed platform (infrastructure).

A further detailed report will be brought back to Committee on the technical, operational, training and funding requirements of this project prior to a full roll out.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Education and Families Committee:

- (1) note the initial steps the service is taking in developing a Digital NL Classroom including a pilot initiative in 2019/20.
 - (2) approve that a future report will be sent to the Education and Families Committee highlighting actions taken to date and plans for further developments.
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Supporting Documents

- Plan for North Lanarkshire**
- to support all children and young people to reach their full potential
 - to enhance participation, capacity and empowerment across our communities
 - Scottish Government Enhancing Learning and Teaching through the use of digital technology
<https://www.gov.scot/publications/enhancing-learning-teaching-through-use-digital-technology/>
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1. Background

- 1.1 Across North Lanarkshire, children, young people and adults have access to technologies today that are transforming how and where they live, learn, work and play in increasingly innovative and exciting ways.
- 1.2 Digital technology is already embedded within Scottish Education. It has a place within Curriculum for Excellence, Initial Teacher Education and the Professional Standards set by the General Teaching Council of Scotland (GTCS). The GTCS Standard for Provisional Registration and the Standard for Full Registration clearly state that teachers should be competent in the use of digital technologies in schools and know how to use digital.
- 1.3 The Scottish Government has set out the role local authorities should play in Enhancing Learning and Teaching through Digital Technology, including developing the skills of educators, promote approaches to digital infrastructure in education that puts users' needs at the heart of the design and to ensure the development of digital skills which are relevant, ambitious and forward looking. The digital learning and teaching strategy published by the Scottish Government in 2016 sets out a series of national actions and local expectations structured around four key objectives:
- develop the skills and confidence of teachers
 - improve access to digital technology for all learners
 - ensure that digital technology is a central consideration in all areas of curriculum and assessment delivery; and
 - empower leaders of change to drive innovation and investment in digital technology for learning and teaching.
- 1.4 North Lanarkshire's Education and Families Directorate recognises that in order to continue to raise attainment, ambition and opportunities for all, conditions must be created to unlock the potential of digital technology in all our schools and establishments, for the benefits of educators, learners, parents and carers.
- 1.5 Digital learning is more than providing students with a device. It is a combined use of technology, use of digital content, creation of digital content and teaching. There is recognition that technology is a pedagogical tool to deliver learning that engages and motivates pupils and can be used to enhance cluster and consortium learning experiences. Therefore the Digital NL Classroom needs to enable pedagogies that support the learning of young people across a range of subjects.

- 1.6 Teachers are essential to digital technology. We recognise that the growth and development of different types of digital learning is rapid and ever changing. Consequently, training for teachers will continue to adapt and reflect this priority, with the Digital NL Classroom being a critical means to ensuring rapid development of these opportunities.
 - 1.7 e-Sgoil, based in the Western Isles receives funding from Scottish Government to support other local authorities in maximising digital learning. From bases in Stornoway (Lewis) and Carinish (North Uist) it deploys GTCS registered teachers and current technology to deliver real-time, interactive lessons, to pupils throughout Scotland. It recruits staff, delivers bespoke e-Quip training, teaches a wide range of subjects and provides IT back-up for schools which require services.
 - 1.8 The e-Sgoil model is one officers will explore as part of the scoping exercise we will undertake between June and December 2019 to establish the most effective mechanism for future connectivity between schools.
 - 1.9 However, it is important to recognise that North Lanarkshire Education and Families has a strong track record of Digital innovation, with a number of schools recognised for this work nationally.
 - 1.10 Therefore it is also possible that through the Digital NL programme, there is a local solution to enabling a future Digital NL Classroom Delivery Plan, which officers will also explore within the scoping exercise.
 - 1.11 The scoping exercise will be genuinely about finding the best solutions for North Lanarkshire pupils.
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2. Report

- 2.1 The proposed Digital NL Classroom is designed to encompass all digital learning developments across North Lanarkshire schools. It is a key strand of activity within the Digital NL planning, which is being brought forward within the wider transformation programme.
- 2.2 It is being created in response to new technological expectations of young people and will create new kinds of learning experiences for them. Learning across schools, without limits, will open up different experiences for learners.
- 2.3 It is also being done to maximise the learning experiences of young people in the Senior Phase who experience smaller class sizes, due to low uptake in some subjects in individual schools, for example at Advanced Higher level.
- 2.4 The Digital NL Classroom has five principal objectives which will underpin future activities to expand digital learning in schools:
 - develop the skills and confidence of educators – and build on the particular strengths of key practitioners
 - improve access to digital technology for all learners – and maximise their efficacy in using it
 - ensure that digital technology is a central consideration in all areas of curriculum and assessment delivery

- empower leaders of change to drive innovation and investment in digital technology for learning and teaching
- provide an effective set of mechanisms to enable digital learning across schools through Digital NL Classroom activities
- develop the digital skills of our young people to meet the needs of the future workplace and key sectors.

2.5 Develop the skills and confidence of educators – and build on the particular strengths of key practitioners

2.5.1 Part of the role of the Digital NL Classroom is to ensure all staff are upskilled in using digital technologies to support learning. Therefore, a North Lanarkshire Practitioner’s Guide is proposed which aims to support all leaders of learning to develop digital solutions and approaches to all aspects of teaching and learning.

2.5.2 A NIF Strategy group is also developing good practice resources for sharing across the teaching profession. This group includes practitioners from early years, primary, secondary and ASN sectors.

2.5.3 An investment in continuous professional development for all staff will be required to enable them to deliver improved digital outcomes and experiences to our children and young people. The established practitioner networks which are driving change in North Lanarkshire will be key to developing planning for the Digital NL Classroom, especially secondary subject networks and the NIF Strategy Group for Digital Learning.

2.6 Improve access to digital technology for all learners – and maximise their efficacy in using it

2.6.1 The Digital NL Classroom will support curriculum planning and create a broader range of opportunities, which are more learner centred. This builds on the approach currently adopted in enabling Senior Phase Consortium arrangements in North Lanarkshire, where young people currently travel between schools to learn in subject areas not offered in their own schools. The Digital NL Classroom, if successful, has a significant potential to remove the requirement to travel.

2.6.2 This latter point will help North Lanarkshire Council to meet the requirement of the 15 – 24 Learner Journey Review to produce a regional prospectus to enable more effective information to be provided to pupils and parents.

2.6.3 Digital NL Classroom – Learning for the Future will require learners to have access to teachers/leaders in other establishments across the Council. This will require a reliable digital infrastructure to be in place to allow this to happen. There will be two options explored during the phasing, one is to procure the e-Sgoil and the other is to explore an in-house option via Office 365 tools.

2.7 Ensure that digital technology is a central consideration in all areas of curriculum and assessment delivery

2.7.1 Schools and establishments need access to the latest approaches, including tools and/or devices to enhance learning and teaching in the classroom, e.g. virtual reality headsets, artificial intelligence devices, tablets, Laptops/PCs etc.

Therefore, there will be a need for a technological upgrade to enable the Digital NL Classroom activity.

2.7.2 Where digital learning is being established for the purposes of delivering qualifications, it is important to build the trust of pupils and parents. Therefore, incorporating the needs of stakeholders into the planning is a crucial part of this development. Such work will be broached as part of the scoping exercise.

2.7.3 However, it is important to recognise that digital learning for Senior Phase programmes already occurs in North Lanarkshire through the SCHOLAR programme, in which Heriott-Watt University provides a set of on line course supports for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher programmes, including mentoring support and assessment instruments. Expansion of SCHOLAR (and getting greater value from the existing contract) will be a mechanism for supporting the roll out of the Digital NL Classroom.

2.8 Empower leaders of change to drive innovation and investment in digital technology for learning and teaching

2.8.1 A key part of the Digital NL Classroom is to enable our leaders to take forward change in their establishments and to lead system change. Part of this is to enable teachers to innovate and for such innovations to inform future systems.

2.8.2 Therefore, the scoping process will involve teachers and Head Teachers and will be designed to explore future learning approaches that may in time create future learning systems.

2.9 Provide an effective set of mechanisms to enable digital learning across schools through Digital NL Classroom activities.

2.9.1 Pilot activity will be brought forward in one of our secondary schools and associated primaries in 2019 to ensure that technical and cultural aspects of the planned programme are properly understood and addressed. The lessons learned from this pilot will be presented in the future report to committee.

2.9.2 The next steps in the delivery plan will be to develop a work plan for scoping the Digital NL Classroom and take it forward in 2019 – 2020. It is intended to bring a further report on this scoping exercise to committee in Cycle 4, early in 2020.

2.10 Develop the digital skills of our young people to meet the needs of the future workplace and sectors.

2.10.1 Understanding of the digital skills which are required now and in the future are Key to the success of the Digital NL classroom.

3. Equality and Diversity

3.1 Fairer Scotland

Across North Lanarkshire we are committed to delivering excellence and equity in all our schools and establishments. We recognise that in developing skills for learning, life and work our young people should experience a curriculum rich in digital technologies and digital approaches to learning and teaching.

3.2 Equality Impact Assessment

The Digital NL Classroom is designed to increase opportunities for all young people to have an enhanced learning and teaching experience, increased curricular opportunities and access to the latest digital technologies.

4. Implications

4.1 Financial Impact

The Service will work with colleagues in Corporate Finance and Business Solutions to identify the full revenue and capital costs linked to rollout Digital NL Classroom across schools and funding options. This information will be included in a future report to committee.

4.2 HR/Policy/Legislative Impact

The service will work with HR colleagues to ensure that all appropriate provision is in place to implement this programme.

4.3 Environmental Impact

As digital classrooms are put in place the cost of transporting our young people between establishments for consortium arrangements would significantly reduce.

4.4 Risk Impact

Without investment in digital teaching, learning and resources our children and young people may not develop the skills necessary to take their place in a future global workforce which will undoubtedly rely heavily on digital skills.

The poverty related attainment gap needs to be addressed by ensuring affordable access to connectivity for all in order to deliver virtual access to key subjects, especially in our secondary schools.

5. Measures of success

5.1 Once implemented fully the effect of The Digital NL Classroom will afford all secondary school learners the opportunity to access an increased range of subjects without the need for them to travel between establishments during the school day.

5.2 Children and young people will have access to a broader more diverse curriculum which will enable them to access opportunities linked to labour market intelligence leading to an increase in the percentage entering and sustaining a positive post-school pathway.

5.3 Through increased access to a variety of digital technology learners will develop their digital skills that will be vital for lifelong learning and work.

- 5.4 Access to Continued Professional Development for teachers/leaders has enabled the council's workforce to be upskilled in the delivery of the Digital NL Classroom.
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