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talk2learn highlights

Inspiring leaders;
improving children's lives

Issue 6b

In case you missed it...

Recent highlights from NCSL in Dialogue, talk2learn's
online community for national education debate

Also available as a podcast

Changing times, changing roles

Leading ICT in primary schools

Is distributed leadership the answer to reaping the benefits of the expansion of ICT in schools?

This question was examined in talk2learn's recent hotseat on distributed leadership of ICT with Elizabeth Giltinan, a NCSL research associate who has studied how ICT is now being led and managed in primary schools.

Deputy head Helen Clark offered her school as an example of how distributed leadership could look in practice:

"All classroom teachers and subject managers manage their areas and are responsible for putting materials, planning and pupil data onto the network. We do use the expertise of members of staff who are more competent and who have worked in ICT outside education. Recently a student we had led a very well-received Inset, both with teachers and support staff on the Interactive whiteboard. Sometimes it is about accepting that the children also are well able to support each other and staff!"

One primary e-learning coordinator said that delegating some technical management aspects of the job to support staff had helped ease the demands of a job that has become increasingly time-consuming:

"During the last three months I have managed to convince the county's schools ICT support to contact our school technician regarding all technical information and installations, rather than keep leaving messages for me to pass on," she said.

She added: "What I would really like to happen would be to encourage all subject leaders to take on more responsibility to promote and train staff in the use of software appropriate for their subject. Currently most staff rarely approach me with a request



to purchase software or more disappointingly are unaware of the software in school for their subject despite being given an inventory."

Class teacher and ICT coordinator Paul Gingell agreed that getting subject leaders on board was a key tactic in easing the burden for ICT coordinators. "My aim is to get other subject leaders more involved as everything that even needs plugging in seems to come to the ICT staff," he said. "We now have an ICT cluster – a group of teachers to work on schemes and policies – which is a step in the right direction. I hope that this will encourage other staff to get excited about the importance of ICT in the curriculum."

Dispelling any notion that success with ICT depends on the state of your hardware, a Business Manager of a fresh start primary school in Peckham with 300 pupils, said that, despite a wealth of brand new ICT facilities, the school scored poorly in Becta's self-review ICT framework.

"I'm not convinced that staff know about half the resources available to them, how to use them effectively, and even whether they know how to log on to their school email! We are currently concentrating on the leadership/management section of the self review framework, and to start off we are auditing our staff's ICT skills. That and agreeing the school's vision for ICT are our first steps."

Elizabeth Giltinan's research report is available on the NCSL website at www.ncsl.org.uk/publications.

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at www.ncsl.org.uk/onlinecommunities