

Report of ACCS Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Sub-Committee 2020/2021

Members: **Paul Fiorentini, President ACCS, Paul Thornton, Chairperson, Tom Cash, Ciarán Stewart, Anne Smyth, Dermot Healy, Tom Lonergan, PDST Technology in Education, Deirdre Redmond, PDST Technology in Education, Sharon Connolly, Noel O’Sullivan, Cleona McCann, Rachel Hayes, Brendan O’Sullivan, Fidelma Foy, Catherine O’Sullivan, Director of FESU, Hilary Treacy, GDPR Advisor ACCS, Áine O’Sullivan, Assistant General Secretary ACCS and John Irwin, General Secretary ACCS.**

The following represents the main activities and schedule of work agreed by the ICT Sub-Committee over the last year. During 2020 this Sub-Committee held its meetings remotely via Microsoft Teams.

1. The ACCS Website (www.accs.ie)

The ACCS website underwent a major refurbishment and update in the early part of 2020 which was fortuitous as it became heavily utilised by both school management and staff during this academic year as a result of COVID-19 and the switch to remote working and learning. A good proportion of the Association’s work was carried out through the medium of the website and moving into the future it is anticipated that the website will continue to have an essential role in the communication strategy of the organisation.

With this in mind, the Association was fortunate to secure the appointment of David Cahill who has considerable experience in the area of website design and management. He will work in conjunction with our website design company, Sreenzest to further enhance and expand our website and social media capabilities.

It is intended to continue the development of the website during 2021 to include helpful videos, guides and webcasts which can be accessed by schools and Boards of Management to assist them in the areas of management, governance and legislation. It is also intended to move some of our training and in-service on to a virtual platform accessible through our website.

In March 2020, the Sub-Committee established an area on the ACCS website www.accs.ie for schools to share resources under a number of different headings including Teaching and Learning, Working with students with Additional Educational Needs, Creativity during Covid, Transition Year Resources, Establishing Protocols and Codes for working online and Wellbeing and Care. Schools could access the resources and share materials which worked well in the online space.



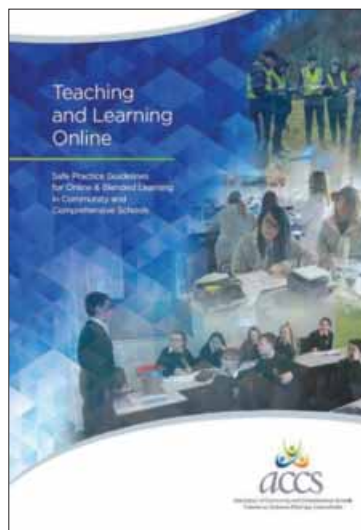
2. Teaching and Learning Online

Much of its agenda was driven by the closure of schools in March as it focussed on what ACCS could do to support schools in establishing best practices in emergency remote teaching. Following much discussion, the Sub-Committee set about producing **Safe Practice Guidelines for Online and Blended Learning in Community & Comprehensive Schools**. These guidelines were issued to schools and other stakeholders in August 2020 and include practical advice on the blend of activities for schools (Post Primary & Further Education) delivering an online learning experience, inclusion, netiquette, GDPR regulations while using digital technologies and a section on universal design for learning.

The Sub-Committee facilitated a comprehensive survey on Digital Technologies in Community & Comprehensive schools in June 2020 and information garnered through this process informed the Guidelines along with observations and suggestions offered by students in Community & Comprehensive schools on their experiences of emergency remote learning. (ACCS Student Voice Event – June 2020)

The link to the Teaching and Learning Online Guidelines is available here:

<https://www.accs.ie/accs-news/a-new-accs-publication?rq=Learning>



3. ACCS in partnership with H2 Learning

In June 2020, the ACCS ICT Sub-Committee established a partnership with H2 Learning which resulted in a workshop for Community & Comprehensive schools to support them in their delivery of a blended learning approach.

H2 Learning created a focused blended learning workshop for ACCS schools, empowering them to design blended learning experiences in their schools from September 2020. The workshop consisted of a number of elements:

- A set of asynchronous learning resources focused on planning blended learning.
- A live workshop with H2 Learning and ACCS staff on hosting school-based online blended learning workshops.
- Facilitated discussions for participating ACCS schools on the LearnDash platform.



The output from this blended short course was to help schools reflect and plan for blended learning in September. The asynchronous content, the live workshops and the asynchronous discussion provided schools with the knowledge, tools and practices to begin implementing blended learning consisting of a mix of:

- Face-to-face
- Live Synchronous Teaching
- Asynchronous Learning

Schools used the workshop material with their staff to prepare, plan, design and implement a blended learning approach to teaching and learning from September 2020.

4. Blended Learning Community Forum

Following the H2 Learning workshops in August, the ICT Sub-Committee established a forum on MS Teams where participating schools could share resources and strategies, discuss common issues and support each other in enhancing capacity.



DEFINITION

Communities of practice are groups of people who share a passion for something they do and who interact regularly to learn how to do it better.

(Wenger, 2006)

AIMS



CONNECT

To connect with colleagues engaged in using ICT in a blended learning environment in the classroom to improve the quality of student engagement and learning throughout ACCS schools.



COLLABORATE

To work together to generate new ideas of using ICT in the Blended Learning environment to enhance teaching and learning.



CREATE

To create and curate resources to be used by teachers in ACCS schools.



CELEBRATE

To share our successes, inspire each other, and learn from best practice in our classrooms/schools.

The Chairperson expresses his thanks to members of the ICT Sub-Committee for their active engagement, to Tom Lonergan and Deirdre Redmond, PDST Technology in Education for their ongoing support and engagement and to the ACCS Secretariat for all their support.

Paul Thornton,
Chairperson.