Teacher Interview 1

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1405

Eddie Falshaw

Teacher 1 Thank you very much for agreeing to meet with me today to talk about technology and Chromebooks at Leighton Park, just to remind you, we are recording this discussion, and it will be transcribed and then used as part of research moving forward. So, first of all we're just asked, when, when students are engaged in a lesson from your perspective, what are they doing, what are they actually doing.

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So, I would like to see that they are looking attentive and interested. Maybe taking part if it's a discussion based activity. If it's a paired or group activity that they are taking an active role rather than just sitting back passively. And if we are using technology that they use it appropriately so that they are you know not going off on a tangent, if they ask you to research on something or not using the equipment inappropriately so. They're on the website that I've asked them to go on or the document I've asked them to go on rather than going on some game, you know what that sort of thing. So,

so yeah this question,

Eddie Falshaw

So how do you know then that they're not going off and

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yeah so in terms of some of the things that I think that I think as a teacher. We do instinctively so it's how you move around the room, and I think regardless of what do you, what tools you're using you would do that you'd engage with them, you'd be discussing, you might let them get on independently but you're kind of gauging by asking questions checking their Ok, sort of standing, the row behind them so you can see how they're getting on checking that they're actually doing what you've asked them to do but also they've understood it so if they've answered a question rather than they've just copied it, or, you know, paraphrase what you've told them, asking them questions to check that learning and understanding. I think in terms of engagement as well. You'd want them to, at key points in lesson to be able to demonstrate that they've made progress that they've actually understood the starting point but also where they've, they've ended up so you can actually say to them, right. I can tell you've been engaged because we started off looking at the causes of First World War and actually you can identify five possible causes. 10 minutes into the lesson. And then that feedback and discussion as well.

Eddie Falshaw

So, when the Chromebook is part of the lesson. Do you think that engagement is better.

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I don't think you can say for certain that just because you're using a Chromebook, it's automatically better. In the same way that if you're not using it, it's, it stops them engaging I think it depends, the task you want them to do, and I think it also what outcome, are you looking for. I think at times, I have found certainly in the last year that it has been a useful tool and I think that I've got quite a number of examples in lessons where they have really engaged, well when we were doing some online learning or hybrid learning I had some students still working overseas, and some of the tools and extension things that we've got I think has aided that sort of engagement. And, you know examples where we've obviously got the Chromebooks and we've got the Google classrooms. And Google's slides, I found Pear Deck particularly good in the near the setting that I have in my own lessons. And I really like to see that some of our quieter members of the class actually were engaging in a way that I don't think they would have done if I'd asked for volunteers to answer a question. So a student in my year eight history class, writes beautifully is terribly shy and terribly quiet but actually, because she's able to type in her answer and I can get it, and then at the end of the lesson I can share that transcript with students for their records. I think that's been a really really good development. But at the same time. I think there have been times when I think maybe the quality generally of written work hasn't always been improved so this was, this is evidence, sometimes you know they, they're assuming there's going to be spell checking and that sort of thing so a little bit, certainly in few of my classes, a little bit more slapdash, though perhaps they would have done if they'd had their exercise book and they were actually having to underline and get their handwriting, sort of really correct. In the recent assessments, they obviously writing in a with by hand. And that was the first time they've done that, probably all year in history, with the exception of a few, you know, old activities. And that was because we obviously decided we were not going to have exercise books so it's an unusual year, but it did make me think, some of them struggled to complete the assessment within the time and I think it's because they're quicker at typing. They've actually got really quite skilled at sort of touch typing, which was another sort of b-product I hadn't foreseen as well.

Eddie Falshaw

So, it depends what you're doing, as to whether the engagement was an interesting thing to come from the survey was the in terms of cognitive engagement, teachers seem very unsure about whether the Chromebook is engaging them cognitively why do you think that might be.

Teacher 1

I wonder if some staff are concerned that it might be a distraction or that the technology is perhaps perceived as doing some of the work for them. So it's actually missing out some of those key steps where you sort of understand or embed that key information. I think sometimes it can be fear of the unknown as well. I think it can help again it comes back, sounds like I'm repeating myself, but I think it does depend on what you're doing because I think it can aid, that if you're using it for, I don't know, a quiz for example I've just had a year eight class again, and we're finishing a topic and we finished with the interactive quiz using Kahoot. And they absolutely loved it and they were really motivated and wanting to sort of get to the top of the leaderboard and all that sort of thing. So I think it can, obviously you wouldn't spend a whole lesson doing that, but you would be able to identify sort of snapshots and bits and pieces that could really actually help to develop their knowledge and understanding

Eddie Falshaw

Now you mentioned distraction.

This was a big area, a very interesting area on both the teacher survey and the student survey. So, what's your view. Is it is it a distraction or is it not really a distraction from the learning that

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think it was, I think it comes back to how you set your classroom up, and your expectations. In the same way that we would say students don't have your mobile phones out, or don't have a book out and be reading. I think we need to use a Chromebook in that way. And actually, we've all had to go on quite a rapid journey with this, we always had the Chromebooks before the pandemic but we're perhaps using them in a different way or much, much more than we were before. So I think there are tactics and things you can do in the same way that you would manage your classroom management so when giving instructions. I always say, close your Chromebooks, and it's a way as it's a marker or signal to them that you need to listen, this is really important. And you won't be distracted because I can see very clearly if you then open up your Chromebook and start looking at something. And so I think it's a way of setting up those expectations and I think I would hope most of our teachers would be clear about that, and, and also, be confident in the sense that today we don't need to use a Chromebook, I think that's something that I will be braver with as we start the new term, and, you know, it's okay to be doing group work and now we can move around a bit more and you know have a little bit of relaxation with social distancing hopefully, that we can go back to some of the kind of carousel type lessons and those things. You still have the technology there I think

Eddie Falshaw

but once they're up and running, maybe with an exercise that involves the Chromebook. What about that tendency to open up another tab and check emails.

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Yeah, it is difficult, because obviously at the moment where we're teaching at the at the front and we're sort of it's a bit more kind of chalk and talk, talk, and Chromebook. This, you can't necessarily be behind every student to check, but I think again, you obviously there are the software in play or there is a software in place that you could check individual. I haven't used it a huge amount, I'll be honest with you. I tend to like to move around the room and sort of, you can check quite quickly as usually you can see, if they're kind of rushing to close something down, and you can almost predict which student it's going to be after a year of teaching them in that way, but also you can you can say like show me what you're working on, and while they're doing that you can often see if there's another tab open and I have, get them I do say right you need to close that down. They usually are very responsive

Eddie Falshaw

And what again the survey seems to suggest that students are less likely to ask the teacher for help. If they're using a chrombook. Have you noticed that

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I wouldn't say I, that is a problem. No, I think my classes do ask quite a few questions actually if they're not sure of something. And I would hope that that's something about how I set up the class as well and the relationship I have with them. I suppose they, they might be tempted to Google, a key word or phrase if they don't understand something, and I've certainly noticed that, but if it's to do with the piece of work and how I want them to answer a task or complete a task I should say, and I think they still would would ask, and yeah,

Eddie Falshaw

it's not necessarily a bad thing is it, maybe it's given them more independence with their learning. They're going to find out the answers for themselves,

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and sometimes I think they're given tasks we've set up this year that do encourage them to solve the problem solving research tasks that they might be using different online tools to find out the answers on. So yeah, I think there's room for both, but I think certainly students haven't noticed them not asking.

Eddie Falshaw

And in terms of general behaviour. Does the Chromebook use of it make a difference to.

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I think the behaviour of students is different with Chromebooks and obviously coming from a school where students didn't have access to their own device some did, but it was very small numbers. There is an element that you've always got an option, you know, so even if you had planned a beautiful lesson but they'd quickly gone through it, much more quickly than you'd expected because they've all got a piece of kit you can always have a few things in your sort of arsenal to say about it we're going to have a look at this, as I said we can do with Kahoot we can do whatever it is, and there were lots of other things like that aren't there as well and I think that is quite good in terms of having other things at your disposal. But behaviour wise. That was the question wasn't it,

Eddie Falshaw

yeah,

Teacher 1

I don't know I think it can be if we're not careful make for a more docile kind of less interactive school community. And I would hope that we would still with even using the technology still allow time for discussions, and, you know, talk to the person next to you talking in group, not just Google it and find out an answer. I would still hope that those interactions are the key part

Eddie Falshaw

With the Chromebook then the as a tool, the focus is directed more at it when they're using it, being aware of their surroundings. So do you think learning is more effective with a Chromebook.

Teacher 1

I think it's a really impressive tool and I think it has the potential to be really important to learning. I don't think you can say across the board, it's always better, I think it depends what you're doing what again what you want the outcome to be. And I think it was, it comes back to some of that really, it's probably old fashioned now talk about learning styles for some students, it's probably perfect for them. I myself as a student, I liked anything I could write and somehow if I was writing by hand, it would stick in my head and I still carry a notebook around to this day and if I write things down. I'm more likely to remember and get things done. But I think it can be really good. I think it can engage I think the interactions, and the, the instant, sort of response to things and the way you can find information is something that the younger generation I think it's instinctive to them isn't it so they, you know, I think they, they just see it as a very very quick and easy tool that that does aid their learning. I think there's room for all sorts to be honest I think. I think there's almost we can get to put we're not always doing the same thing every lesson because that becomes ineffective simply because you've used it so much and it's, it's, get over overkill, isn't it. But yeah, I think what I'd like to do I remember there was an inset this year where we had, I think it was it called the smorgasbord. I found that really helpful because I've gone back to that a few times because at the start of the pandemic, I would probably say I was a confident IT user, but I was confident with the things that I knew to do so I was okay with what I needed to do an Excel, or I'm okay on Word, whatever it was. And Google Docs but I think just seeing some of that and having other teachers so it was like a peer led training session I found that really helpful so Rose's session that she did on Pear Deck that's what kick started me to do that as well. She makes it seem so easy I can do that. And actually for me, it's been quite powerful to think, well, it doesn't matter. And the students I think have responded really well. They've seen I've tried, you know, and I haven't always got it right and I remember being at home and trying to do an online lesson and it was disastrous. But the students were there giving me advice saying what have you tried this Teacher 1. And actually, I've learned more, through the process so I think as a kind of strange byproduct, they've seen that we've all been trying to come along on this journey as well so yeah I think it's been really quite positive.

Eddie Falshaw

Well you mentioned though before about remembering things when you write them down. The research does suggest that for cognition to remember things actually, it's more effective to use a pen, than a keyboard.

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That would make sense then,

Eddie Falshaw

which maybe then counteracts this idea of the engagement but again, like you said, it's very much dependent on what you're using it for.

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Yeah, yeah.

Eddie Falshaw

Okay, final thing I'd like to ask you, could you share with me a time when you felt that your students in a class, whatever it was, we're so engaged that they almost, you know, they didn't want the lesson to end so is that really the end of the lesson, can, can you explain what you were doing and what they were doing,

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and it probably was a Pear Deck lesson I've mentioned Pear Deck a little bit but it was a lesson on the Middle Passage of the slave trade. So it was looking at conditions and we're looking at. There's that very famous kind of bird's eye view of the slave ship where you look at how they were cramped in, and they really got into that they were completely outraged at this it was seemed to be like the first time they actually clocked that this was how ridiculous that quarter of the people on board wouldn't make it that sort of thing be thrown overboard, before they got to the Americas, but it allowed them to put comments and their outrage and their upset was completely communicated. And we use that, then we looked into the abolition and that sort of thing. And I would say it was the tools using the tools they gained from that and so in a sense it was a typical kind of presentation lesson but they got much more involved in it. And then it led to them, creating a pamphlet which was a kind of almost a protest pamphlet about slavery and abolition. But I think because they had been able to explore some of the feelings and they seen other people's viewpoints. And I think they wrote more than they would have done if I just asked a quick question and then certainly if it had been an oral discussion, or I think if I'd asked it as a question in an exercise book, it would have been a one line answer

Eddie Falshaw

because they could see what everybody else was writing.

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Yes, and I think they were spurring each other on not competitively but just I think it was encouraging, what they were suggesting, and there was another question that led on to it because it was talking about how some of the abolitionists had actually taken wealthy people to look around some of these slave ships is in a bid to try and get more support. And it talks about people coming in and fainting and you know this kind of thing, at what they were seeing. And again they got quite engaged in that they, they had lots of good suggestions but it also then led on to what questions do you have so let's look at that same diagram again, what's not shown on that source, what do you still need to know. And we put those questions, all on this interactive forum as well. And they, we then support what do you think are the answers. You know what, what else, and it ended up being a lesson than that, it sort of took on a life of its own. I didn't expect it to be I thought it'd be a five minute slide we put up, but they got really engaged in it, honestly quite outraged when they realise what, what that actually showed. And I just I do think that was the moment I thought actually, this is, this is really useful.

Eddie Falshaw

So it's combined actually the ..., the material of the of the history and the topic, combined with the technology and the tool of the Chromebook allows them then to, and that together, build a great lesson that was very engaging.

Teacher 1

That's right.

Eddie Falshaw

Teacher 1, that's, that's really helpful there any other comments that you'd like to make just generally about Chromebooks at the school

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and then the only frustration at times, obviously because we might have a desktop computer monitors and they have the Chromebook and it is compatible to a point, but I need to get better at setting up better folder systems on my Chromebook. Because otherwise, I just have this mass of files. So I think that is a big job and I wish somebody had maybe made that more clear, at the start because they've now got a massive job to do, but a bit yeah and I still think I could learn more I think there were probably some quick wins that I could develop and I think we've got some experts on the staff, you know, people that are quite good at their own little things, but I think I'd really like to learn from maybe we could reissue that smorgasbord document again, I think that started the year because there were some good things. I remember I focused in on two or three so that I can do three things well. At that point you know it was a lot going on I had home schooling as well for my son. But I think there could be a good opportunity to go back and stretch yourself even more.

Eddie Falshaw

Great. Teacher 1 thank you very much

Teacher 1

It's a good bit of research isn't it. Youve got to write it all up now.

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