FREAKED OUT

The bewildered teacher's guide to digital learning

Simon Pridham

At the time of writing and publication the version of operating system available on iOS devices shown in this book was 7.1 therefore the screenshots (some screenshots show version 6.1.3) and instructions are suitable for this version.

The apps shown in this book are accurate to the date of publication and screencasts shown in the book are linked by dynamic QR codes, i.e. the QR code stays the same but the content it links to can be changed, so if any of the key apps change then the screencasts which explain them can be changed by us.

Apple usually release a new version of iOS every Autumn, since the last major update from iOS6 to iOS7 was a very major one which changed the whole look and feel of the operating system we don't believe that there will be a major change this Autumn (2014). But you never know what Apple's plans are.

Trademarks: All terms mentioned in this book that are known to be trademarks or service marks have been appropriately capitalised. Crown House Publishing Ltd cannot attest to the accuracy of this information. Use of a term in this book should not be regarded as affecting the validity of any trademark or service mark.

Independent Thinking Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party websites referred to in this publication, and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

Contents

Welcome to the start of your digital journey

Well, here goes! You are probably reading this book for one of three reasons:

1. You're a head teacher who has read stories about how tablet technology, and iPads in particular, are being used in education all over the world and you want to see what all the fuss is about. Is this just another fad?

2. You're a teacher in a school where the senior management team has decided to invest in iPads and a technology-enhanced curriculum. You are petrified!

3. You're a head teacher, teacher or any other professional involved in education who has plucked up the courage to learn more about the use of technology in education because you have just realised your 3-year-old son, daughter, niece or nephew is able to navigate their way around a mobile device with relative ease, while you are reaching for a manual and your glasses. You need help!

Irrespective of what category you fall into, or even if you are a parent or grandparent who wants to know more, *Freaked Out* is here to help you. So, what's my background and how can I help?

I'm Simon Pridham @Freaked_Out123. In 2010, the primary school of which I was the head teacher gained seven grade 1s in an Estyn inspection. Following on from this, several sector-leading examples of practice at the school were highlighted by Estyn (Ofsted equivalent in Wales) and the Welsh Assembly Government. Everyone connected with the school was rightly proud and we felt our fantastic hard work as a school team had paid off.

Shortly after, I reflected on the previous twelve months (which had been hectic, to say the least) and challenged myself to take the school to the next level. But how? How was I going to lead my team forward and what was the vehicle for change going to be? I turned to a focus group of pupils and talked to them about their lifestyles, interests, preferred ways of learning and so on. The conversations I had with those children changed the strategic direction of the school forever and led me to ask myself an even bigger question: what is the role of schools and education in the 21st century?

After my discussions with that group of 11-year-old pupils something became very clear, very quickly. These pupils – using technology, peer support, networks of collaboration and mobile online resources – were able to build an education for themselves anywhere and at any time. A decade ago, information for your average 11-year-old was scarce outside the classroom walls. In 2014, information can be found in abundance. Google, YouTube, online blogs, social media, the list goes on and on but don't worry, we'll talk about this later.

Children no longer need to see their teachers as the font of all knowledge. In fact, they know they are not. Instead, they need to see their teachers as modellers of learning, master learners, risk-takers, facilitators, collaborators, creators and, to top it all, those teachers have to be tech-savvy. In today's child's world, content, knowledge and teachers are everywhere and accessible at all times. As educators, we have to change, and we should be excited about embracing the challenge and reaping the rewards.

So how do you do it? You need to have a love of learning, be able to model effective learning systems, be brave enough to take risks, be innovative and, most importantly, become a teacher of learning rather than a teacher of content, curriculum and facts. The 21st-century classroom, where technology is as accessible as pen and paper, allows you to personalise learning like never before, it allows you to develop independent and creative thinkers and it allows your pupils to drive their educational journey as co-pilots rather than passengers.

The days of constructing four walls with a podium at the front and calling it a classroom are over. Children are highly connected and consume information when and where it is needed. Developments like augmented reality (see Chapter 3) will certainly change the face of education as we know it – and already

has in some cases. Successful classrooms now facilitate networking, small group collaboration and inter-action with the subject of study in a highly connected environment.

Before we get stuck into the nitty-gritty and you start your journey in earnest, I would like to give you an insight into how things have changed using my 3-year-old daughter as an example. My daughter has been born into a world where technology and, in particular, mobile technology is no big deal. From birth, she has been exposed to mobile devices, gadgets and computers and to vocabulary like email, blogging, websites, Wi-Fi and so on.

To her grandparents, this was alien talk a year ago, so I have invested time and effort in helping them to become connected and in tune to learning through the use of technology. But even now, at 3, my daughter is far more confident than her grandparents. This is the world in which she comfortably exists. She is not afraid to push buttons, to explore technology, to make mistakes and to start again, thereby developing self-confidence and becoming resilient and resourceful. This is not part of the mindset of many adults

who passed through an education system which did not promote or even understand the importance of these key qualities.

A little while ago, when my daughter wanted to make a paper aeroplane, she handed me my tablet device and asked me for help. Her instinct was such that she knew what to do when she didn't know what to do. I'm not for one minute suggesting that she knew where to look online or whose blog to read, but she certainly had the wherewithal to realise that the tablet would connect us to something which could teach us. We ventured straight to YouTube where we had several videos to choose from on the first page of results, and she soon found one she liked the look of. Within minutes we knew what materials we needed to collect and she was pressing pause on the video. We built the aeroplane together step by step. I taught her how to rewind and play the video as we progressed, and an hour or so later we were testing her prototypes outside. We even took photos to show her grandmother and she asked if we could email them when we had finished playing in the garden.

Welcome to the world of learning in the 21st century! Pupils now learn from peers, online communities and experts who share their knowledge through traditional and online sources. As teachers and coaches of learning, we have a duty to provide the environment and opportunities that young people need to flourish. I think it is simply unacceptable not to be inspiring, engaging and enthusing pupils in this way.

Pupils aged 11–14 now have access to more information through their smartphones than I did in my entire university library as a student. Yet a high percentage of secondary educators still ban pupils from using smartphones in their classrooms. Talk about missing a trick, alienating a generation and turning pupils off school! What society needs are individuals who can ask good questions, come up with imaginative solutions, critically examine those possibilities, work out which creative solution is most likely to be effective and communicate it effectively enough to motivate others to action. The wise old owl, Albert Einstein, said, 'education is not the learning of many facts but the training of the mind to think'.

In short, the 21st century classroom should be flexible, creative and highly connective. Moveable, comfortable furniture is important to encourage small group collaboration and communication. We need tables and walls on which we can write freely and collate our thoughts and actions – learning walls. Each

pupil should be placed in a skills bank and should be comfortable and at ease sharing skills and learning with peers, thereby making learning more equitable, with each individual contributing to the development of the whole class. There is no need to have a front or back to the classroom, or a teacher's desk or even pupils' desks.

Why do we allow the same group of pupils to sit next to each other in the same seats for a whole academic year and then wonder why they aren't engaged in their learning? Would you really want to sit next to the same person for almost ten months at a time and not have the opportunity to get out of your seat to ask your friend at the other end of the room for help? No, I thought not. Thriving learning institutions have classrooms that embrace the social, physical and emotional aspects of learning.

We must always remember that technology is simply one part of this effective learning environment. A creative curriculum, highly effective pedagogy and mobile technology *together* create the surroundings where pupils feel valued, challenged and effective. The days of the teacher being the purveyor of all knowledge at the front of the class are dead. Some of the best teachers my daughter will ever experience will be virtual, online and sitting on the other side of the world.

There is currently a debate brewing in technology-rich schools regarding accountability – to parents, system leaders, local authorities and our friends from inspectorate services and government. The debate goes something along the lines of: should we balance school life between using technology and more traditional methods such as writing with pens? And it's all about a balance between the two.

Until our assessment systems are radically overhauled, we are still going to need to prepare pupils for the end-of-year exam – using technology or not. But this doesn't mean I agree with it. Indeed, we should keep challenging the status quo, demonstrating that a technology-rich curriculum coupled with excellent teachers and industry engagement will ultimately raise standards, increase engagement, empower

pupils, improve teachers and will scaffold the skills the next generation are going to need when entering the workforce.

We must be innovative and create systems that provide parents with the confidence that the effective use of technology is a must in their child's schooling. This will inevitably mean that school classrooms, school books, homework and the way pedagogy is delivered will be different from their own schooling. Society has evolved, people have evolved and the skills that employers now demand have changed dramatically. As schools and educators, we have an incredibly important duty to evolve at the same pace. If we don't then we are failing a generation.

For these reasons it is vital that the school's vision and purpose when using technology across the curriculum is communicated clearly to parents and community members, as well as system leaders, the inspectorate and local authority officials. Learning should be about choosing the right tool to solve the right problem. If we can instil these skills in children during primary school then they will leave us as independent, personalised learners.

I'm sure your mind is now racing with positive and inquisitive thoughts. How do you create a classroom where technology is as accessible as pen and paper? An environment where pupils have personalised learning experiences and are co-pilots in their learning journey? Well, it's all down to small steps, so let's take our first one together and meet your iPad.

Please note: Throughout the book you will notice that important words and terms are highlighted, these words are explained in 'A useful glossary' on p. 119.

Key to QR codes

Information   Download

Video