

# Case study

## Technology and CPD

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## Extending the use of REfLECT

Since 2008, West Kent College has been encouraging its teachers to use the REfLECT online learning space from the Institute for Learning (IfL) to support their reflective practice and help create a sharing good practice community. The initiative has helped teachers become much more confident with their information and learning technology (ILT), which in turn has had a positive impact on learners in the classroom. Ros Pearson, head of education and training at the college, and Michelle Constable, staff development coordinator, explain their current achievements and future ambitions.

REfLECT training was rolled out across the campus during 2008-09. Teachers in some curriculum areas were easily persuaded of the benefits, while others were initially rather sceptical. Our principal, Bill Fearon, has been particularly supportive – he started to use REfLECT himself and is now actively encouraging our college governors to use a similar online space too. Our current challenge is to support our assessors, franchised partners and other staff working offsite. We have found them to be very enthusiastic.

Sharing good practice must be at the heart of reflective practice if its impact is to be maximised. The teacher education and advanced practitioner teams have worked tirelessly at persuading colleagues to evaluate the impact of their continuing professional development (CPD) on classroom practice. A recent survey carried out at the college into the impact of CPD confirms the value of this evaluation on an individual basis; the impact of sharing this with others cannot be overstated.



Our next challenge is to encourage colleagues to share their activities online, within and across teams.

Many colleagues still believe that CPD is restricted to internal or external training events. This academic year, we are encouraging staff to reflect more frequently on other activities, such as feedback on lesson observations, curriculum development and so on.

Evaluating a new teaching or assessment method can be a very valuable and sometimes exciting activity when shared with others. Sharing failures can be just as productive as sharing successes, and can lead to improved teaching and learning.

At the end of the first full year of using REfLECT, our analysis of the CPD questionnaires proved to be a valuable exercise, and confirmed the need to drive forward our sharing good practice project urgently. REfLECT will help us in this quest. These are some of our teachers' comments about their experience of using the system:

**“It was useful in terms of focusing on what I need to work on this year to improve impact on learners.”**

**“Good to have a reminder of good intentions formed while receiving training, and to develop them.”**

**“CPD has allowed me to reflect on my teaching practice as doing this helps us to update our individual learning plans for students in a positive way and also our own individual professional development plans. For example, I went on a course on Moodle, which meant I could upload my schemes of work and assignment schedules. As the students have 24-hour access to Moodle, communications have improved 100 per cent.”**

**“The behaviour management training I undertook has been extremely beneficial and has had a major impact on the way I address behaviour issues and involve the students in the process. For example, I ask them the question, ‘If you were me, what would you do?’ This has worked extremely well and the students have, as a result, decided on their own sanction rather than my making the decision. This has had more of an impact on their future negative behaviour. They have said it has ‘made me stop and think, before I do...’”**



Sharing online applications for Qualified Teacher Learning and Skills (QTLS) with colleagues and supporters is a natural progression from sharing good practice derived from CPD in REfLECT. The CPD reflection and personal evidence required for QTLS are inextricably linked. As we roll out QTLS workshops, sharing good practice will become second nature.

Michele Balazs, our ILT manager, has been busy extending the use of REfLECT by compiling a portfolio for use as evidence for a professional learning technologies qualification. She told us:

**“Having their own web space will bring many benefits in the future for staff beyond recording and reflecting on their CPD; they will be able to create webfolios and showcase their skills for future employers and colleagues. Our next challenge is to encourage staff to maximise their use of REfLECT through workshops and one-to-one-training.”**

We have extended the use of REfLECT to some of our governors who were enthusiastic about using the software themselves. This is a very interesting project, as they are using the same REfLECT system as the teachers in the college. This will have a positive impact on closer links between the governors and the curriculum staff.



West Kent College merged with South Kent College on 31 March 2010.

In the first year, we concentrated on training our on-site staff, but have now started extending our support to offsite assessors as well. We are encouraging all the assessors to join IfL and use CPD, whether their brief includes teaching or whether theirs is more of a supportive role. This is some of the useful feedback we have received from assessors:

**“The IfL training has certainly opened my eyes to a lot of things I need to consider in my teaching and has made me start changing my delivery and planning. Very informative.”**

**“I found the training very useful as I had joined IfL but had no idea how to use REfLECT. It will be extremely useful and will enable me to reflect on my training and identify any areas I can improve on, whilst having a handy, up-to-date record to keep track of hours, training, etc. It will also be useful for anyone wanting to see my CPD, i.e. Ofsted or an external verifier from CACHE [Council for Awards in Children’s Care and Education].”**



**“I will use REfLECT often to continually update my standards of delivering a more structured learner programme by reflecting on and evaluating my performance on a daily basis to make for a more enjoyable course for my candidates by offering a wider scope for gaining evidence to enhance their portfolios.”**

### IfL and Becta working together

One of IfL’s strategies for continuing professional development (CPD) is to promote the use of technology to support professional development.

We encourage members to develop their knowledge and skills as reflective practitioners through planning, recording and assessing the impact of learning using REfLECT.

We are working in partnership with Becta on a research project to help boost our members’ skills in using REfLECT and new technologies to support their professional development. This case study is one of six produced as part of the project.

See [www.ifl.ac.uk/cpd/ifl-and-becta-supporting-the-workforce-project](http://www.ifl.ac.uk/cpd/ifl-and-becta-supporting-the-workforce-project) for more information.

# REFLECT

IfL members are given a free and flexible online tool, developed by teachers for teachers, to help them manage their CPD.

REFLECT provides a personalised learning space where members can reflect on their professional practice and record the many and varied CPD activities undertaken to enhance their teaching. Members can choose to keep all records private if they wish, or can selectively share them with peers, mentors and managers. CPD activity records can be linked quickly and easily to an annual CPD record for submission to IfL if desired.

When records or assets are shared, the user may give others permission to view, comment, copy or collaborate. Permission to share may be time-limited, or rescinded at any time. Comments may be added to shared assets in the form of a professional conversation.

REFLECT can be set up so that entries automatically populate the CPD record. As more entries are added throughout the year, the system will automatically recalculate the number of hours' CPD completed.

REFLECT also gives IfL members a number of easy-to-use utilities that can be used to support teaching and learning, such as a simple blogging tool, web page builder and the facility to create multiple e-portfolios. It complements a provider's virtual learning environment (VLE), and individual members may use REFLECT however they choose, at any time and from any computer with internet access.

REFLECT Mobile gives members access to a very simple version of REFLECT via the browser on any mobile device, allowing them to manage their professional development on the move.



*This is one of six case studies produced by the Institute for Learning (IfL) and Becta in March 2010 to help identify the barriers and challenges that members face in capturing CPD.*

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