

## East Riding Digital Learning Community - Direct Teaching Service

[www.thedlc.org](http://www.thedlc.org)

East Riding Digital Learning Community is part of the East Riding Local Authority and provides online teaching and ICT support for education within the authority and beyond.

### Tags:

Primary, Enablers CPD, SEN/LDD inclusion, G&T, Cross-curricular, Distance learning

### Harnessing technology system outcomes:

Enabling infrastructure and processes

Confident system leadership and innovation

### Sectors:

Primary

### Innovation

The East Riding Digital Learning Community (DLC) runs a direct teaching service that allows geographically dispersed learners to work together in live online lessons, with additional post-lesson activities provided via a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE).

### Background

The East Riding of Yorkshire is a mainly rural area in which approximately one third of the primary schools have less than one hundred pupils; consequently some pupils have few peers working at their level within their school. John Janulewski, East Riding's ICT Strategy Manager, developed the DLC direct teaching service to enable such children to have access to lessons specifically designed and paced for their needs, alongside peers and with a high level of teacher input.

Mr Janulewski set up the DLC in 2004 using ODPM funding matched by East Riding Council. The original purpose was to provide lessons for children who were either disengaged or at risk of becoming disengaged from mainstream provision. Since then the direct teaching service has expanded to include primary numeracy and literacy booster courses, gifted and talented lessons, out-of-school-hours courses for looked after children, and staff CPD.

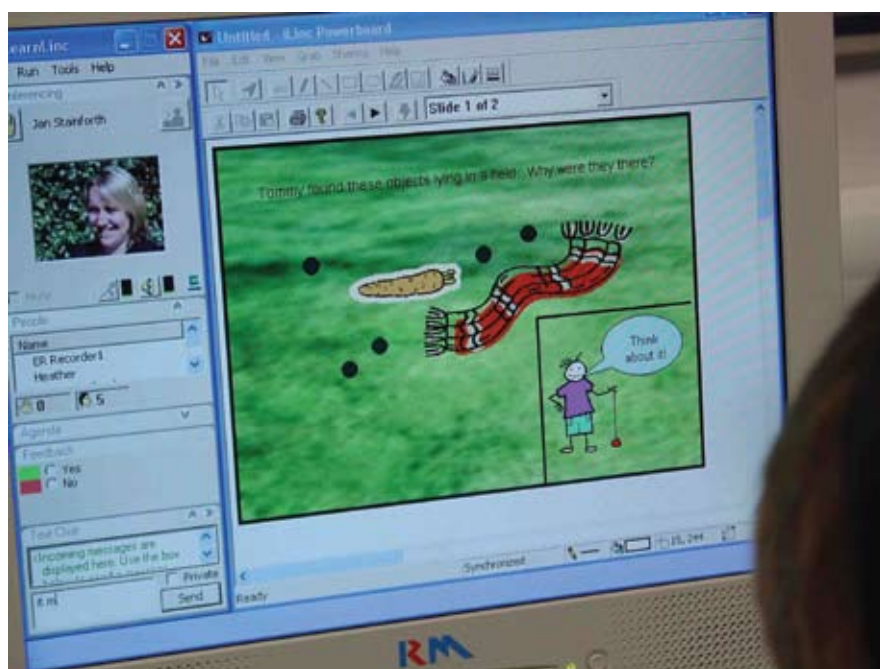
## Technology

The direct teaching service uses web conferencing technologies to deliver lessons. To participate schools need computers running at least Windows XP, internet access and an audio headset for each child. The technology allows the participants to speak to and text each other, screen share and make contributions to the whiteboard. Webcams can be used to provide a visual link, but tend not to be as they have been found to be distracting for primary-aged children.

The DLC hosts a dedicated VLE which is populated with extension and consolidation materials and activities and is available to subscribing schools.

## Teaching and learning

Most courses tend to run for six to 14 weeks and consist of a weekly 45 minute lesson for groups of six to eight learners. Each lesson focuses on particular aspects of literacy or numeracy, with an emphasis on the children's active participation and collaboration in the session. In addition, every child has some individual time with the teacher during every lesson.



*"I like the idea of getting different people from different schools and talking to each other and using each other's ideas to figure out puzzles. It was easier for me than normal to get on with it because of the encouragement. I like the text chat box and enjoy it when other pupils are saying 'Well done' or 'Nice one'." DLC pupil*

The learners can choose whether to contribute openly to the group or privately to the teacher. The DLC believes this to be critical as some of the children have low self esteem and find public communication intimidating.

*"There are a number of children out there who are able to do more than they tend to do in a school setting and this is one area that every child gets an opportunity to express themselves in a way that's either private or public. We want children to communicate and if we can provide just one little step where a child has communicated and got pleasure from communicating then that supports the work they do in other areas of the curriculum."* John Janulewski

Each lesson is evaluated and feedback is given to the schools.

## Impact

During the 2007/8 academic year 923 children from 64 schools took part in DLC live lessons. An independent report praises the quality of the teaching, with a study from Hull University indicating a greater increase in subject motivation and confidence for children taking part in the DLC lessons compared with matched groups at the same school. This mirrors observations from schools:

*"The novelty of the way the DLC lessons are delivered i.e. internet with headsets, seemed to increase the children's enthusiasm for numeracy."*

Headteacher of a participating school

*"Thank you, yet again a brilliant course that inspires and excites the children."*

Headteacher of a participating school

Schools often place the children who are at risk of not reaching their targets in the booster lessons, and it is found that the majority of these children do then successfully meet their targets. It is thought that this is due to the schools integrating the DLC lessons with their usual classroom activities.

The DLC has also received praise for its CPD courses. An additional aspect of participating in CPD through the direct teaching service is that it saves staff the time and costs of travelling, which is particularly important as East Riding is a large rural area.

## Challenges

Primary schools tend to have adaptable timetables to accommodate visitors, visits, sports days etc, therefore for a DLC course to run effectively, careful planning is needed to ensure that all participating schools are able to co-ordinate their timetables and school diaries. Further, good time keeping is also crucial to the success of each lesson, as is the upkeep of the school's technology. Disruptions to the lessons are also minimised if a teaching assistant supervises participating children so that they can deal with practical issues the children may encounter as they arise.

All lessons are taught from a central building, this ensures the smooth running of the lessons as the DLC is able to respond rapidly to any technical problems.

The DLC is part of the East Riding LA structure. Originally the DLC was funded by fees charged to schools with a subsidy of around 50% from grant funding. Although grant funding has since ceased, East Riding have compensated for this by paying the local authority revenue element as recommended by Becta. The DLC is currently investigating other ways to ensure its financial sustainability.

## Wider adoption

The reputation of the direct teaching service has led to the DLC delivering courses nationally, and with various different group of learners such as school bus monitors and children at home through illness. However, Mr Janulewski believes the most effective use of the DLC direct teaching service is as a strategic part of the local authority's 'Children and Young People's Plan', with co-ordinated aims and targets.



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