
Portmarnock Community School Improves Teaching and Learning Possibilities with Moodle

Since September 2007, Moodle has been firmly installed as the e-Learning tool of choice for Portmarnock Community School in County Dublin. This is in no small part due to the fact that, Assistant Principal, Donal O'Mahony became interested in Moodle while doing a Masters in e-Learning at Dublin City University and saw how he could use the online learning environment to enhance teaching and learning at his school.

'During my studies I found Moodle to be a powerful medium for online forums and discussion groups and I saw how I could bring this online dialogue into my own teaching practices.' Donal O'Mahony, Assistant Principal, Portmarnock Community School.

Tried and Tested

As a test in the school environment, O' Mahony downloaded Moodle onto the DCU server and asked a group of fifth year history students to take part in a number of discussion forums with him on topics relevant to the Leaving Certificate History Syllabus.

'I wanted students to be able to look at controversial issues from more than one point of view and learn that their own judgement can be subjected to the most searching analysis and criticism.'



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From these sessions O' Mahony found that the students were able to criticise and analyse in a collaborative environment, which he felt enhanced the teaching and learning of the leaving certificate history curriculum. As a result of this O' Mahony spoke to his principal about rolling Moodle out to the rest of the school.

Technology Partners

Portmarnock decided to engage with a technology partner on the project because they wanted to concentrate on the teaching and learning aspect. They chose Enovation Solutions because, as Ireland's official Moodle partners, they were the best company to support Portmarnock from a technology point of view. Also, Enovation had experience implementing Moodle in other second level schools.

According to David Kerrigan, solutions manager at Enovation Solutions: 'Portmarnock were aware of our work with St. Aidan's in Tallaght and knew that we could support them in the rollout of Moodle. They concentrated on the content side of things while we focused at getting them up and running.'

Implementation

In preparation for the launch in September 2007 Enovation Solutions provided the following services to Portmarnock Community School:

- They **configured and optimised moodle to run in Enovation's hosting environment**
- They provided Moodle **Training** for ten teachers
- They provided ongoing **Support** and advice

In turn Portmarnock Community School provided each Moodle teacher with a laptop and projector and asked them to carry out a significant piece of work with one of their classes over the coming academic year.

Benefits

Only 3 months into the project teachers and students are already seeing positive results from their Moodle implementation:

- Teachers at Portmarnock now share digital literacy with their students.
- If students lose class notes they simply log into Moodle and find a copy there.
- If students are out sick or away from school they can still join in discussion forums, quizzes, assignments etc. over the internet.
- They also have their work peer-reviewed by other students, something that the Department of education is keen to encourage.
- There is an improvement in the academic engagement of the classes generally.

The Future

The open source nature of Moodle means that Enovation Solutions can continue to support Portmarnock Community School by providing them with free updates and features to help them integrate Moodle into everyday school life.

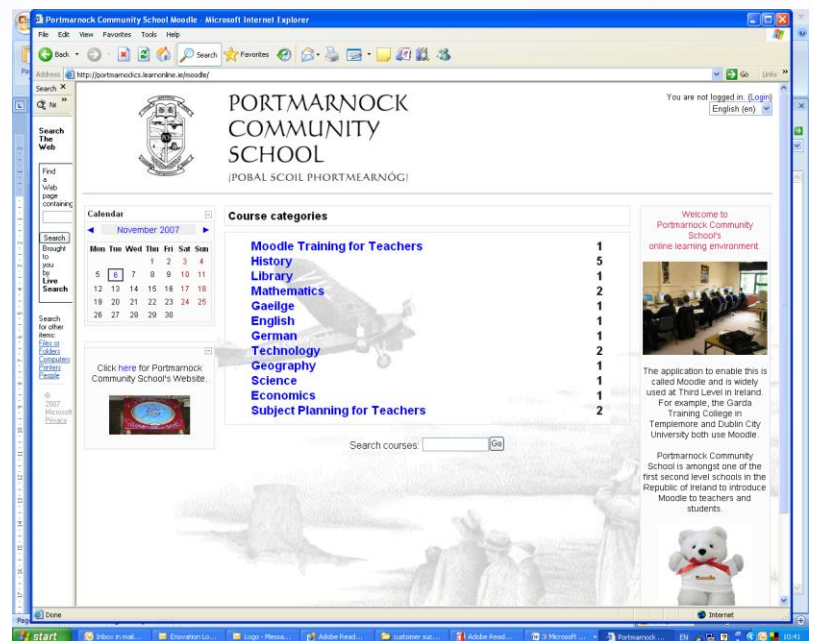


Figure 1: Screenshot of Portmarnock's Moodle Website