

Digital Leads leading Digital Delivery at Navitas Skilled Futures



Settlement
Council
of Australia

AT A GLANCE

Target participants:

Teachers and students in the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) and Skills for Education and Employment (SEE) Program at Navitas Skilled Futures, across 5 colleges and all levels and classes.

Program aims:

Since 2018, a Digital Lead team at Navitas Skilled Futures has supported technology-enhanced learning activities across the Adult Migrant Education (AMEP) and Skills for Education (SEE) programs.

The Digital Lead role has been central in enabling learners, on a 1-1 and group basis, develop their digital literacy, problem-solving skills and autonomy in using core technology. Digital Leads aims to provide a network to support teachers with digital innovation in the classroom, through professional development workshops and sharing of best practice.

Organisations involved:

Navitas Skilled Futures

Location: Bankstown, Fairfield, Liverpool, Cabramatta, Canberra

Funding: Built in as business as usual

INTRODUCTION

Navitas Skilled Futures has long recognised the need to embed digital skills as part of delivery, but this also requires teachers who feel confident and capable of integrating educational technology into their lessons. Teachers everywhere recognise that by empowering learners to be competent digital users and consumers they will become more independent and better problem solvers. *However, what if teachers themselves do not feel they have the necessary skills?*

By employing teachers as Digital Leads to provide support to colleagues, we are not only future-proofing their roles, but providing valuable opportunities for teachers to upskill, and to cascade their learning to other teachers. This also fosters a better learning environment for students as teachers approach the tools and platforms used in the classroom, more confidently.

The Digital Leads were first employed across the five colleges in 2018, and each was selected based on their existing digital capabilities and enthusiasm for the role.

Because the Digital Leads are also classroom teachers, they had a deep understanding of the digital needs of learners with different levels of English, and the importance of tailoring learning tools to individual learners.

The Digital Leads are allocated one day a week to provide support to teachers and students, however this support often carries over to other days once teachers appreciate that they have experts on hand to help them solve problems quickly.

The type of support provided varies, and includes, but is not limited to:

- training teachers in the use of the **core technology at Navitas Skilled Futures, including Canvas Learning Management System, Chromebooks and Google Apps and iPads**. This training can take the form of 1-1 sessions, drop-in clinics or formal short workshops.
- assisting teachers with in-class digital support - for example, logging in to Canvas and helping students use Chromebooks.

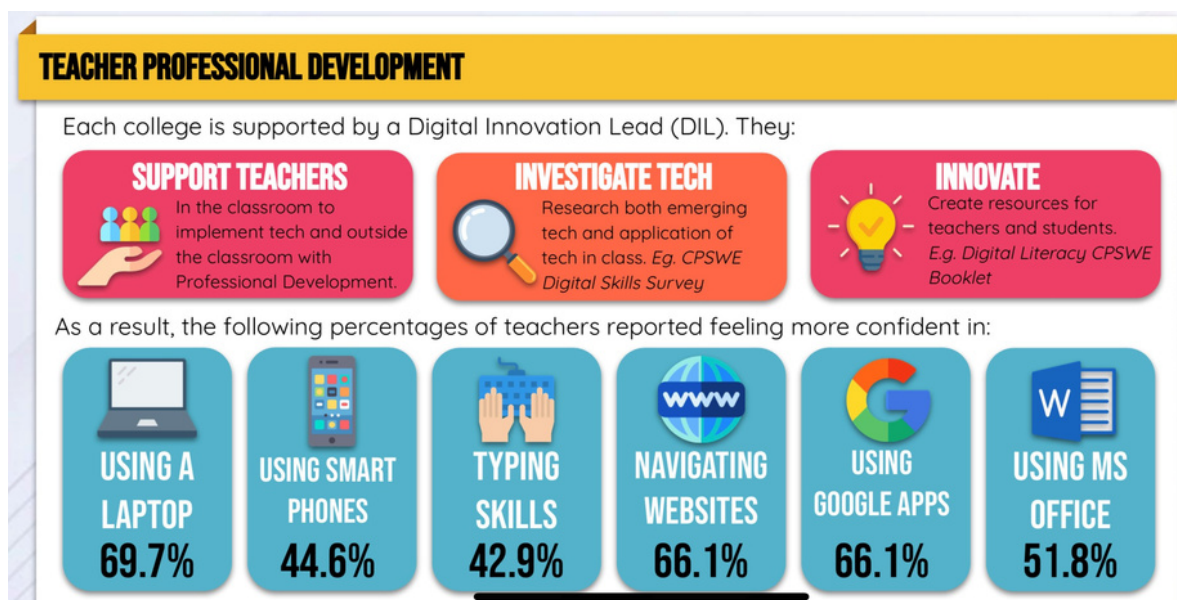
Digital Leads are also encouraged to make use of their own “20%” time, during which they can investigate tech tools that interests them. This has led to some Digital Leads becoming Google certified, and the discovery of some useful edtech tools, which benefits other teachers, therefore ensuring a continuous cycle of upskilling and learning.

POINT OF DIFFERENCE

Navitas Skilled Futures recognised the need for an embedded digital leadership role across its colleges, to nurture and develop the digital skills. It acknowledged that there are numerous obstacles that teachers face to developing their own technology literacy without having a guide to assist them. Placing technology in the hands of learners, demands that they know how to make the best use of that technology. To this end, Digital Leads provides flexible and effective mentoring, shaped by the needs of individual teachers and their learner cohort.

CHALLENGES

Change is a slow process, and at first there was a lot of resistance to learning and implementing tools like Chromebooks and the Learning Management System into the classroom. It took a great deal of support and time to gradually shift attitudes from what has always been done, to a culture of experimentation and discovery of the potential of new technologies.



From Navitas Skilled Futures Digital Innovation Core Technology Infographic 2021

OUTCOMES

- The training on all aspects of our core technology ensured that when the first lockdown occurred, teachers were ready. There was definitely a period of adjustment, and the Digital Leads spent a great deal of time training others in the use of Zoom. The training from the Digital Leads meant the transition was far smoother than it may have been without this support. During both lockdowns, the digital leads were available online for continued support in the form of drop-in clinics.
- Teachers were surveyed about the impact of the digital leads on their personal digital skills, outside the training provided in the core technology. This snapshot from the survey results shows how valuable the Digital Leads role is.
- Outcomes for students were also clearly evident with overall digital literacy increasing significantly. Those having the skills to access school online learning systems from home, rose from 25% to 77.8% after the training.

KEY LEARNINGS

- One of the most worthwhile learnings is that teachers who are not used to teaching with technology require a lot of time, patience and repetition. The pandemic forced the hand of many reluctant teachers and then they quickly adapted to an online model and they confidently took more risks because they had support available.
- The Digital Leads themselves have grown from strength to strength in terms of confidence and leadership skills. Each has presented at internal or external conferences on classroom research projects. They have been given leadership roles over different terms, and they have time for investigation of new tech tools and skills improvement. Individual motivation and retention of Digital Leads in their roles have all been significant.
- One of the most significant learnings has been that with support anything is possible. Addressing and improving the digital skills of learners enables them to approach a range of tasks more confidently. This can only be achieved if there is also confidence in delivery. It is important that staff feel that they are not getting left behind, and with e-mentorship in the form of Digital Leads, we continue to work towards providing the requisite assistance.

For more information visit: Navitas Skilled Futures: <https://navitas-skilled-futures.com.au/>