Peter de Lisle – Office 2016 and Windows for Enhanced learning

Peter de Lisle came to Hilton College as Head of IT, but is now more involved with curriculum and administration of the school's learning platforms. Peter says: "I teach English and Life Orientation, and I have been part of an amazing team working on a cross-curricular Grade 8 programme which we call the Learning Journey. It is an attempt to teach foundational academic, research, thinking and ICT skills, as well as core attitudes to work. I also am involved with the fairly extensive research essay which all our Grade 11s undertake."

Peter has been involved in Microsoft programs for many years and is currently a Microsoft Innovative Educator Expert. In 2010 he was the second runner up in the Innovation in Content category of the Worldwide Innovative Education Forum. Peter's "Biodiversity" project involved students using thinking and research tools to find out about biomes and creating a collaborative spreadsheet tool to evaluate the best biome to live in. Learners then used creativity tools to create a biome as a context for a computer game and they designed a suitably adapted creature to live in it. Finally, they narrated an adventure in their biome. Peter says that "Meeting with innovators from all around the world was an amazing experience, and I was hugely privileged to have the opportunity to be a part of that. I learned so much."

Microsoft tools and devices at Hilton College

Peter believes it is important for all Hilton College students to become familiar with Microsoft Office as these are they tools they are most likely to use in their tertiary studies and in the workplace. He says: "Students should learn to outline in Microsoft Word so they can play with ideas and organize them effectively; learn to reference, so they don't get busted for plagiarism; and check their spelling and expand their vocab using the dictionary tools. I like PowerPoint because it is a good way to teach basic graphic design skills, but it is also a way of focusing attention on what is important and how to communicate that. Excel is great for managing surveys (especially now that you can create the survey online from the web version of Excel) and organizing information in structured ways, and it is also very powerful when you start to use it for modelling such as with pivot tables and for visualizing data through graphing."

Overview

Country: South Africa
Location: Hilton, KwaZulu-Natal
Industry: Education

Software and services:
Microsoft Innovative Educator Expert program
Office 2016
Windows Devices

Websites:
Hilton College: www.hiltoncollege.com

Microsoft Innovative Educator Experts advance the conversation about improving student outcomes through innovative uses of technology in teaching and learning.

"There needs to be a re-thinking of what education is – not about learning content and writing exams, but about finding meaningful content and learning to use it in interesting ways."

"Our top grade 12 student has taken to his Surface with incredible ease. He found the keyboard great to work with. He has made OneNote his one and only place for all his study notes and of course it is all backed up in the cloud. He uses the pen which he finds brilliant. He takes notes in class using the camera. One could do all of these things using other devices and platforms, but he says the ease with which it works is intuitive and has enabled him to make huge strides in his academic work."

- Peter de Lisle
  Hilton College

For More Information

For more information about Microsoft in Education, visit:
www.microsoft.com/education/ww/solutions/Pages/index.aspx

To find out about the Microsoft Innovative Educator Expert program, see:
http://www.educatornetwork.com/Sites/Educators/Index

For more information about Hilton College visit:
www.hilton.com

Most of the Hilton College staff have used Microsoft Windows and Office on their school supplied laptops for years and most students have laptops as the school operates on a "Bring your own device" policy. More recently though there has been a trend towards hybrid devices as some tasks require students to have access a keyboard and full-feature word processing software whereas other tasks involve interacting with e-textbooks or accessing the online library where a tablet is a better choice.

Peter suggests that parents invest in hybrid Windows devices for their boys that can fulfil the roles of both laptops and tablets depending on the task at hand and he likes the fact that there is a range Windows devices available at different price points. Peter says that on his advice one of his Grade 8 boys replaced his previous (non-Windows) tablet with a cost effective Acer Windows Hybrid. "He loves the new device, enjoys having the keyboard, uses Office via our school subscription, and likes the fact that he is readily compatible with school systems (network drives and printers, Moodle, Turnitin etc), without sacrificing portability or battery life."

Peter also reports that a Grade 12 boy, who is Hilton's top academic student has a Surface which he has taken to with incredible ease. "He wrote his matric long essay using it, and found the keyboard great to work with. But he has particularly made OneNote his one and only place for all his study notes. He has a beautifully organized system of notebooks, and of course it is all backed up in the cloud. He uses the pen which he finds brilliant. He takes notes in class using the camera etc. One could do all of these things using other devices and platforms, but he says the ease with which it works is intuitive and has enables him to make huge strides in his academic work.

It's not about the device – it is about the learning
The Hilton College 'Bring Your Own Device' policy means that a range of different support issues occur depending on the devices used, but Peter sees the positive side of this policy as students make a plan to get their projects done on whatever device they have access to. "Creativity is enhanced. I have had boys making a movie which they filmed using a Samsung phone and edited on an iPhone. They handed it in using a Windows laptop. The new versions of Office are great for cross-platform usability, so BYOD is not really such a big issue. The challenge for us is to make our learning materials available cross-platform, so Moodle is our way of doing that. And also one needs to focus on foundational skills and generic tools, not specific apps, so as to keep the learning and thinking at the forefront."

The learning that technology helps to facilitate is best encapsulated by the Grade 11 extended essay research project and the Grade 12 One Research Task which help to develop life skills and the skills for researching and writing up an extended piece of writing. Boys at Hilton use their devices and a range of productivity tools such as Word and OneNote to gather their information and to write their final essays, but the focus of these tasks is on the research process and the final product – not the tools which help to facilitate this. Peter feels that in a school setting the systems, apps and devices need to become more and more intuitive so that they are not the focus of learning, but that rather the view on the other side (such as the thinking, creativity and collaboration) becomes the focus.