

Distance Learning Approach by Rochestown ETNS

Alan Sheehan is the Principal of Rochestown ETNS and has shared their school's approach to distance learning which has gone from a typical school based primary school to teaching and learning on digital platforms. Alan has agreed to allowing me sharing their approach with other Educate Together schools.

Please note: Alan has stressed that his school was able to do this in a very short time but it did require a lot of work and know-how. He's sharing it to be of help to others not put them under pressure to do similar.

- In the absence of clear guidance from the DES and following the school closures the management team met (consisting of the principal, deputy principal and two assistant principals). They put a plan together to review the different platforms from the list provided by the PDST.
- Having reviewed all the platforms they chose Google classrooms because of it's g-suite functionality. G-suite involved setting up individual accounts for reach child.
- G-suite allows teachers to set tasks for the class and for the child to complete the tasks, submit to the teacher and receive direct feedback from the teacher that is only available to the individual child.
- The platform allows the teacher to post video and audio of the teacher speaking to the children – the school feels that this is extremely important at this age to maintain connection and interaction with the teacher. The children can see and hear their teacher.
- The school has decided not to use video conferencing platforms such as Zoom at this point until the DES issue guidance on the use of such platforms.
- Study Ladder – free online platform – includes different pods, literacy and numeracy. Children do the activities and the teacher can see the progress and interact with the child on this.

Administration

The administrative work load in setting this up is not to be underestimated. The school had to individually set up over 340 individual child accounts. Families then had to login. Within a few days about 300 of the 340 children had logged in. There was a lot of learning involved in this and Alan is very happy to share his learning in this to save others time.

Children without IT

The school were very aware of the number of children who might not have a device at home. The Board took a decision to allow some children to use school equipment.

Children with limited IT at home

Teachers are setting tasks that involve a lot of 'away from screen' activities as they are aware that there may be only one device at home that might have to be shared with other family members.

Non-engaging families/children

The school are concerned about the families that are not engaging. The school support team are reaching out to those families. They are triaging to prioritise the children of most need.

Distance Learning Policy

The Board have drafted a Distance Learning Policy in order to ensure clear boundaries. All families were required to consent to the distance learning.