Case Study

Kilvington
Grammar School

About

Kilvington Grammar School is an independent co-educational school in Ormond, Victoria, focused on delivering education based on academic excellence, character, community and care. The vision is to be a school of excellence offering a holistic education to girls and boys, enabling them to excel individually and as part of a community.

Kirsty Watts

Kirsty Watts, Academic Dean of Technology and eLearning, talks to ReadCloud about how digital textbooks and technology help personalise learning and decision making.

Background

As a Mathematics teacher, Kirsty was quickly identified within Kilvington as an individual who was proficient in technology and communication, able to help the school introduce technology into the classroom and train other staff on how to use different platforms. Being one of the early schools to be a 1:1 laptop school allowed Kilvington to embed them in the classroom and then branch out into iPads as a user-friendly device for consuming content such as eBooks.

This soon led to exploring the use of digital textbooks as a way of helping parents save money, and also for the ergonomic benefits that come with students not having the heavy weight in their backpacks. This was bolstered by the additional access to interactive resources that digital platforms provided, which meant being able to provide more engaging and realistic activities for students, especially those with learning difficulties or those who prefer a hands-on or visual lens.

Teaching and learning priorities

Being an early adopter of laptops, technology was always a focus for the school. Opening up and giving everybody personalised options, I think is a real key for our school, and making sure that our students are catered to for their individual needs is a driving force.

The power of a digital resource and eBook platform gave the staff at Kilvington Grammar School the ability to personalise learning and make decisions so that if a particular resource or book wasn't quite right for a student or students, they could find other materials to explain it in a different way...

Pairing a digital resource platform with an LMS

Kilvington Grammar School integrates their Schoolbox Learning Management System (LMS) with ReadCloud and the Microsoft Suite, including Teams and Office 365, to create an online community for teachers and students that builds on digital platforms, provides a digital experience to improve interaction and offers an online learning presence.

"There was already a real commitment to digital around the school, so it made sense to actually move forward and reduce the amount of physical books that [students] had to carry around, really look at those interactive resources and help reduce costs for parents."

With the ReadCloud Bookshelf embedded inside Schoolbox, whenever a student wants to find the books they need they can head to the LMS, click the resource they need and it opens up directly inside Schoolbox. This helps to reduce the cognitive load so that students don't have to think about where they need to go to find the information they need and can focus on the learning.

Choosing ReadCloud

There were two key considerations for Kilvington when choosing ReadCloud that ReadCloud had been designed for Australian secondary students first that ReaCloud had a responsive support team

It was designed with our students and teachers in mind, so we had a bespoke solution that addressed our School's particular needs.

In addition to the platform, the relationship with the ReadCloud team gave Kirsty confidence that she was working with a team that backed their product and had a responsive support team in case something goes wrong.

Remote access to content

Having ReadCloud as part of the school's digital toolkit also helped to move to and deliver remote learning during extended periods of lockdown.

Given that we went into lockdown so fast in 2021, it was critical that students had access to all their textbooks electronically regardless of where they were. Many students would have faced the issue of having to collect their textbooks from school if not for a platform like this.

It meant that the students had access to their resources and could get the information they needed.

Advice for those transitioning to digital textbooks and resources

Kirsty offers some advice on change management and the benefits of moving to a digital resource platform. The first is to acknowledge that there is a normal adverse reaction to change, but that the benefits outweigh the initial pain point of asking people to change the way they do things.

If you carefully plan for the different stages that you need to go through and phase the implementation - rolling it out to two year levels at a time, rather than the whole of a senior school - while highlighting the benefits of a digital resource over a paper resource, gives you your best chance for success.

The additional benefits of your interactives and the aggregation of all the different publishers in one place, I think is something that justifies the initial pain for future gain.