



Student action through digital leadership

Steve Brophy

Digital leadership roles for students have been around in schools for a while. Under a myriad of monikers such as Digital Leaders, Student Techs, Cyber Angels, and so on, schools have long seen the benefits of harnessing student interest, talent and enthusiasm to help in the digital realm. When I started at Ivanhoe Grammar School five years ago I wanted to establish a role for students where their digital talents and interests were harnessed in an authentic and purposeful manner and where they played a key role in important decision making.

I began by investigating what other schools were doing in this space and this led me to the Digital Leader movement. The concept of Digital Leaders originated in the UK in 2010 and evolved into the Digital Leaders Network in 2012 thanks to the dedication and initiative of Mark Anderson (@ICTEvangelist) Sheli Blackburn (@shellibb) and Chris Sharples (@gr8ict).

The Digital Leader Network started as a collaborative blog to bring together schools with Digital Leader programs to share their great work. The network connected like-minded teachers and students and really developed a movement across the UK. The authenticity of the platform combined with the inspiration shared in each post helped students, teachers and schools to establish or develop their Digital Leader program. As well as the blog, a Twitter chat (#DLchat) was started to connect teachers involved with Digital Leader programs and Digital Leader

conferences were organised and run. Mark Anderson also set up the Digital Leader Academy to support new programs in the North Tyneside area. The Digital Leader Academy is a two-day program where new Digital Leaders from eight local schools gather to be trained and upskilled.

Digital Leadership at Ivanhoe Grammar

I was incredibly inspired by the work of the Digital Leaders Network and was wondering how my school could join. As luck would have it, a chance encounter on Twitter introduced me to Digital Leaders Australia or OzDLS as it is better known. OzDLS (www.ozdls.com or #ozdls) is the brainchild of Nick Jackson (@largerama), an educator originally from the UK now living in Adelaide. Nick played a pivotal part in the setup of the Digital Leaders Network in the UK and having seen the power of authentic student action through the network, wanted to start the same movement here in Australia. Nick believes that student voice is not enough in schools and that student action needs to be the driving force. He believes so strongly in the power of empowering young people that it is the focus of his current PhD. The purpose of the OzDLS is to support schools to set up Digital Leader programs and it was through Nick's generosity that the Digital Leader program at Ivanhoe began.

The program at Ivanhoe is moving into its fourth year and has grown from strength to strength each year. We have learned so much along the



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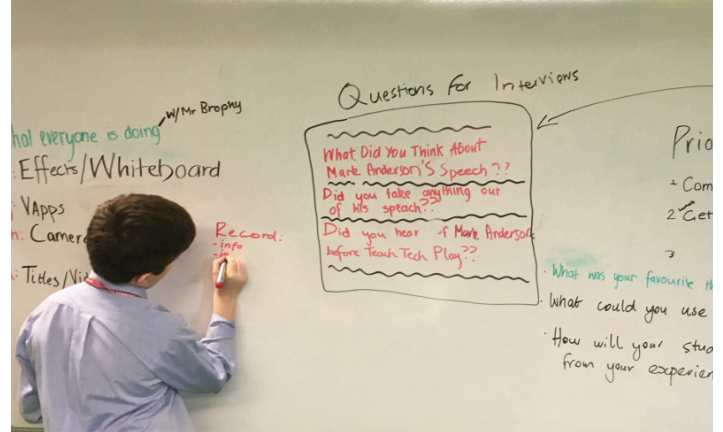
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way, with the key to the growth most definitely being the consistency of staffing and the democratic process we use to drive activities and initiatives. Jason Coleman (@jc_igs) through his insight, dedication, presence and attention to detail is also a huge reason the program has blossomed. There is no doubting the enthusiasm of the Primary students to be a part of any exciting initiative but the Digital Leader program demands a great deal of dedication and so we have found that an involved application process helps to determine which students are truly interested. Through a multi-stage process, which showcases communication skills, creativity, character references and self-direction, we determine the right candidates for the job. In our first year, we had too many students involved in the program and it proved challenging to manage. Our sweet spot is usually four to five per grade level. In 2016 we had 10 and were extremely pleased that the gender balance was 50/50. Developing a program that appeals to both boys and girls is a must and because the Digital Leaders have driven the program over the years, it appeals to both boys and girls.

Our Digital Leaders meet every Monday at lunch for 30 minutes for a regular meeting or for 45 minutes if we have a program coming up. This really helps with continuity and communication. We have used Edmodo in the past for communication outside of meetings but have felt more impact using a combination of face-to-face meetings and Trello boards. Along the way we have had students who lose interest but we have managed to move around this by constantly looking out for students outside the program who remain interested in joining. Once students are selected as Digital Leaders in Year 5, they maintain this title in Year 6. This really assists with development, rapport and continuity. Our 1:1 program has expanded this year to incorporate Year 4 and I am excited to work with the students over a three-year journey.

The Ivanhoe Digital Leaders have achieved so much in the four years the program has been in existence. Here are some of those achievements.

- Running a TeachMeet for staff to showcase Makey Makeys, how to code with Python and how to use Osmo
- Techie breakies and Tinkerspaces – set up spaces for staff and students to play with new technology in a relaxed environment
- Tech roadshows – visited other schools to teach them how to use robots and build circuits
- TechXpo – run a whole school event for students exploring challenging age appropriate robotics and coding activities.
- Classroom help – assisted in Prep–Year 6 classrooms showcasing how to use iPads, green screens, Osmo, Apple TV, iBook author, Chibitronics and much, much more
- Provide in class technical assistance to teachers and students. The Digital Leaders are then responsible for relaying this information to our IT Help desk.
- Blog on our school blog – *Ivanhoe Learn*
- Developed their own Digital Leader TV series (DLTV) on Touchcast showcasing their current explorations
- Developed iBooks to assist new students transition to our 1:1 iPad program
- Find 5 series – developed a short series of tutorials (5 minutes duration) for staff to develop their ability with Trello, iMovie, Garageband & Touchcast
- Set up Trello boards to manage their own projects and ideas
- Presented at iPad Parent information evenings outlining how embedded technology use has helped their learning
- Made QR codes, videos and robotic displays to enhance the school Art Show
- Assisted with building Prep iBooks to document their school year
- Developed their own website to manage the student borrowing of technology
- One of our Digital Leaders, Luke was the first student participant ever on the TeachTechPlay webshow
- Final keynote for the 2015 TeachTechPlay Conference. Digital leaders also developed roving daily reports using Touchcast and co-presented a session to teachers on how to use Touchcast in the classroom. This



year the Digital Leaders will be presenting a session by themselves at the 2016 TeachTechPlay Conference.

The Digital Leader program is the initiative that I am most proud of at our school and I highly recommend schools look into developing such a program. Below are a list of great resources to get you started. Connect with me on Twitter if you are keen to start or are looking to develop your program.


Great resources

<http://www.digitalleadernetwork.co.uk/>

www.ozdls.com

Ivanhoe Learn – www.ivanhoelearn.com or our iBook <http://apple.co/1N5H7BX>

One Best Thing – Digital Leaders by Mark Anderson - <http://apple.co/2iln2PO>


Digital Leader Impact in NTLT – iBook - <http://apple.co/2ilkrFv> 

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