

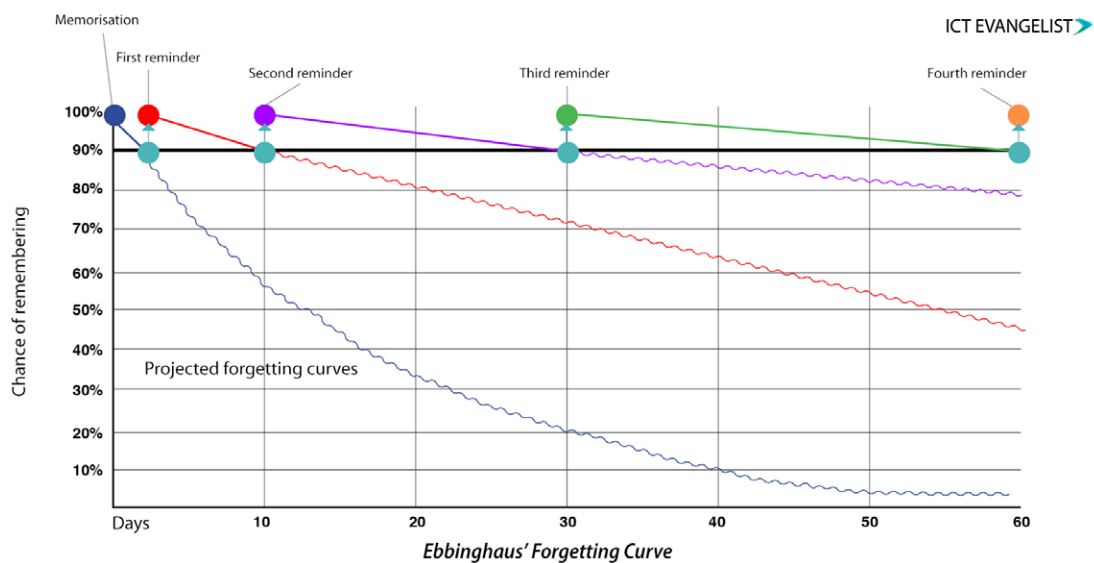


NetSupport School Review

By Mark Anderson (ICT Evangelist)

I love music. As a youth, I used to play the piano. I wasn't too bad either and I even managed to achieve my level 5 in my piano examinations. I also played the church organ on occasion in Sunday morning services at my local church. Now, as an adult, I rarely have the opportunity to play, although I still love it. Recently, I had the opportunity to play and found myself to be severely lacking in the skills of both reading the music and in the playing of the piano. This is because I haven't used them in while and my skills have severely waned over time.

This is something that is very similar to what happens with many teachers and their use of technology for learning in the classroom. Despite there being lots of different mobile learning and 1:1 strategies in schools, many have a more traditional 'PC Suite' installation or a trolley of devices that are shared around the school for learners to use. This can often mean that technology isn't pervasive and for teachers who don't use technology very often, it can make things quite difficult for them to manage when they come to want to use it again. As we know from the research around retrieval practice and Ebbinghaus' Forgetting Curve, if we don't revisit our learning often, over time we will forget it.



This is where NetSupport School comes into its own. Its beauty is in its simplicity. Want to quickly grab the attention of all the learners in your classroom? Simply click the lock button. Want to quickly get them back working again? Simply click the unlock button. Want to ask all of the class a quick 'on the fly' question? It's another easy step straight from the toolbar. It's a similar approach with all of the features and this is where you can start to really capitalise on making a superb, efficient and focussed learning environment with technology; even if using technology is something you don't do that often!



So what does this mean and how can it help me?

As a teacher, you want quick, easy, reliable access to tools that work in the classroom. As one of the most popular choices for schools to use to support their use of technology, NetSupport School has lots of features bundled in which are really helpful to you as a teacher in the classroom.

I love apps as much as the next person but having everything linked in to a single tool on a single toolbar that you are already using makes it even quicker and easier to get on with your job of teaching and assessing pupil progress.

The beauty of using edtech to help with this is that it means that no child is left behind. Every child can engage in the quick formative assessment activities that you want to do in your classroom. There are no hidden learners somewhere coasting along in the middle; every child needs to engage in the activities. To top it all off, all of the activities you do with your class can be logged so you have them to refer back to when you're reviewing the lesson and planning for your next one.



So what activities can you undertake?

There are lots of different formative assessment tools available and you can learn about each one in turn on the [product information page](#). However, I thought it helpful to highlight those which I think you'll find most useful.

Polling

Polling is a great way of gathering information (not data) from your learners. Did you understand this topic? Which bit was most difficult? So forth and so on.

Questioning and drawn responses

You can gather multiple choice, short or longer answer responses. This is great and with the software doing the marking for you on the MCQs, it makes it another great way of keeping everything together for you. My favourite questioning tool though has to be the use of annotation. You can ping across a question to any individual, group or whole class of learners and have them give you a drawn response. This can be labelled, it could be some writing, it could be a keyword or a spelling. It could be anything where interaction and creation of a response is required. I love that at a quick glance you can literally see where children have understood or misunderstood things. And it's all quick. There's no gathering in 30 pieces of paper here. Simply look at the overview of responses and you are good to go.



Q&A Mode

One of my favourite features is the Q&A Mode and I'll explain why. Children are naturally curious and so often within the classroom, learners will ask questions themselves. This often leads to discussions which lead on much further than the learning you might have planned. We could choose to say, no - let's cover that next lesson or next week or whenever you plan to cover it. My choice more often than not however is to follow their curiosity and to change the lesson plan on the fly, accordingly. Due to the nature of this kind of activity, it makes it difficult to prepare questions for testing learners. This is where the Q&A mode comes into its own. Here you have the ability to ask questions verbally, capture quickest to answer, or automatically select the next student to answer to keep everyone paying attention. Once you select the student who answers, you can quickly then peer assess the rest of the class to see if they agree. This, for me, is an absolute winner. It means that even if you come off lesson plan, you can still use inclusive and accessible ways of using simple technology to impact upon learning standards. Win!

Summary

To find out how NetSupport School can help you with these kinds of activities in your classroom, have a word with your IT team and see if the software is available in your school. Being so popular, there's every chance that it is. And if it isn't, simply visit [NetSupport School](#) and find out more about how you can get this kind of learning activity going on in your classroom.