

WMnet Update

News from the West Midlands Regional Broadband Consortium
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www.wmnet.org.uk

National projects

Video-conferencing and user identification feature in three national initiatives involving WMnet.

First, West Midlands schools are invited to join a video-conferencing pilot offering access to high quality, well managed systems and advice to enable links across the country and beyond. Until April 2005, the offer includes free ISDN video conferencing so no call charges will be passed back to the school. The school's local authority must be registered with UKERNA – the agency set up to advance and support JANET, the UK's education and research network.

Second, to help schools find partners for collaboration WMnet is working with E2BN, the East of England RBC, and the London Grid for Learning (London's RBC) to develop a collaboration portal that enables schools to search lists of schools to find partners who wish to communicate on specific subjects and in specific ways. Schools are encouraged to think about projects at the moment, and more information will be published when the portal is launched in early 2005.

Third, WMnet is running a pilot with i2q on behalf of Beta to look at issues around user identification, access to content and single sign on. This project is likely to involve only a small number of authorities, but the results will be widely published.

For more information on video conferencing contact your local authority or simon.white@wmnet.org.uk.

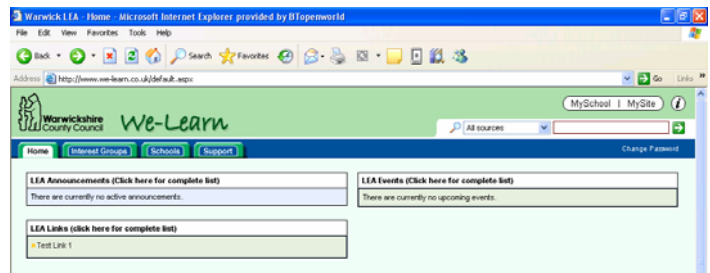
We learn in Warwickshire

The Warwickshire elearning community project will help create and shape the classrooms of the future. A Private Finance Initiative, it offers a new approach to teaching by extending the learning environment beyond the classroom and supporting teachers to bring high-quality, digital resources to enhance lessons and engage students.

The project focuses on pupils in Year 5 to Year 11 and on the following subjects: English, Mathematics, Science, ICT, Geography, History, and Modern Foreign Languages. A Teacher Toolkit will be installed in each project classroom, allowing teachers to control the projector and whole-class display from anywhere in the room and giving online access to new, rich resources and a dedicated learning network. It consists of:

- A tablet PC – a portable computing device for the teacher to enable them to work both within the classroom and away from it;

- A data projector and classroom PC – for the teacher to deliver high quality whole class interactive lessons utilising digital resources;
- A dedicated learning network bringing together digital learning resources for teachers and pupils to access “Anytime Anywhere”;
- Wireless access to allow flexible use of the toolkit anywhere within the classroom.



The We-learn portal

Schools in the project receive a variety of subject specific software, tools and digital resources integrated into “Kaleidos” a ground breaking Virtual Teaching and Learning Environment to help teachers plan and deliver lessons. Innovative portal technologies support communication between teachers, schools and the wider learning community.

Says John Parmiter, We-learn Project Director: “Our vision is of schools staffed by confident, trained practitioners using classrooms equipped with dependable, exciting technology to raise attainment and encourage positive and independent attitudes to learning. The legacy for the future will be improved standards of achievement, a collaborative and skilled work force of teachers and support staff, an outstanding pool of resources, skills and knowledge and an appetite for learning.”

More: www.we-learn.com or 01926 413739.

It's a breeze!

WMnet, in conjunction with a number of LEAs, is conducting a pilot project using Macromedia Breeze to produce online lessons and lesson materials. WMnet is hosting a server and has purchased a number of licences. A number of areas of the curriculum will be looked at including end of KS2 maths and KS3 science topics. Other anticipated outcomes will include CPD materials and online events which bring experts into the classroom. These will be available to all via the WMnet portal as the project progresses. We are keen to widen participation across the region as much as possible and would welcome interest from people who would like to take part in this pilot phase. Please contact jean.maud@wmnet.org.uk.

More information is at www.wmnet.org.uk/go/breeze.

Crossover II



Following on from last year's successful Crossover project we are pleased to be launching Crossover II. Schools from all 14 LEAs will once again be pairing up to design and build bridges and buggies with support from 'real' engineers via Imagineering. Schools and engineers will be collaborating via e-mail and video conferencing. The project has been extended this year to involve at least two schools from each LEA and we expect that there will also be links with other regions. This time the emphasis will be on the production of support materials (including digital video assets) which will be available, via the WMnet portal, enabling any school to take part in the project in the future.

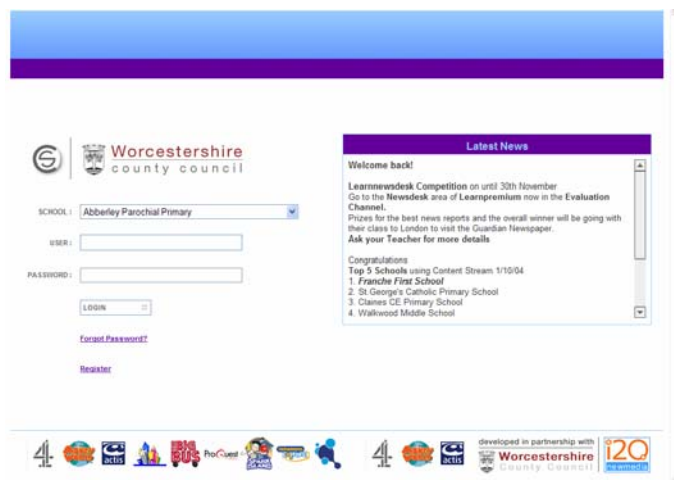
Contact jean.maund@wmnet.org.uk.

Content flows in Worcestershire

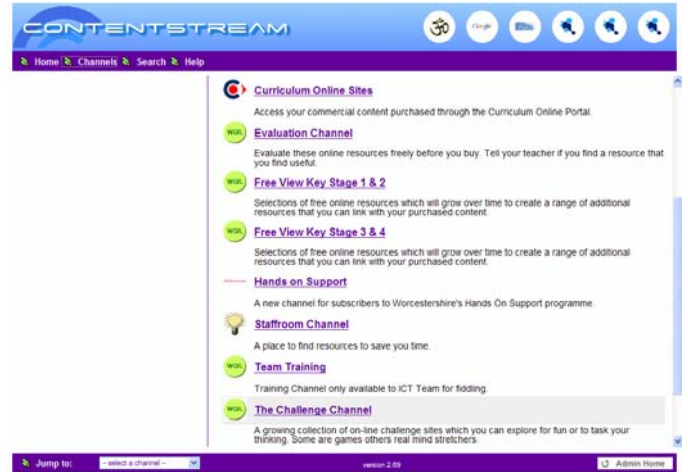
ContentStream, the content management service developed in partnership between Worcestershire LEA and i2Q Ltd., is rapidly making an impact in Worcestershire schools as it delivers specific content to specific users without the need to remember multiple usernames, passwords and web site addresses. Content is now just a click away anytime, anywhere.

ContentStream was born from a need for teachers and learners to manage and access their own digital content, based on individual needs rather than simply collections of materials delivered to an entire institution.

The system uses metadata tags used in Curriculum Online and similar schemas to allow the user to search for resources whether purchased or developed or located on the internet by users. Resources are then bundled as Learning Objects ready to support learning and teaching activities as required, whether at home or school, through a single authentication using an LDAP (Lightweight Directory Access Protocol) engine linked to the central LEA databases.



The interface to the ContentStream service is a simple series of channels for individuals, one or more schools or the whole LEA. This enables the LEA to support schools in national initiatives by creating specific channels like Hands on Support and ICT Across the Curriculum, with resources to help deliver the strategy. The next version of Content Stream will support individual learners and teachers with personalised resource packages to support specific learning activities.

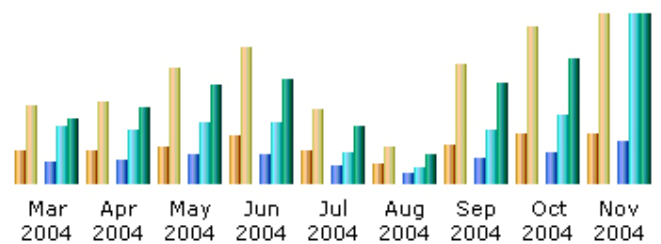


Users can access their choices of over 30 Curriculum OnLine commercial services via ContentStream's brokered content service.

Usage statistics and user feedback show that in the fourteen months of using online content through the service ContentStream is effective in supporting learning and teaching. It is therefore becoming one of the enablers towards the integration of digital resources across the curriculum for schools in Worcestershire. Changing pedagogical approaches to e-learning is an iterative process and ContentStream is just the start of this journey for schools in Worcestershire.

Contact: James Green, jmgreen@worcestershire.gov.uk.

Portal visitor numbers up



November 2004 was a record month for visitor numbers to the WMnet portal. After an understandable low point in August use has grown each month. New sections added by Jean Maund make the site more accessible.

What is WMnet?

WMnet is a consortium of all 14 Local Education Authorities in the West Midlands established to coordinate the provision of a broadband network and support innovation in teaching and learning in 2,500 schools and other centres of learning in the West Midlands. Contact: info@wmnet.org.uk