

E-mentoring

2. Safe and easy to use technology

There have been some weird and wonderful ideas around how e-mentoring should be facilitated. However, the best e-mentoring programmes are the ones that have safe and secure but easy to use technology.

Whenever we talk about students and the Internet or students working with adults then safety has to be the number one priority. This doesn't mean we have to be fanatical just sensible. The most secure and reliable system is to have all the mail to and from the student printed off, read and stored manually. Now let's have a reality check, there isn't a teacher in school today that has the time to do this so it's completely unrealistic to ask them to.

With this in mind there are electronic versions of what I have just described that can get you to this point. Here's how we have managed to create a workable and flexible e-mentoring environment.

1. Closed environment
2. Electronic Approval System (EAS)
3. Monitored Email
4. Monitored Forums
5. Anti spam, anti-virus

The above is not a definitive list but as long as you have them all in place then communication should flow freely but still have the parameters and security needed to ensure safety for the student and mentor.

You should also ensure that the students are able to use the technology that is being provided and that they are happy with it to. This is a very important consideration as we must remember who the end user is, it's not the school and it's not the teachers, it's the students.

Lastly, security must be in place and we all know that but remember that the e-mentoring you are running is also supposed to be fun. So don't scare your students and don't put them off because of politics. Make them aware that everything is monitored and checked and then let them develop their relationship knowing you as their monitor will oversee everything.