Self Organised Learning Environment (SOLE)

This month, I was lucky enough to be asked to go into a school and help organise a **Self-Organised Learning Environment** (SOLE). SOLEs are created when educators encourage students to work as a community to answer their own vibrant questions using the Internet.

What is a SOLE?

Welcome

Welcome to the Self-Organised Learning Environment (SOLE) Toolkit, a School in the Cloud resource designed to help educators support students as they tap into their innate sense of wonder and engage in student-driven learning.

Student-Driven Learning is:

Curious

Collaborative

Facilitated by adult encouragement

Self-organised

Social

Engaged
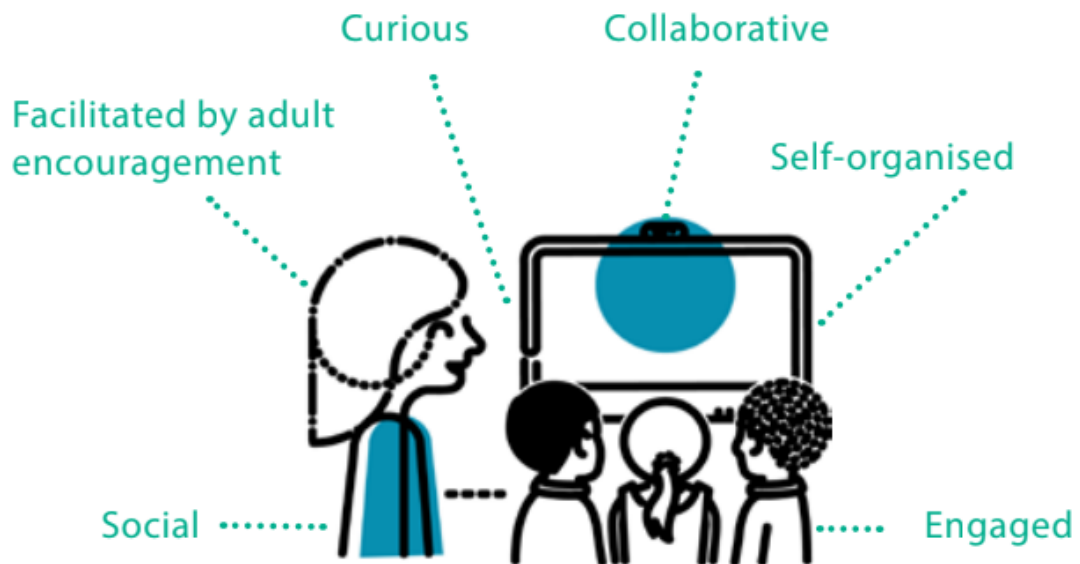
Rules of the Game

1) Students are given a big question or are challenged to think of their own

2) Students choose their own groups and can change groups at any time

3) Students can move around freely, speak to each other and share ideas

4) Students can explore in any direction that they choose: there may be no single right answer

5) Groups are expected to present what they have learned at the end of the session

The SOLE learning path is fuelled by big questions, self-discovery, sharing, and spontaneity. These parameters are needed to create a non-threatening environment in which children feel free to explore.

In this case the SOLE constituted all year 5 and 6 students and was scheduled for a Friday afternoon. The children carried out a SOLE related to remembrance day and each group presented their findings back to the whole year group in a variety of formats. The school have facilitated a SOLE most Friday afternoons since the initial one at the start of November.

SOLEs can help young people recognise and think critically about the knowledge they encounter online. It is this skill that will support a love of life learning and acknowledge the vast amount of knowledge available on the internet and the critical skills required to access, process and evaluate it.

I was very excited to be invited back this month to see how things had developed. When I returned to school I was amazed to see the impact that facilitating a SOLE had had. The students were now generating their own "big questions" about subjects that interested them. These questions have included "What makes a

sportsman talented? ", "Why people continue to believe in urban myths?" and "What might remain undiscovered in the ocean?".

When they were set to work the children selected their own groups and immediately started to engage in the autonomous and diligent creation of fantastic presentations that they were prepared to feedback to the class to share what they had learned. As part of this process they utilised a range of technology, navigated a variety of information sources and successfully negotiated/debated around conflicting opinions.

The class worked hard and then fed back their findings. All were very keen to present and volunteered to share their work and were disappointed if there wasn't time to get on to their presentations that week. As well as feeding back lots of content based information, a number of groups shared where they had obtained their information from and how their opinions had changed during the course of the afternoon.

Many young people now feel that SOLE is their favourite part of the week. It was an inspirational piece of work to be involved in.

If you would like to set up your own SOLE please contact psychological services (psychservices@northumberland.gov.uk) or speak to your link psychologist.