

## **Motivating students a high priority for teachers**

### **EdTech experts The Learnovate Centre offer advice on how to motivate students while distance learning.**

As Covid-19 continues to wreak havoc right across the world, closer to home, it is having a detrimental impact of almost every aspect of business life in Ireland.

Covid-19 is the single largest challenge to the Irish economy since the financial crisis, and there are concerns that Ireland's domestic economy could contract by seven per cent and unemployment could reach 18 per cent in the scenario of a 12-week pandemic shutdown.

Unfortunately, many companies across the country have been forced to temporarily close its doors and lay off staff.

Speaking on RTÉ's Morning Ireland, Regina Doherty, Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection, said that some 16,000 plus companies had applied for the wage subsidy scheme.

EdTech experts The Learnovate Centre, one of Europe's leading research centres in learning technologies, felt the pulse of second-level teachers across the country last week to see how they were adapting to remote teaching.

Many are finding technology is helping motivate students but there were a range of other concerns being raised by the students themselves – in particular the uncertainty around the state exams.

Just last week, it was announced that the school and college shutdown was being extended until Monday April 20 at the earliest, but no decision has been taken in relation to the State written exams in June.

The Leaving Cert and Junior Cycle exams are still scheduled to go ahead as normal, but that could change, depending on the spread of Covid-19 in the community.

Based at Trinity College Dublin, The Learnovate Centre is an industry-led technology centre, funded by Enterprise Ireland. The advice from the centre on how teachers and parents can motivate students is to ensure they stimulate students' curiosity, that the students realise the relevance of what they are learning, have the confidence that they can succeed and feel good about the work they are doing.

"Advances in learning technology mean that, during the current Covid-19 pandemic, teachers and

students are well prepared to continue their learning journeys at home,” says Nessa McEniff, director of The Learnovate Centre. “However, being able to use technology to connect with students and set work for them is one thing; motivating them to do this work is another matter altogether.

“Teachers are finding that the uncertainty over the state exams, which has still not been addressed, is adding to the general anxiety being felt by students during this uncertain time for everyone. This is leading to students finding it hard to concentrate and stay motivated.”

Michael Rooney, deputy principal at Coola Post Primary School in Co. Sligo, says the technology that the school has embraced over the last number of years has meant that the transition to working from home has been made easier. However, as work is set by teachers, it's important for students to not get overwhelmed or demotivated.

“We have decided that teachers should generally contact students during the time allocated for them on the existing timetable. This allows students to know that during specific times, they can concentrate on certain subjects, without interruption. It also allows them to take breaks at specific times.”

Some 126,000 students are entered for the June exams – 61,053 due to sit the Leaving Cert and 65,190 at Junior Cycle level.

*By Stephen Larkin*

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