

BETT 2016 & Data Exchange

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BETT 2016 has been and gone. For me it was another fantastic experience to be able to engage with educators and vendors and identify the next wave of trends hitting the sector. And while sadly innovation has this year been interspersed with imitation, smoke and mirrors and jumping on buzzwords (in the main, many passing themselves off as identity providers and offering identity management services), the biggest news for me was one that was delivered by the most unexpected of sources for BETT: The Education Secretary Nicky Morgan MP.

Announcement

Her full opening keynote speech for BETT 2016 is available [HERE](#), but the extract I am most gratified to hear and repeat is this:

“While we’re talking about data I should mention our Open Standards principles. Too often it is difficult to get data out of systems used in education without considerable effort.

As a consequence people re-key information or send similar data to different people using different systems. This wastes money and constrains the power of data. Put simply, systems need to be able to talk to each other better.

Within our daily lives system integration allows information to flow seamlessly behind the scenes to benefit users. It requires 2 things: a will to improve, and commitment to implementing common standards.

Common data standards will help us overcome this.

My department intends to begin prototyping new systems for data collection – data exchange – in 2016. It will implement common data standards and work with the Access 4 Learning Community who have achieved great things locally and internationally.

This will make it easier for schools to share data with us. It will reduce our data burden on the sector and provide, and enhance both what we know, and how quickly we know it.

Better system integration should allow education technology firms to enable easier data movement within and between schools.”

Data Exchange

The Data Exchange (DX) project is something I have been working closely with via several channels for a number of years now. It is somewhat satisfying to hear after some degree of personal beratement last year about the failure of the previous incarnation of DX, given my waivered support and positivity about the project and intended outcomes. In 2015 I undertook an in-depth research project on behalf of the Department for Education to support the renewed project that has led to this announcement. The report looked at a number of technical and political aspects, of which the work between the DfE and the Access 4 Learning community, of which I am an elected member of the Technical Board, has pushed forward to address the identified issues.

This year will see this project come to the fold finally, and it is important that the entire education sector understands and supports the benefits this will offer, from school to LA to data and software supplier, and work together to make whatever transitions are impending happen with as little (political) disruption as possible – Data Exchange is here, now made official by the parliament powers that be, so it is time to step up or...