



# East Berkshire College



## P R E S S   R E L A S E

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For immediate release

### New technology helps students learn

Construction, motor vehicle and hairdressing students are well used to the tools of the trade: spanners, trowels, saws, hair clippers, combs - but laptops and PDAs?

High tech communications might not be something you associate with learning a trade, but that's something East Berkshire College is changing. Here students are using high-tech communications tools and the internet to help keep track of their work while away from the campus.

The MoLeNET (mobile learning technology) project sees students use mobile phones, personal digital assistants (PDAs), mp3 players and laptops to record their work, then put it online where they, their lecturers and others can see how they are going.

In addition, the College has chosen a new online personal assessment tracking system, eTracker. Designed by VLE Support, a specialist in building technology solutions for educational institutions, eTracker brings together all the data on each student held by the College, from their grades through to attendance records and disciplinary issues.

Along with the rest of the MoLeNET project, eTracker is being trialled by groups of students. It shortly now be available within all areas in the College and potentially to all of its more than 12,000 students.

Welding and fabrication apprentice Paul Welsh, 22, from Oxfordshire, rates MoLeNET highly for taking some of the hassle out of recording his work.

"I think it's very useful. It's so much quicker and easier than all the paperwork, especially when you are at work you are under pressure to do things quickly. Instead of sitting down and writing something that might get lost or burnt, you can take a quick snap on your phone and put a presentation together on it or at home, then put it on the website."

Kurt Hintz, Head of School for Motor Vehicle, Engineering and Computing East Berkshire College, expects eTracker will help motivate students and lead to an improved performance.

"It will also help teachers, parents and the businesses that are offering students' work placements keep an eye on how the students are doing and help them achieve their goals."

Kurt says a key factor in the College choosing eTracker was its ability to encourage students to take control of reporting and assessing their work, rather than it being lecturer driven.

The whole MoLeNET project is part of a move to a teaching model that recognises that students learn in different ways and in different environments. We needed a system that would encourage that.

Kurt continues: "When I came across eTracker at a trade show, I knew it fitted the bill perfectly. We had a clear idea of what we needed because we were already using tracking and assessment software, but we needed a more advanced system – one that could be tailored for the different disciplines within the College and could be accessed from anywhere at any time.

"With VLE Support's help, we will create a central hub for all of our data and then provide controlled access to information that is relevant to each student.

"Each student's page will have several percentage bars showing them exactly how well they are doing in relation to their personal goals. It will be easy for them and their tutors to identify where they are succeeding and if they are having difficulty with anything."

Along with giving lecturers, students, employers and parents better, more holistic information, eTracker will also save time and reduce paperwork.

Mark Trinick, managing director of VLE Support, says: "East Berkshire College is one of the largest roll-outs we will have undertaken and we are thrilled to be a part of its mobile learning technology project. The College offers a massive range of subjects and courses. eTracker can be easily tailored to suit the requirements of any courses whether they are A levels, City and Guilds, NVQs and so on."

East Berkshire College was awarded a grant of £108,000 for the Learning and Skills Network for MoLeNET.

## **Ends**

### **Notes for Editors**

Photographs:

0921: East Berkshire College welding student Kacper Jablonski, 18, from Stoke Poges, can record his work using mobile phones provided by the MoLeNET project.

0880: East Berkshire College welding students Morgan Pearce, 23, from Oxford (left) and Paul Welsh, 22, from Oxfordshire, can record their work on-site using mobile phones and upload it to the internet.

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### **About East Berkshire College**

- East Berkshire College has 12000 students and nearly 800 staff in total, including both full and part-time staff and students.
- We offer a wide range of vocational, academic and general interest courses, in subjects varying from forensic science to childcare to plumbing.
- There are two main campuses, in Langley and Windsor. We also hold courses in many community venues across the region, including Maidenhead and Slough.
- Ofsted has commended the College's leadership and teaching, and our academic results are constantly improving. In 2007 A level pass rates were 95% and there was a 94% pass rate on National Diplomas and Certificates.
- Our motor vehicle provision has achieved Centre of Vocational Excellence (CoVE) status.

### **About VLE Support**

VLE Support is the only company in the UK to provide an all-in-one package for education and commercial sectors introducing virtual learning environments (VLEs). It facilitates the installation, configuration, training, maintenance and support of VLEs. Focused on Moodle software, it offers a comprehensive package of training and support for teachers, trainers, administrators and support staff. VLE Support also designs and develops bespoke content ranging from enhanced static documents to fully interactive multi-media presentations. Clients include Bromley College of Further and Higher Education, St Dunstan's College and the London Ambulance Service.