Spring Online Planning Guide for Schools

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Note from the Managing Director of Digital Unite

Spring Online is a wave of mass digital activity for older people. Together, up and down the UK and overseas as well, we encourage older people to have a taste of what the digital world can offer them by going to a free Spring Online Event nearby. Events are run locally by libraries, schools, community groups, businesses, charities, housing schemes, museums, people at home in their kitchens. Where there’s a will (and an internet connection) there’s a way.

We believe that school children and the school community can reap learning and other civic and community-orientated benefits from this work. We believe that communities of older people such as those in sheltered housing stand to gain far more than digital skills learning support from this partnership working – they are reconnected to other parts of their community through the learning activity.

This pack is intended for teachers who are looking to run Spring Online sessions in their schools or colleges. It contains advice, tips, guides and sample forms that we hope will come in handy as you plan and carry out your event. There are also separate planning guides available free to registered event holders on www.digitalunite.com. This document complements them, and contains information and guidance that is specific to schools.

Feedback about anything, as always, is welcome.

With kind regards,

Emma Solomon OBE
MD, Digital Unite Limited
March 2013

du@digitalunite.com
Why get involved?

Schools who get involved in Spring Online are helping their students engage with the local community and demystifying the barrier of the school gate. Community cohesion is the keyword here.

‘This is the first time we have run such an event or indeed brought groups of people onto the school site to learn, who are not students. Being a small private school, we have beautiful grounds and few facilities, and so, now having the facilities and having successfully completed a community teaching project, we are planning many more in the near future, including working with the local unemployment centres to try and deliver some ICT training for its patrons. This has really opened our eyes to the possible ways in which we can support the local community and be involved in a much more varied delivery of support for everyone’.

Any age pupils and students can participate. Year 10 is a good age, and year 8 and 9’s also benefit. In year 11, students are sometimes more concentrated on examination preparation, but by the sixth form, students again are in a good position to get involved. Students in colleges at any age can benefit from assisting or running such events.

‘Our event truly bridged the generations. To see a group of 14/15 year old students engrossed in teaching older learners the basics of computing was amazing to witness. The feedback was outstanding with all learners saying they would come again and giving praise to our students. Running the event with Age Concern Sutton meant we could really access those learners who would benefit from the day and with Wilson’s School and Age Concern working together we were able to put on a first class event. We are already planning a repeat day in..."
July. We are very proud that our students were able to make a difference to someone today.‘

There is a clear link to the curriculum, for example: PSHE citizenship, business studies and IT.

‘Our SSD was well received because we believe that there is not enough of this kind of event/support for the older generation in our area and what made it extra special was the support we had from our Business Admin students who helped plan and support during the day as Event Management is part of their course - so not only did we help the Silver Surfers but it was an opportunity for them to be part of the students’ training. And to that the feedback we received will not only help us in planning future events but the students will use them as part of their assessment work’

For young people, it can be a revelation to spend time with people who’d been born pre-NHS, lived through a time of War and witnessed the technological revolution from gas lamps to space-flight; from valve radios to youtube. These two generations have much to offer each other and the benefits of this kind of intergenerational event are manifest:

‘Computer skills are second nature to today’s generation but intergenerational contact is something that is often missing from their lives. One of our students says almost the only contact he has with the older generation is once a year at Christmas with grandparents. So this has made a big impact on his life experience.’

‘Glan Afan Silver Surfers is the name of an intergenerational class which takes place in Glan Afan Comprehensive School Port Talbot. Pupils from the school teach senior citizens from the local community how to use computers and the internet. Our free weekly classes attract an average of 20 senior citizens every Wednesday. Sessions take place every Wednesday from 3:30. We have been recognised nationally for our work.’
Benefits for all

‘Having our groups based within the School of Computing means that students can access the views of older people on the systems they design. Students are encouraged to help out at Silver Surfer Day Events and at the drop-in sessions we run all year round. This mixing of generations is great for all involved and encourages the local community to take an interest in the students’ work. The students themselves find the contact with older people very valuable. Having the support of a national event such as Silver Surfer Day has helped us promote our group.’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefits for older people</th>
<th>Benefits for young people</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social inclusion and community cohesion</td>
<td>Social inclusion and community cohesion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased self esteem and self worth from helping the young generations.</td>
<td>Increase self esteem and confidence from helping others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved health and access to information.</td>
<td>Communication skills improve.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having fun.</td>
<td>Looks attractive on CV when applying for college, university and employment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning new skills which will enhance their lives. This can include more communication with family and friends and keeping fit using games consoles like the Nintendo Wii.</td>
<td>VINSPiRED awards recognise the time young people aged between 16 and 25 give and are there to boost CVs by showing employees, colleges and universities clear evidence of what young people have achieved through volunteering. <a href="http://www.vinspired.org.uk">http://www.vinspired.org.uk</a>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Option for them to up-skill and help their own peers with digital assistance in time.</td>
<td>Volunteer hours towards their Duke of Edinburgh award <a href="http://www.dofe.org.uk">http://www.dofe.org.uk</a>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning from younger generation and being introduced to websites and information they would not have seen</td>
<td>Learn about history and other facts from an older generation and access websites they would not usually know about.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
before | Receive a certificate from the partner organisation and school as a thank you for participation.

Spend time with interesting and lively young people. | Spend time with positive role models.

**Planning**
Down to business: in this section, you decide where to hold the session, who to invite and how to manage - or ideally avoid! – any costs.

**a) Setting up the project**
Your school may already have a template for setting up community mini-projects such as a taster session for older computer beginners. However at Appendix 1 there is a template which you can also use, setting out the project’s aims and objectives, with space to enter an evaluation afterwards as well. Appendix 3 contains a quick checklist to use as a planning guide as well.

**b) Getting students involved**
To see an example in action, it’s worth having a look at how students from Sir Christopher Hatton School took part in an event at Wellingborough housing scheme – a wonderful video about it is here: http://www.youtube.com/user/WellingboroughHomes#p/a/u/0/MOl67clzTTQ

You could use this video to show staff and students about the benefits to all of becoming involved in projects such as Spring Online. Use the information and resources available on www.digitalunite.com/spring-online to bring students and colleagues up to speed on why helping older people access the benefits of the internet is important: but also satisfying and fun.
c) Finding older beginners

If your school does not already have relationships with older learners, this is a real opportunity to forge new partnerships with local organisations. The main motto is to go to where the people are and build relationships which can later grow.

**Relatives**
Some schools have invited pupil’s parents, grandparents or other older relatives in for a taster session.

**Local Sheltered Housing**
Most sheltered housing schemes have communal lounges, and all house older people. Many want to participate in local events, particularly anything to do with learning about computers. You could either join with them and use their facility or invite their residents to your facility. Either way, first try approaching through the head office. A list of local sheltered housing is here: [www.housingcare.org](http://www.housingcare.org).

**Age UK and Age Concern branches**
Many Age UK branches offer IT tutoring to their visitors and may be interested in a link-up with your organisation either about premises or volunteer tutors or both. See [www.ageuk.org.uk](http://www.ageuk.org.uk) for your nearest branch (in England).

**Local faith group**
Another place to look is your local church, or other faith group. Often they have volunteers who are willing to come out and help older people with all sorts of tasks.

**Local older people’s groups**
Local interest groups, whether the knitting circle, the gardening club or the darts group can be popular amongst retirees who may not already be familiar with using computers.
and the internet. Depending on the subject matter, the expertise of older people can also be communicated back to your students, creating a truly intergenerational exchange.

**UK online centres**
Many of these are in libraries, some aren’t. These are all primed to participate in Spring Online and may be able to help you with advice and support. Go here to find your local centre: [www.ukonlinecentres.com](http://www.ukonlinecentres.com).

d) **Venue and equipment**

If your school has an IT suite with connectivity to the internet, this is an ideal venue for a Spring Online event. Consider having multiple rooms set up if you have the facilities, so that people can Skype from room to room. Or perhaps you have space and facilities for a Wii session – getting people up and moving is always very popular.

However the motto is to work with what you’ve got – if you’ve just got a couple of borrowed laptops that will do the trick as well. The main thing is to enjoy the day.

‘The Silver Surfers’ event helped us show people that computers and the internet are critical in the teaching and learning of this new generation. The pupils were so confident about showcasing their abilities and talents to others and making the older generation feel more at ease. They put so much hard work into our first Silver Surfers’ Day by redecorating the classroom with Zones (Music, Search, Map, PPT, Games, Comics, Photo and email Zones), organising tasks and activities, creating certificates for participants and setting up a web cam system throughout the school.’

e) **Theme**

Once you have students enthused about participating, work with them to decide the structure of the session and what themes if any you want to choose. The theme could be driven by interests – springtime is often about gardening, so perhaps that could form your theme: or it could be hobbies and interests in general. Depending on your equipment, e.g. if you have webcams available or Wii equipment, you could set up remote Skype calling or a Wii session, thus creating a theme of communication or healthy exercise.

Getting your students involved in the planning stage will increase the benefits they achieve from it.
f) Risk Assessment
You will likely need to do a simple Risk Assessment for health and safety purposes if you’re using the school as a venue. A template is available in the downloads section of the Spring Online website. Your school may also have a standard template you’re required to use.

g) Child protection requirements
As the event is a one-off, it should not be necessary to organise CRB checks all round. Your own common sense and experience will serve you well here, with respect to ensuring that people are suitably supervised.

h) Consent forms
A simple consent form for your participants to sign, means that you can safely use any photos taken at the event either online, in print or in publicity materials. Depending on your school’s policies, you may also need to obtain consent from parents or guardians. A template is available in the downloads section of the Spring Online website.

i) Managing costs
A Spring Online taster session does not have to result in huge costs, and indeed it is common for events to be run on a shoestring and still be extremely successful!

Out of pocket expenses you may encounter might include the following, but you could also see if people or local businesses could donate their time or services to help you out for such a good cause:

- Refreshments on the day – nothing helps smooth initial awkwardness like a cup of tea and a biscuit or two! Your local supermarket might be able to oblige with a donation if you have no budget. Depending on the timing for your sessions, it might be that lunch also would need to be catered for.

- Transport – if your older beginners are travelling to your school or college, you or they may need to arrange a bus or other transport.

- Printing expenses – it is great to give your older beginners something to take away with them on the day. A printout of a website they visited and liked, or of an e-card they created on the day can give them a great sense of achievement. There are also a number of posters and flyers which are available for download on www.digitalunite.com/spring-online which you may choose to print. They are intended to be used for publicity and they also serve as excellent decorations for the venue.

- Technical support – depending on your existing arrangements for technical support, you may need assistance to set up your equipment, load any software
you want, and so on. Normally you can get volunteers to help you. If you have a supplier for your technical support you should check beforehand that there will be no additional charge for their assistance.

**Publicity**
Digital Unite will be working to generate national publicity for Spring Online, but if you want your event to have lots of visitors, you need to make sure that everyone in your area knows about it.

Even if you are holding a closed event (i.e. you don’t want participants from outside your own community, or the participants are invitation-only), it will still be worth doing publicity in order to get the local media interested as this reflects well on your school and on you.

When we asked event holders in previous years for their key success factors, the answer was ‘Publicity, publicity, publicity’. You need to use a variety of methods to reach as many people as possible.

The key areas to consider are:

**Local press and media**
On [www.digitalunite.com/spring-online](http://www.digitalunite.com/spring-online) there are guides for event holders how to market your event. This covers how to get local press and media involved, and how to invite celebrities and local dignitaries to your event to increase awareness of the good work you are doing in the community.

**Posters and flyers**
You can advertise directly to potential visitors using posters and/or flyers. Sample posters and flyers for your use are available for free to registered event holders on [www.digitalunite.com/spring-online](http://www.digitalunite.com/spring-online).

If you are looking to have a general open invitation, then send a copy of your poster in advance to:
- Local Health Centres and GP surgeries
- Sports Centres
- Community Centres and Centres for Retired People
- Age Concern, U3A and other 50+ Groups
- Churches and other faith bodies
- Libraries, museums and other local facilities
Sheltered Housing and Retirement Homes
Social Clubs, pubs, chip shops
Shops – supermarkets or the local newsagent
Anywhere that people who might be interested in your event will see it.

On the Web
Please do register your event on www.digitalunite.com/spring-online if you haven’t done so already. You can do this once you have registered as an event holder on the site.
Even if your event is by invitation only, you can enter it as a ‘private’ event, so the details won’t be made public. It’s still really helpful though to the campaign if we know who is holding events, and to allow us to shed a good light on your work.

If you register the event as public, it will also show up for advice line staff answering calls from people seeking events for themselves or for people they know. This service is free for registered event holders.

Briefing students before the day
The likelihood is that your students are ‘digital natives’ who have grown up with computers and the internet. It’s really helpful for you to brief them beforehand to allay any nervousness they might have about helping older beginners, and to help them understand that the participants may not have ever touched a keyboard or know what a mouse does and how to use one. Make sure they know:
- Who is coming to participate in the session
- What their likely skill level will be
- How to deal with possibilities such as disability, problems with vision or mobility
- How to address older people with friendly respect if they don’t already know
- What the students will be doing on the day, e.g. playing the Springboard activity with the participants
- Any arrangements about themes or refreshments

Encourage them to take each session slowly, and where possible that they should in turn encourage the participant to use the mouse and keyboard themselves, rather than doing it for them.

Some students might like to be reassured by you that they don’t have to be complete computer experts, and that what’s important is that the participants have an enjoyable experience rather than that they learn everything about the internet in one taster session.

Many schools who hold events find it helpful to match up participants and students in advance, or at least to have specified slots when participants will be having their session.
A template sign-up sheet is in the Resources section of www.digitalunite.com/spring-online.

On the day

As your final preparation, consider the following:

- Your students could decorate the room, with posters and flyers or perhaps balloons, to make the sessions feel more festive
- A last-minute check of computers and connectivity is always a good idea, and having technical support on hand to sort out any glitches ditto
- Make sure that any arrangements for refreshments are clear
- Always remember to take photos of the event (or even video if you can). These are great for inclusion in the school magazine or for any press releases you do, and if you send them to us at Digital Unite, we can use them to promote your good work. Participants also love to see their photos up online: it’s quite exciting to be up there on the internet! Remember to get signed permission from all the participants too so that there are no issues with publishing the photos or video.
- Try and capture any quotes from people, either your students or the participants, which you can later weave into your evaluation story. Feedback forms are very useful for this; a template is provided in the resources section of www.digitalunite.com/spring-online.
- Be aware of what follow-up courses there are locally for the participants. It’s great to enthuse them and even better to not leave them high and dry if they want to pursue the learning further.

'Just before 10am the computers were switched on for the session to properly start. All of the older visitors had a great time and were full of praise for Chailey School staff and students. One lady said “The student I worked with was excellent, very friendly and knowledgeable; when can we come back?”’ More details of this session at Chailey school are available in this case study: http://schools.becta.org.uk/index.php?section=tl&rid=17936
Afterwards

a) Evaluation
Writing up a note about how your event went, with good quotes and pictures from the day, will be helpful for you and your colleagues, and may also come in handy the next time your school is inspected. Use the feedback forms from participants as input. Try and capture the benefits and any lessons learned. Talk to your students about their experiences – good, bad or humorous! - and weave this into the narrative. This can be great as an article in the school magazine, a feature on your school website, or even as a press release for a local newspaper. Consider getting one of your students to write this up as well.

b) Thank-yous
Your students, their parents and the participants would all appreciate a thank-you, along with any other helpers. The biggest thank-you goes of course to you for having put the event together as a whole.

c) Survey
If you complete the post-event survey which will be posted at the time on www.digitalunite.com/spring-online, you will be in the running for the annual Best Event award, which carries a cash prize and excellent publicity for you and your school.

d) Start planning the next event!
We hope that your sessions will have gone well – in which case you might consider how your involvement could continue, and how you could build on the relationships you and your students have built.

And the final thought: have fun!
Appendix 1

Project Template
You may find it helpful to record the details of your event planning on a sheet like this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Name of Project</strong></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spring Online – April 2013. Event to be held on xx April.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Brief Description</strong></th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spring Online is a national campaign run by Digital Unite which encourages older and less confident adults to try out computers and the internet in taster sessions held around the country. <a href="http://www.digitalunite.com/spring-online">www.digitalunite.com/spring-online</a>. At our school, we will be holding taster sessions at [location] with participants invited from [partner organisations]. Students from [class name] will be running the event and assisting the older beginners one to one, including assisting them with the Springboard activity.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Number of People involved</strong></th>
<th><strong>How is this made up?</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[number]</td>
<td>[number] of students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[number] of staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[number] of participants</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Objectives</strong></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To give participants as taste of what the internet can do for them / One to one time with a student for each participant.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Impact / Outcomes</strong></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participants more confident with computers and the internet / Participants willing and inspired to take the learning further.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Evaluation summary</strong></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[fill out your summary of how the event went, and whether repetition of the event would be desirable].</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>