



PRESS RELEASE

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TEACHERS PROMOTING FREE SOFTWARE TAKE ON THE BETT SHOW

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Moodle, the free virtual learning environment and one of the most innovative pieces of educational software, is available at this year's BETT. Uniquely, the Moodle stand (SW154) is being provided by a small group of UK teachers who've had their teaching transformed by this software, and are eager to promote it as the first choice learning platform for UK schools, by presenting it as a viable alternative to the commercial learning platforms on show. Team member Drew Buddie, Head of ICT at Royal Masonic School, is excited about seeing the vision for a Moodle presence at BETT become a reality: "This truly has been a collaborative team effort, particularly given we all have other 'day jobs' that pay the wages. That we are there at all is a testament to the efforts of so many people."

Developed by a team led by Australian educator Martin Dougiamas, Moodle provides teachers and learners with all the tools they need to engage in effective e-learning via the Internet. In use in over 8000 sites worldwide, with more than 70 language versions available, Moodle is making a real difference to the quality of learning in all phases of education, ranging from infant schools, through universities into the world of corporate training and life long learning. Moodle does far more than present online courses - Moodle is underpinned by a belief that people learn best together, and so it's really about using the web to build learning communities, with all the opportunities for collaboration and communication that that implies. As Moodle is open source software, schools using it have a flexible and powerful tool, developed and tested in the education community, that can be extended to meet all their e-learning needs. It is easy to administer and use, and, best of all, is free.

In her speech at BETT on Wednesday 11th January, Secretary of State Ruth Kelly is widely expected to announce funding for Regional Broadband Consortia to purchase online 'learning platforms' for roll out in 2008. Moodle makes this functionality, and much more, a reality for UK schools today. Furthermore, as it's open source software, schools, local authorities and RBCs can use their limited funds to provide high quality support, ongoing development, and new content, all with direct educational benefits, rather than paying for high cost software licences, which end up funding share holder dividends. The educational technology agency Becta's recent study of total cost of ownership showed significant savings for schools using open source software.

Although the team have given their time and expertise freely, funding for the stand has been raised by members of the Moodle and Open Source communities, as well as some of the small companies providing commercial Moodle services, such as Moodle partner Sean Keogh's pteppic.net. Team member and Becta ICT in Practice award winner Miles Berry said "BETT visitors can't fail to be impressed by Moodle, and the vision of social, collaborative learning that has inspired it. As they try it out for themselves, I'm sure many will jump at the opportunity to use this software to develop online learning communities in their schools and colleges, which will make a real difference to the quality of education, just as it has in my school."

Further information:

Journalists attending the BETT show will be able to try Moodle out for themselves and meet the team at Stand SW154 in the software zone.

Miles Berry will be presenting on how Moodle supports the DfES e-strategy at 4.15 on Wednesday 11th in Seminar Theatre C, as part of the BCS seminar on the e-strategy, as well as taking part in the Becta/TES 'Day of Good Practice' on the Thursday – he will be in the Club Room from 3.30-4.45.

Drew Buddie, Darren Smith and Miles Berry will be presenting on how Moodle's used in their schools in the Software Zone seminar theatre at 1.10 on Saturday.

Moodle:

moodle.org

The Moodle at BETT team:

www.helpusgettobett.com

BETT:

www.bettshow.co.uk

DfES FAQ on Learning Platforms:

www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/ictis/infrastructure/learningplatforms/faq/

Open Source software in UK schools:

schoolforge.org.uk

Becta's report on total cost of ownership for open source software:

www.becta.org.uk/corporate/publications/documents/BEC5606_Full_report18.pdf

Commercial Moodle partners:

moodle.com/partners/list/

Becta ICT in Practice Awards:

www.becta.org.uk/corporate/display.cfm?section=21&id=2403