

Interactive Classroom Working Group

School strategies for fostering students' digital competences

Practical guidelines for school leaders



Case Study

Primary school Bratov Polančičev Maribor · Slovenia



Case study: Osnovna Šola Bratov Polančičev Maribor, Slovenia

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Introduction

School digital strategies refer to the plans and frameworks developed by educational institutions to effectively integrate digital tools, technologies, and practices into the learning environment. Sustainable and inclusive digital education strategies require a balanced approach that considers diverse learner needs and promotes equitable access to technology. Rather than simply integrating new technologies in school practices, effective digital education strategies require a well-considered idea of how technology can improve educational outcomes, address inequalities, and support the wider educational mission of the school. It is a continuous process of identifying key priorities, allocating resources for targeted initiatives, monitoring progress, and achieving the different objectives.

This case study is one of 15 developed from interviews with members of school leadership teams who have contributed to the development of effective, sustainable, and inclusive school strategies to foster students' digital competence. The case studies focus on strategies that have successfully improved digitalisation of school and teaching practices and supported the development of digital competences in their students, in a sustainable and inclusive way. The schools are located in eight countries i.e. Czech Republic, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Portugal, Serbia, Slovenia, and Switzerland. The interviews were part of research carried out by European Schoolnet's Interactive Classroom Working Group on the schools' experiences, the lessons they have learnt and the good practice they have developed. This research has informed the development of the publication 'School strategies for fostering students' digital competences. Guidelines for school leaders'. Find the publication and other case studies here: <https://fcl.eun.org/icwg>

Introduction to Slovenian Context

Slovenia's education ecosystem is shaped by a combination of EU directives, national strategies, and specific initiatives aimed at developing digital competences among different stakeholders, including students. Digital education in Slovenia began in 1994 with systemic measures/approaches to integrate ICT in teaching and learning. The foundations were laid by the computer literacy programme (1994–2000, extended to 2006). In 1998, the role of ICT/digital coordinator was established in primary education. Since 1995, progress and achievements have been regularly promoted nationally and internationally.

In 2006, the Programme Council for Informatisation of Education adopted the Informatisation of Education Action Plan, setting new goals and measures for all stakeholders, further advancing digital education. After 2006, the absence of a national programme was offset by various projects that maintained the momentum in digital education. From 2008 to 2013, the E-education project (E-šolstvo) developed the 'e-competent teacher standard'. During this period, most teachers and headteachers underwent extensive training through seminars, conferences and on-site workshops. Over 10,000 teachers and students participated in e-communities (Moodle) for educational purposes. Post-2015, the main project has been [Innovative Learning Environments – Pedagogy 1:1](#) which focuses on new teaching methods and digital competences. Additionally, Erasmus+ Action 3

projects have been developing various digital education practices (e.g. [AI4Teachers](#)).

The Covid-19 pandemic accelerated the adoption of digital skills and technologies in education, highlighting teachers' essential roles and revealing both opportunities and challenges in remote learning. Slovenia's educational system has adapted well to these new realities.

For digital education to have wide-ranging impacts, active societal participation and alignment with national goals (e.g., AI, digital transformation, green transition, literacy, mental health and safe learning environments) are crucial. The Programme Council for Digital Education was assigned a task in 2019 to prepare a new national [Digital Education Action Plan \(ANDI\)](#). The creation of the document involved active participation from various stakeholders (pupils, students, teachers, headteachers, professors, researchers, union representatives, policy makers).

The recovery and resilience plan (RRP) of Slovenia further underscores the importance of digital education. It allocates substantial funds to enhance digital infrastructure in schools, develop digital curricula and provide training for educators. This initiative aims to bridge the digital divide and ensure that all students, regardless of their background, have access to high-quality digital education.

More information:

[Country Digital Education Ecosystems and Governance: A Companion to Digital Education Outlook 2023](#) | READ online (oecd-ilibrary.org)

Introduction to the school



Primary School Bratov Polančičev, Maribor is a well-established primary school located in the heart of Maribor, the second largest city in Slovenia. The school was officially established by the Maribor Municipality in 1947 and serves several city districts. The school building is equipped with modern facilities following significant upgrades, including energy-efficiency renovations, advanced electrical and mechanical installations, and a comprehensive wireless computer network. Specialised classrooms, such as those for home economics and a well-equipped kitchen, underline the school's dedication to practical and hands-on learning experiences. The school prides itself on high academic standards, evidenced by notable achievements in national assessments. The school emphasises a well-rounded education, balancing strong academic programmes with a rich offering of extracurricular activities in arts and sports, along with various excursions. This diverse curriculum is designed to cater to the holistic development of students,

Why this school as a case study?

The school was selected as a case study due to its approach to integrating digital technologies within its curriculum and educational practices. The school's development and execution of a digital strategy demonstrates a forward-thinking vision. The strategy includes the deployment of modern

ensuring they excel not only academically but also in their own personal growth.

The teaching staff (61 all together) is highly qualified, and continuously engages in professional development to keep up with modern teaching methodologies and technological advancements. Thus, teachers are well-prepared to integrate innovative teaching methods and digital tools into their classrooms, thereby fostering a dynamic and engaging learning environment.

With 554 students, the school maintains a community-centric approach, fostering close-knit relationships between students, teachers and parents. The school actively involves parents in the educational process, and so promotes a collaborative atmosphere.

In the wider community, the school is recognised for its innovative educational practices and active participation in various national (Eco School, Healthy School, Cultural school, Fit pedagogics, Innovative Pedagogy) and international projects (Erasmus+, UNESCO).

educational technologies such as AI, VR and advanced STEM tools, which provide students with hands-on experiences that prepare them for future technological advancements.

Recognising the importance of digital literacy, the school prioritises the development of digital

competences among both students and staff. The school employs innovative pedagogies such as the [Innovative Pedagogy 1:1](#) and [Innovative Pedagogy 5.0](#) projects, which leverage one-to-one computing to personalise learning.

The leadership plays an important role in driving digital innovation. One of the factors that contributes to the selection of the school as a case study is the relatively recent appointment of the headteacher, who has been in the role for two years. Together with a robust digital coordinator role, a position held by an experienced professional, they have been dedicated to overseeing the integration of digital technologies.

School leadership team

The leadership team consists of the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and the digital coordinator. Responsibilities within the leadership team are clearly delineated. The headteacher coordinates with external stakeholders and ensures that the overall vision and strategy are aligned with the school's goals. The deputy headteacher focuses on the day-to-day management of the pedagogical process, ensuring that teaching methods and curricular activities are effectively implemented. The digital coordinator plays a crucial role in the school's leadership team. With extensive experience in educational technology, he is responsible for implementing the digital strategy, maintaining the technological infrastructure – including collaboration with external technology providers, and providing ongoing support and training to both teachers and students.

The process of forming the leadership team is overseen by the headteacher, who appoints team members based on their expertise and ability to contribute to the school's strategic goals. Team

The school's administration actively supports continuous professional development for teachers. The school's approach to integrating digital technologies is inclusive and collaborative. By involving all stakeholders in the digital transformation process, the school fosters a culture of shared responsibility and collective growth.

By securing funding through national and international projects, the school has invested in state-of-the-art infrastructure and resources. Participation in national and international projects such as Erasmus+ and UNESCO initiatives highlights the school's commitment to global educational standards and practices.

members are expected to engage in professional development opportunities, and to stay updated on the latest educational trends and technologies.

The leadership team meets regularly, often in informal settings, to discuss ongoing projects and address any issues related to the digital strategy. These meetings facilitate quick decision-making and ensure that the team remains agile and responsive. Decisions are made based on empirical analyses, brainstorming sessions, and thorough evaluations of new proposals, to ensure that any changes or new initiatives are well-considered and strategically sound.

Communication between the leadership team and the rest of the staff is robust. Decisions and updates are presented during professional meetings and pedagogical conferences, ensuring that all staff members are informed and engaged in the implementation process. This keeps everyone aligned with the school's strategic goals and fosters a sense of collective ownership and responsibility.

Vision-values of the school digital education strategy

Why did the school decide to develop a digital strategy?

The decision to develop a digital strategy originated from the recognition of the critical role that digital competence plays in modern education and the need to prepare students for a rapidly evolving technological landscape.

The vision of digital education is centred around creating a modern, inclusive and dynamic learning environment. The school aims to integrate digital technologies seamlessly into its curriculum to enhance the learning experience and ensure students are well equipped with the necessary skills for the future. This vision includes the

use of advanced technologies like AI, VR and comprehensive STEM education to provide students with hands-on, practical experiences that foster critical thinking, creativity and problem-solving abilities. The digital strategy also emphasises the development of digital competences among both students and staff.

According to the headteacher, the digital strategy was essential to align with the school's broader educational goals and to ensure that all students receive a modern, relevant education. The headteacher stressed that the strategy helps in systematically incorporating digital tools and methodologies into everyday teaching practices.

How did the preparation (practical steps) of the digital strategy work?

The digital strategy is closely tied to the school's vision and broader development plan (2023-2028). The process of developing the digital strategy was systematic and collaborative. The school reviewed various guidelines and strategic frameworks, including European guidelines like [DigComp 2.2](#) and [DigCompEdu](#), and national programmes such as the [National Programme for the Promotion of the Development and Use of Artificial Intelligence in Slovenia](#). School-specific guidelines, such as the Golden Rules for the Use of Mobile Devices and guidelines for distance learning, were also considered. An analysis of the school's current digital capabilities and needs was conducted, evaluating the existing infrastructure, technological tools, and the digital competences of both teachers and students. Tools like [SELFIE Reports](#) and feedback from the Innovative Pedagogy 1:1 project were used to assess the situation.

The initiative for the digital strategy came primarily from the digital coordinators' team, which included experienced members who had previously worked on related projects. The digital coordinators are teachers with relevant qualifications who are employed in the position of digital coordinators

at the school. The leadership team, including the headteacher and key stakeholders, played a crucial role in driving the initiative forward. A development team, including the digital coordinators team and other key teachers, was formed to lead the preparation. This team was responsible for drafting the strategy, integrating feedback from various sources, and ensuring alignment with the school's overall vision and goals. Teachers, students and parents were involved in the preparation process through consultations and feedback sessions.

Teachers generally responded positively to the introduction of the digital strategy, appreciating the support and training provided, which helped them integrate digital tools into their teaching practices more effectively. Students adapted well to the digital strategy. They gained better access to digital resources and tools, which supported their learning and development of digital skills. The coordinator highlighted, 'Our students quickly embraced the new technologies, and their engagement levels increased significantly.' Parents were basically just informed and involved through regular updates and consultations. They appreciated the move towards a more digitally integrated educational environment, which also facilitated better communication between the school and home, such as through e-Asistent⁽¹⁾ and email communications. The headteacher remarked, 'Parents valued the improved communication channels and the overall enhancement of the educational experience for their children.'

Focus and aims

The focus and angle of the digital education strategy are centred on fostering a comprehensive and integrated approach to digital literacy and competences for both students and teachers. 'Our goal is to prepare students for the future by integrating advanced technologies and fostering digital competences. This is not just about using digital tools but understanding and applying

¹ e-Asistent is an online platform designed to facilitate communication and administrative processes within schools. It is widely used in Slovenia and provides a range of tools and features that help teachers, students and parents to manage and monitor various aspects of the educational experience. Key functions of e-Asistent include tracking student attendance, recording grades, sharing homework assignments and enabling direct communication between teachers and parents. This platform aims to streamline school administration, enhance transparency and improve the overall efficiency of educational activities.

them effectively,' the headteacher stated. The digital coordinator highlighted that the strategy is also about empowering teachers to utilise digital tools confidently. 'We aim to provide continuous professional development and support so that teachers can integrate these tools seamlessly into their teaching practices.'

The process of deciding on this focus involved extensive consultations and collaborative planning. The school reviewed existing guidelines and conducted an internal analysis to assess its current capabilities and identify areas for improvement.

What are the main objectives of the digital strategy and why?

The main objectives of the digital strategy are outlined in the school's development plan 2023 – 2028.

1. Enhancement of digital competences for teachers and students by conducting monthly workshops and advanced training sessions to improve teachers' digital skills and their ability to integrate technology into their teaching methods and develop students' ability to critically evaluate digital information, communicate effectively using digital platforms, and solve problems using digital tools. The headteacher underlined that their 'goal is to ensure that both teachers and students are proficient in using digital tools, which is essential for modern education.'
2. Integration of digital tools into teaching and learning by establishing a systematic selection of digital tools based on pedagogical needs and ensuring their consistent use across all subjects. The digital coordinator explained that they 'carefully choose digital tools that align with our educational goals and ensure they are used consistently to enhance learning.'
3. Promotion of innovative pedagogical practices by supporting teachers in exploring and implementing new teaching methods and technologies to increase student engagement and improve learning outcomes. The headteacher remarked that 'innovation in teaching is key to keeping students engaged and improving their learning experiences.'

4. Facilitating efficient digital communication and collaboration by implementing and utilising standardised digital platforms for seamless communication among teachers, students and parents. The digital coordinator added that 'effective communication is vital, and standardised platforms help us maintain clear and efficient communication channels.'
5. Ensuring sustainable and equitable access to technology by providing that all students and teachers have access to necessary digital tools and infrastructure, including mobile devices and robust internet connectivity. The headteacher noted that 'equitable access to technology ensures that all our students have the tools they need to succeed, regardless of their background.'
6. Fostering a safe and responsible digital environment by teaching students about online safety, digital ethics and the responsible use of technology. The digital coordinator highlighted that 'it's crucial that our students understand how to navigate the digital world safely and responsibly, which is why we emphasise digital citizenship in our curriculum.'

As the digital coordinator pointed out, 'there is no modern school without modern technology.'

How does the school implement digital strategy and ensure/encourage all employees to be involved?

The key steps and measures are built upon several enablers.

1. Professional development and training during which the school organises regular workshops and advanced training sessions for teachers to enhance their digital competences. These sessions are designed to cover various aspects of digital tools and their integration into teaching practices. Specialised training sessions, such as weekend workshops, are conducted twice a year, and focus on advanced digital skills and innovative pedagogical methods. Continuous support is provided through helpdesk services and technical support teams, ensuring that teachers can resolve any issues they encounter

with digital tools. The headteacher noted that ‘our professional development programmes are crucial. We provide continuous training and ensure that every teacher feels confident in using digital tools. This ongoing support is vital for the successful implementation of our strategy.’ Collaborative planning and execution is carried out by the so-called school development teams which are formed and consist of members from different disciplines and grade levels, to work on priority tasks and projects related to the digital strategy. Clear and measurable goals are set for each academic year, with detailed action plans and timelines. Activities are aligned with the overall strategic objectives. The digital coordinator mentioned that ‘by forming interdisciplinary teams, we encourage teachers to collaborate and share their experiences.’

2. Integration of digital tools into daily practice where the school establishes a consistent set of digital tools and platforms for use across all subjects and grade levels. This includes digital communication platforms, educational software and online resources. The headteacher added that ‘we ensure that the digital tools we use are integrated into our daily practices. This consistency helps in creating a seamless learning experience for our students.’
3. Infrastructure and resource provision to ensure that all students and teachers have access to the necessary digital devices, such as tablets and laptops. The coordinator stated that ‘our investment in infrastructure is substantial. We

Infrastructure and funding

The main infrastructure used to support the implementation of the school’s digital education strategy includes high-speed internet connectivity, interactive whiteboards, tablets and laptops for both students and teachers. Advanced tools such as 3D printers and laser cutters are available in the school’s digital fabrication lab, which aims to foster creativity and practical skills among students.

The digital coordinator plays a significant role in overseeing the technology, providing guidance,

want to ensure that both students and teachers have access to the best technology available to enhance their learning and teaching experiences.’

4. Fostering a supportive culture where leadership team plays crucial role in mediating between the vision of the digital strategy and its practical implementation. They provide guidance, address concerns and ensure that the strategy is realistic and achievable. Successful innovations are shared and scaled across the school. The headteacher remarked that ‘creating a supportive environment where teachers feel comfortable experimenting is essential.’
5. Communication and collaboration for which teachers regularly meet in both formal and informal settings to discuss progress, share experiences and collaborate on digital projects. This includes development team meetings, pedagogical conferences and workshops. The coordinator commented that ‘we keep everyone informed and involved, which helps in building a strong community support system.’
6. The implementation of the digital strategy is continuously monitored through various evaluation tools, such as feedback surveys, performance reports and self-evaluation sessions. The headteacher explained that ‘we constantly monitor our progress and seek feedback. This helps us make necessary adjustments and keep our strategy effective and relevant.’

and supporting teachers and students. Due to the complexity of some IT tasks, the school collaborates with external IT firms to ensure that all technical issues are promptly and effectively addressed.

Funding the development and implementation of the school’s digital education strategy involves multiple sources. A significant portion of the funding comes from various projects, accounting for about three-quarters of the total investment. These projects include national and international initiatives like

Erasmus+ and partnerships with local government bodies. The school also allocates funds from its budget surplus, which has been used to purchase equipment like AV tools and STEM kits. The Maribor municipality provides financial support based on the

Role of AI and other emerging technologies

The digital education strategy includes elements about the use of emerging technologies in teaching and assessment. The strategy is designed to integrate advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) to enhance the learning experience and provide innovative assessment methods.

In practice, these technologies are applied in several ways. For instance, AI-driven tools are used to personalise learning experiences and provide real-time feedback to students. The digital coordinator mentioned that 'we use AI models like ChatGPT to help students prepare for presentations, ensuring that they understand and can articulate their topics well.' Another example is the use of Bing for history projects, where students engage in interactive sessions with the AI to gather and analyse historical

Added value and impact

The introduction of the school digital education strategy has enhanced the overall function of the school as an organisation. The digital strategy has streamlined administrative processes, improved communication and increased the efficiency of educational delivery. The headteacher highlighted that digital tools have 'facilitated better data management and resource allocation, making administrative tasks more efficient and less time-consuming.' This has allowed staff to focus more on educational activities rather than administrative burdens.

Students engage more interactively with their learning materials through digital platforms and tools. The digital coordinator noted, 'Students are more engaged and motivated because they find digital learning tools exciting and relevant to their interests and future careers.' This engagement has translated into a more dynamic and participatory classroom environment. Performance reports indicate improved academic results and higher levels of student engagement. Teachers have

number of students, which helps cover the costs of essential devices and infrastructure upgrades. The headteacher noted that 'we have a well-structured financial strategy.'

data. Speech recognition technology is employed for language learning, allowing students to practice and improve their pronunciation and fluency by interacting with AI-based tools that provide instant feedback.

In June 2024, Primary School Bratov Polančičev was one of the first schools in the Digi-sustainable teacher ([Digitrajni učitelj](#)) project to conduct Effective Use of AI Tools training. The training was successfully completed by 75% of the entire staff.

For school administration purposes, staff members use AI and other emerging technologies to streamline processes and improve efficiency. The headteacher explained that AI is utilised for administrative tasks such as scheduling and resource allocation, which helps reduce the workload on staff and improves overall productivity.

reported that the use of digital tools has allowed for more personalised and effective teaching methods, which cater to the individual needs of students. The headteacher attributed these improvements directly to the strategic integration of technology in the classroom, stating, 'The digital strategy has enabled us to provide a more tailored and effective educational experience for our students.'

The school conducts regular surveys and collects feedback from teachers, students and parents to assess the impact of the digital strategy. Performance reports and evaluations are generated periodically to monitor progress and identify areas that need improvement. Self-evaluation sessions are held where teachers and other staff members reflect on the effectiveness of the digital tools and methods they are using. The headteacher noted that 'we rely heavily on data and feedback to understand how well our strategy is working. This continuous feedback loop is essential for making informed decisions and improvements.'

For teachers, the introduction of the digital strategy has led to a more organised and efficient teaching environment. They have access to a wide range of digital resources and tools. They benefit from continuous professional development and support, which has improved their digital competences and confidence in using technology. The availability of real-time data and feedback allows teachers to tailor their teaching methods to better meet the needs of their students.

Students have access to a variety of digital tools and platforms that make learning more interactive and engaging. The use of digital technologies has enhanced their critical thinking and problem-solving skills, improved collaboration with their peers and provided better access to information and learning resources. The introduction of digital tools has made it easier for students to receive feedback and support from their teachers, improving their overall learning outcomes. The coordinator added that 'students are more motivated and engaged. They enjoy using digital tools, which makes learning more fun and effective.'

The broader school community has reacted positively to the introduction of the digital education strategy. Parents have also reacted positively,

Challenges

The main challenges when developing the school digital education strategy were ensuring that all teachers were on board with the changes, securing adequate funding, and integrating the new technologies seamlessly into existing educational practices. The headteacher noted that aligning the diverse levels of digital competence among the teaching staff was particularly challenging. 'We had to ensure that all teachers, regardless of their initial skill level, were comfortable and proficient with the new technologies.'

One challenge was securing the necessary funding to support the digital strategy. The school relied heavily on various projects, including national and international initiatives like Erasmus+, to fund their technological advancements. Integrating the technology in a way that complemented and enhanced existing teaching methods required careful planning and continuous adjustments.

appreciating the increased transparency and communication facilitated by digital tools.

Developing a digital strategy has had a significant impact on the school. It has provided a clear framework for integrating technology into teaching and learning, which has improved educational outcomes and engagement. The strategy enhanced the school's ability to innovate and adapt to new technological advancements. By setting specific goals and providing continuous support and professional development for teachers, the strategy has fostered a culture of continuous improvement and innovation.

The digital coordinator added that the strategy has been pivotal in addressing several challenges, such as the initial resistance to technology among some staff members and the need for continuous technological upgrades. He noted that the strategy includes comprehensive training programmes and support systems that have helped teachers become more comfortable and proficient with digital tools. He also mentioned that the digital strategy has enabled the school to participate in various national and international projects, which have brought additional resources and opportunities for innovation.

Challenges also included managing the digital divide among teachers, maintaining the technology infrastructure, and ensuring that the technology was used effectively to enhance learning outcomes. The coordinator noted that 'we faced challenges in making sure that the digital tools were being used to their full potential in the classroom, which required continuous monitoring and feedback.'

The school implemented different strategies. Continuous professional development was a priority, with regular workshops and training sessions to help teachers improve their digital competences. The school formed interdisciplinary development teams to foster collaboration and share best practices among teachers. It strategically combined resources from various projects, municipal support and its own budget surplus to ensure continuous investment in digital tools and infrastructure.

Sustainability and improvement of strategy



The implementation of the digital strategy has been successfully managed through real-time monitoring, regular evaluations and concrete data collection methods. Real-time monitoring involves the use of digital tools and platforms that track the usage and effectiveness of the technologies integrated into the educational process, e.g. software that logs how often and effectively digital tools are used in classrooms, as well as feedback mechanisms where teachers and students can report their experiences and issues in real-time.

The plans for the future are comprehensive and forward-looking, and aim to build on the successes and lessons learned from the existing digital strategy. The school will continue to focus on enhancing the digital competences of both teachers and students. The plan is to further integrate advanced technologies into the curriculum, including a stronger emphasis on AI, VR, and AR. The digital coordinator explained that 'we are planning to incorporate AI-driven tools more extensively, not only for administrative purposes but also to enhance learning experiences through personalised education and adaptive learning systems.'

The school aims to ensure that all students and teachers have access to up-to-date devices and robust internet connectivity. The headteacher mentioned that 'we are committed to keeping our technology current and reliable, ensuring that every

student and teacher can benefit from seamless digital learning.'

The school plans to strengthen partnerships with other educational institutions and participate in more international projects like Erasmus+ to exchange best practices and innovations in digital education. The coordinator highlighted that 'our collaborations with other schools and international partners have been invaluable. They provide us with new insights and resources that we can adapt and implement in our own setting.'

The school also plans to expand its digital fabrication capabilities by setting up a fully operational school fabrication lab where students can engage in hands-on learning with tools like 3D printers and laser cutters. This aims to foster creativity and practical skills among students, preparing them for future careers in STEM fields. The headteacher noted that 'by providing students with access to cutting-edge fabrication tools, we are not only enhancing their learning experience but also preparing them for future technological advancements and career opportunities.'

The school will continue to educate students on digital citizenship, online safety and the ethical use of technology, by regular sessions on these topics and the implementation of stricter guidelines and monitoring systems to protect students' digital identities and privacy.

The case study complements the European Schoolnet's publication 'School strategies for fostering students' digital competences. Guidelines for school leaders'.

Find the publication and other case studies at fcl.eun.org/icwg



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