

Digital resources case study: Andy Bill

USING MISSION X RESOURCES TO INSPIRE STUDENTS TO EXPLORE STEM

Capturing imaginations

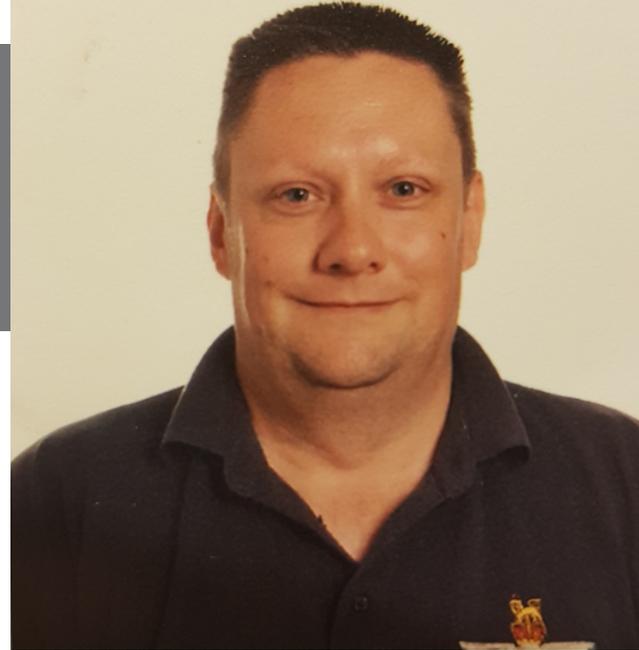
Andy Bill is a teacher at Wightwick Hall School, a state special educational needs school for 11 to 19 year olds who have additional learning needs or disabilities.

"I was looking at ways to enhance our STEM offer for our class. I liked the look of two space themed resources: Mission X and Mission to the Moon. We started using them in school towards the end of lockdown. The students have really taken to Mission X. We have a session once a week and they all look forward to it.

We provided each student with a printed Mission X booklet and are careful to link it to other subjects as well. They take so much pride in it and each day they come in to tell me something new that they've researched at home. It really has captured their imaginations."

The Mission X resources use the excitement of space to inspire students to learn more about nutrition, exercise, science and space exploration. The materials are available in a range of languages and are supported by teacher guides, a student handbook and videos. Andy has been able to link other topics into the space theme too.

"This term we're doing a bit of gardening and so we've talked about how you might grow plants on Mars. Mission X has formed a backbone to our classroom learning which has continued to engage the students."



Growing confidence

Andy has observed a change in his students after finding a class project that they can all engage in.

"Low confidence is something we see in a lot of our students and I've noticed them growing in confidence since starting this project.

They are making progress, both individually and in groups. You can see their confidence grow as they achieve different stages of Mission X.

Other teachers have noticed and wanted to engage with the resources. Even the headteacher has had a look!"

Adapting the resources

Andy recognises that being able to adapt resources or provide extensions for those students that need additional stretch is really helpful.

"Often mainstream resources are not at the level that my students can access but Mission X is really easy to adapt to different learning needs.

It is great to have a real life context that is meaningful and not over-simplified yet accessible. It is also really helpful to have the sessions planned out, it reduces the preparation time!"

Andy keeps an eye out for STEM Learning's newsletter to see if any other resources spark his interest.

"If I'm looking for something specific then I'll search for a keyword such as 'sound' and see what pops up. There are resources from the RAF, from engineering companies, a real range. We have been looking at aeronautics recently and used some resources that fitted that area.

Sometimes the resource isn't quite right but it triggers an idea which you can then develop for your classroom."

A collaborative space challenge

Mission X is a European Space Agency challenge organised in the UK by ESERO-UK (the European Space Education Resource Office UK). It aims to use the context of space to open doors for young people by delivering engaging, world-class teaching in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM).

ESERO-UK run a number of engaging challenges and competitions including Mission X (aimed at primary schools) and CanSat (a secondary school competition).



Embedded into school curriculum

Mission X has been so popular at Wightwick Hall School that it has been made part of their STEM curriculum.

"This will carry on now so the next group will start Mission X in September, spreading it across different lessons within the curriculum.

The students find it so exciting that it is linked to the UK Space Agency and Tim Peake!"

