

# How Foremarke School Dubai Creates a Schoolwide Community and Helps Students Learn Arabic with Showbie



**Martha McCleary**  
**HEAD OF DIGITAL LITERACY**

Formerly from Toronto Canada, Martha now resides in the UAE and is Head of Digital Literacy at Foremarke Dubai. She is also a Showbie Champion and an ADE. You can follow her on Twitter at @mcmcclary.

Foremarke School Dubai is an academically advanced private school located in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). As a part of EKI Schools, Foremarke School Dubai belongs to a three-school network in the UAE that offers students a rigorous and balanced curriculum to prepare them for senior school and beyond.

## **1:1 for 21st-Century Learning**

At Foremarke School Dubai, students are expected to excel in core subjects and also learn Arabic, one of the world's most difficult languages. However, rigorous coursework is only part of what makes Foremarke School Dubai unique. The school also believes that today's students need open communication with their peers and teachers and that technology is essential to creating this connection. This belief led the school to adopt a 1:1 iPad model in 2014.

"Before we implemented our technology plan, we thought carefully about why we were doing it," explains Martha McCleary, Head of Digital Literacy at Foremarke School Dubai. "Beyond academics, we believe that to succeed in the 21st century, students need open communication with their teachers, peers, and parents."



Even with a sound reason to implement technology, school leadership understood that simply having access to technology would not accomplish the goal of connecting students to their learning community.

“Using technology in education is a powerful tool that stimulates our students to become innovative problem solvers,” says Martha, “but students also need to develop complex thinking skills by collaborating with their peers. This cannot be accomplished with computers or tablets alone. We needed to find a solution for our workflow – to leverage the iPad in our classrooms and build an online collaborative community.”

Martha worked diligently with school leadership to find the best solution for managing student classwork and to fully integrate the iPad into the daily curriculum. She piloted several workflow platforms before finding that Showbie was the best fit for Foremarke School Dubai. Showbie’s comprehensive platform allowed for differentiation in teaching, storing, and sharing student work and increased communication between teachers, students, and parents. Within a year Showbie was implemented schoolwide, and the following year Showbie was required for all teachers to use as their primary workflow tool.

### **Connecting a School Community**

Foremarke School Dubai has used Showbie for just a few years, and its power to connect students, teachers, and parents is evident in countless ways. Parents in particular have witnessed immediate benefits with Showbie, because they now have insight into their child’s learning that was previously inaccessible. The link between school and home has strengthened, and homework is less of an obstacle with parents and students in sync with what’s being covered in the classroom.

“With Showbie, parents can see what their child is doing at school at any time, rather than waiting for parent-teacher conferences to learn about their progress in a subject,” says Martha. “Having parents become more active in their child’s education gives more depth to learning in class because students can enhance critical thinking skills by discussing important topics at home as well as at school.”

Year 3 teacher Emma Bond has also seen the benefits of connecting directly with parents in her classroom.

“Before Showbie, I communicated with parents via a ‘class representative,’ making it difficult to personalize progress updates for each student,” explains Emma. “Now parents can see exactly what their child is doing in class, along with any feedback I submit to show how their child is evolving in any subject.”

Like their parents, students are benefiting from Showbie’s ability to streamline connectivity and communication. As shown in Martha’s recent staff surveys asking teachers for feedback on school technology, teachers see firsthand that students love Showbie and its features.

“Showbie allows me to personalize Arabic learning for my students because I can send them assignments based on their abilities.”

— MAHA ALHASAN

“Students are eager to use the app and are always excited to apply their knowledge in creative ways,” said a teacher in a recent anonymous survey. “We now have excitement in the classroom again, which has made school life more rewarding for teachers and students alike.”

Emma’s Year 3 students have also embraced Showbie with enthusiasm. Because students are so receptive to Showbie, Emma encourages her students to become independent and confident learners with technology.

“Showbie has made it possible for me to differentiate work in a subtle way to accommodate my students’ different learning levels,” says Emma. “I just upload work into each student’s folder and they complete assignments at their own pace, not knowing that their work is any different than their classmates’ work.”

With each year Showbie is used in the classroom, teachers continue to find new ways to implement it into their curricula, and the app has changed the way some teachers use technology to engage students. For example, music teacher Mukami Mugambi has seen dramatic changes in the way children absorb lessons in and out of the classroom with the app’s audio recording features.

“I can keep track of how each student is progressing with a piece of music by listening to their rehearsals on Showbie,” says Mukami. “When the time comes for a class performance, I know my students are ready because they have gotten personalized feedback from me and have access to resources that they can also review at home.”

Mukami also enjoys that Showbie allows her to provide parents with audio of student rehearsals.

“Parents are always excited to attend our major performances but have been able to see only the final product of their child’s work. Now Showbie allows the parents to observe their child’s learning process and appreciate the amount of work they put into preparing for the performance.”



## Language Learning Through Showbie

Foremarke School Dubai has had great success using Showbie to create a collaborative community, but the school hasn't stopped there. Tapping into Showbie's ability to alternate between languages (14, to be exact), the school has also found the app extremely helpful in teaching one of the school's more difficult subjects – Arabic.

All students are required to learn Arabic and with the majority of Foremarke's students being non-native Arabic speakers, teachers are tasked with using different techniques that ensure students understand the language. Teachers are finding that Showbie is a powerful tool that can differentiate lessons for students to immerse both native and non-native Arabic speakers in the language. Maha Alhasan teaches Arabic to non-native speakers and appreciates Showbie's ability to customize her lessons to each student.

"Showbie allows me to personalize Arabic learning for my students because I can send them assignments based on their abilities," says Maha. "My colleagues and I are now able to shift from teacher-centered to student-centered learning, and our students are showing progress in their comprehension of the language."

At Foremarke, four skills are taught to master the Arabic language: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. With Showbie's voice recording and annotation features, students can perfect all skills on one platform, at their own pace.

"Using Showbie in the classroom has advanced the way students comprehend the Arabic language," explains Maha. "I can listen to a student's interpretation of a text and record specific feedback to help them get a firm grasp of the language. They also use their Apple pens to practice writing letters and complete assignments in Arabic, and we can save their work throughout the year to evidence their progress."

With Showbie's ability to alternate between languages, Maha has found that switching between the Arabic and English keyboards has been helpful to students.

"Students can use Showbie's Arabic keyboard to begin recognizing the shapes of each letter and eventually to complete full assignments in Arabic text," says Maha. "The ability to switch between English and Arabic keyboards allows students to build their understanding of Arabic because they can reference both languages in one location."

Maha has also used Showbie to expand students' Arabic learning beyond her classroom.

"I have created a collaborative class on Showbie to connect with a school in Abu Dhabi," explains Maha. "Students from each class share and review mutual assignments and help each other excel in Arabic without any need to meet in person. They are able to see how other students approach their Arabic learning, which helps them interpret the language in different ways."

Foremarke is steadily continuing its mission to be an academically advanced school in the UAE. With its success in building an online collaborative community as well as in helping teachers find new ways to deliver difficult material, the school is delivering on its promise to give all students what they need to succeed.

"We are dedicated to incorporating technology into all aspects of our curriculum," says Martha. "Showbie is a big part of this, and we are excited that it can be fully integrated into our curriculum and used across the school. This will help us continue to build our online community and improve learning for our students."

