Snapshot Study 12

The school and its vision for digital technology

SS12 was a state funded secondary school in a regional town in Australia. The school vision was about 'Excellence in everything we do.' The ICT Coordinator and teachers who participated in the study were focussed on enhancing student learning by providing them with improved access to computers. The ICT coordinator believed that by changing routines, in this case the level of access to computers, you would bring about changes in culture.

The digital technology strategy

The school had phased in a 1:1 netbook programme over the previous five years, partly in competitive response to a newly built school in the same town. This had been funded through the Federal government scheme for 1:1 laptops for years 9 to 12, combined with school funding and a A$60 per year contribution from parents. In the first year of the programme students in Years 7 and 9 were provided with 1:1 netbooks. Within three years every student had been provided with a device. The school's WiFi infrastructure had been progressively improved over this period.

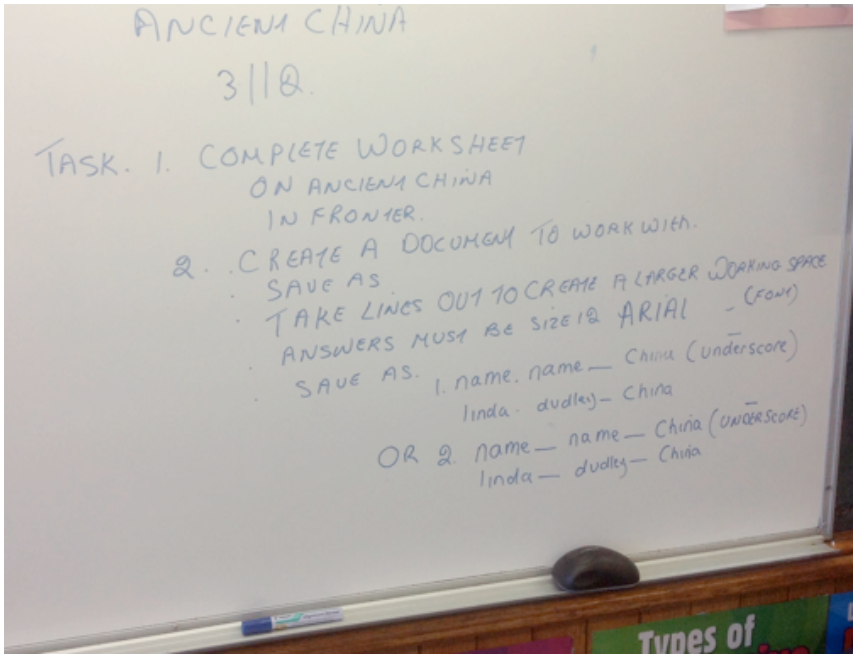
In January 2013, with the end of Federal government funding, the school moved to a Bring Your Own Technology (BYOT) strategy.

An example activity

Yr7 History – Researching a Chinese Dynasty

The 22 students were sat at tables facing the front of the class. One boy, with a hearing impairment had 1:1 adult support. The class teacher introduced the lesson by recapping on the work that the students had been doing on four Chinese Dynasties in the previous lesson. Then, as she distributed a handout she asked the students to log in to Fronter (the school's virtual learning environment). A couple of children who were having technical problems were sent to see the ICT coordinator.

The teacher read through the handout, which contained information about Chinese Dynasties, expanding on some of the content to ensure that the students understood it. She then explained that pairs of students needed to download the Chinese Dynasty worksheet from Fronter and use the websites listed on it or other sites they found on the Internet to answer the questions in relation to their chosen dynasty. The students were asked to enhance the formatting of the document and then record their answers underneath the corresponding questions.



As the students started to work on the task the teacher wrote the instructions on the whiteboard. She then circulated around the class, dealing with questions and resolving technical problems (one of the suggested reference websites was

blocked for students, but not for staff). Students were noted to be composing texts based on researched information, rather than cutting and pasting.

At the end of the lesson the teacher asked the students to upload their completed worksheets to Fronter so that she could mark them.

Impact

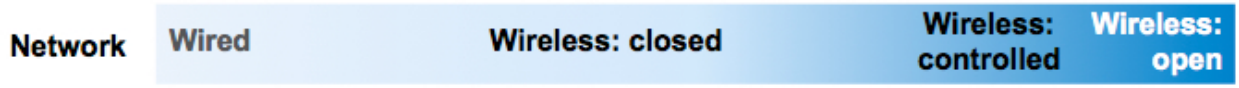
Teachers reported that easy access to the Internet had increased the availability of resources, which had enriched the curriculum and enabled a move to more independent study. Where staff or students experienced difficulties accessing the Internet, for example because of lack of bandwidth to cope with large numbers of users, they experienced frustration that resulted in reduced levels of use of the devices.

Key lessons learnt

- Be flexible, things will not always go as you expect
- Don't expect the students to know how to use the technology effectively, they need to be taught (e.g. how to search effectively)
- Condense and communicate the user agreement effectively to the community
- Have protocols in place for dealing with issues, such as breakdowns, inappropriate use and cyber bullying
- Advise students to keep their device in a rigid carry case to prevent accidental impact damage.

An emerging trend – Going wireless

This school had improved its wireless network as part of the roll out of 1:1 netbooks and then the implementation of a BYOT strategy. Students were issued with usernames and passwords that allowed them to connect their mobile devices to the school's open wireless network. This provided them with filtered Internet access, including access to the school's VLE (Fronter).



Category	Explanation
Wired	The school has a wired network, which provides managed access to the Internet as well as any internal school servers.
Wireless: closed	The school has a wireless network, which provides managed access to the Internet as well as any internal school servers. Only school owned devices can access the wireless network.
Wireless: controlled	The school has a wireless network, which provides managed access to the Internet as well as internal school servers. Only devices which have been registered with the school (e.g. the MAC address has been registered) can access the wireless network.
Wireless: open	The school has a wireless network, which provides (filtered) access to the Internet. Any wireless device can access the wireless network without having to be registered. This may be called the Guest network.