

# Peter Moyes School gets everyone online, everywhere

*ET staff*



**T**he measure of the success of Peter Moyes Anglican Community School's revamped ICT network is the number of complaints that Richard Cackett, the Middle School ICT Integration Coordinator, receives. As he says: "teachers are very quick to speak up when things go wrong."

"Our teachers spend a lot of time putting lessons together, if the IT lets them down they're very vocal about it."

Fortunately for him the network has been humming along, dealing with increasing traffic and pressure as the school's laptop program transitions from the computer lab model to a one-on-one program.

Founded in 2000, Peter Moyes is a co-educational K-12 school located in Mindarie, 36 km north from Perth. The school has close to 1600 students, and is located in a rapidly growing suburban corridor.

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Partnering with Civica Education, design of the school's IT network upgrade program began in 2012. From the outset, the project has been characterised by carefulness and conservatism, with the focus always on the students' needs.

"You have to remember that the greater parts of our exams are hand written, including university entrance exams in Year 12. To completely abandon traditional teaching would be a mistake," Cackett says.

The school currently offers laptops to students in Years 4, 7, 8, 9 and 10. Laptops are being rolled out to Years 5, 6, 11 and 12 in 2017 and 2018. The start of the school year sees more than

500 new devices purchased and configured for students and every third year 100 replacement staff devices are provided. The school offers parents a hire purchase arrangement for their children's devices, using economies of scale to deliver savings.

The school currently uses Moodle as its LMS but will be transitioning to Canvas in the coming year. Over the last two years the school has upgraded its administration package to iWise which is available through Civica Education and links to Moodle [and Canvas when it arrives].

Civica has developed a unified wireless and wired network to provide connectivity to students, teachers and visitors. The network covers an area of more than 100,000 square metres, including classrooms, administration buildings, libraries, science labs, recreation areas and school grounds.

Tablets, laptops projectors, printers and



internet-enabled TVs operate on the same wireless infrastructure and can be accessed from anywhere on the network with the same level of connectivity.

“The network is accessible from every point in the school, including the playing fields, but we’ve told parents that the focus must still be on learning and we’re suggesting access to 50 per cent of the time ... we’re not throwing away tried and tested paper based learning,” Cackett says.

“We introduce students to the one-to-one program in Year 4 and replace their devices every three years, they get a new one in Year 7 and when they reach Year 10 they get another. They currently have pen-based tablets with Microsoft OneNote, so many of our teachers are inevitably moving away from paper based learning.”

Having the network in place has changed the way in which lessons are delivered, Cackett estimates that 25 per cent of teachers have used the technology to its fullest, around 50 per cent have integrated technology into their teaching to some degree and around 25 per cent have decided to stick with the more traditional ways of teaching.

But the rate of adoption isn’t always defined by age, as you might expect, with younger teachers being more comfortable with using technology in their teaching more so than their older colleagues.

“When you have a new graduate you’ll find that they’re willing to try anything but their level of technological skill is quite varied, they might be very social media savvy and comfortable with those apps but unsure as to how to integrate technology into their pedagogy.

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“Older staff know the curriculum backwards, they have good pedagogy, they know how the students are thinking so they can stand back and see how technology fits into their teaching; our teachers of around five years standing have been the best at using the technology” he says.

Technology is matched to the pedagogies in each age group, for instance the Year 4s are very app-heavy in their learning – a popular app centres on the planets and their behaviours – students can investigate what the planets are doing and annotate as they learn. In Year 7 the curriculum becomes more abstract and the focus shifts to become more text-driven.

Senior school is more “drill and kill”, as Cackett describes it, with students accessing documents, filling them in and returning them.

Moving away from the lab based hard wired network to a largely wireless network has meant that a significant amount of new infrastructure has been required, in one building alone up to 500 wireless devices can be active and simultaneously seeking WiFi access.

“That represents a significant demand, and to meet it we’ve replaced all of our access points, which was an 18-month process, it cost around \$1000 to replace each access point and we’ve

installed 30 so that’s been a significant capital outlay” notes Mr Cackett.

“To get the coverage right, some of the points have been moved up to three times, Civica have worked hard to optimise the placement so everyone has an equally good experience with the network.”

Iain Finlayson, Civica Education National Services Manager, says that the strength of the network lies in a pragmatic approach to equipment selection; Civica isn’t affiliated with any particular manufacturer so they’re free to use the best equipment for the job at hand.

“The school had made good technology choices so our approach was more one of optimising and improving what was there,” Finlayson says.

Key to the network’s use and function are four Civica support staff on site, who are active and visible within the campus.

“We tell our ICT support staff that they need to be visible and available to teaching staff at the school, not sat at their desks looking at screens. We’ve seen cases where IT support staff sit in a cave and rarely seen so we wanted our staff to be there whenever an issue crops up.”

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