

St Leonard's takes the BYOD route

Trials over 12 months led to parent-supplied iPad and device policy

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Following a year-long trial St Leonard's College in Brighton East, 16 km south of Melbourne's CBD, has introduced a BYOD policy for all students in Years 5–12.

Susanne Haake and Timothy Barlow were assigned the role of eLearning coordinators last year to facilitate the evaluation process, which involved 17 teachers from nine faculties investigating the use of iPads – from the Early Learning Centre through middle school to Year 12.

“We took our time to investigate all aspects... pedagogy, technology, curriculum and possible implications,” Haake says. “We talked to other schools too and found out about the positives and the potential pitfalls.”

She cites the key performance indicators that the 17 teachers were given to evaluate the



Timothy Barlow Director of Technology Innovation and Susanne Haake Director of eLearning



usability of iPads as evidence of the painstaking internal research process:

- Investigate how devices may be used and which Apps are most suited to their school/ subject area
- Take units of work already used and specifically identify how devices can assist in the delivery of the subject content
- Trial the units identified with a class and provide feedback to the eLearning team
- Work collaboratively with other team members on cross faculty units of work, specifically developed for devices.

By the end of the trial enthusiastic support by teachers and students in all age groups made taking the BYOD route a straightforward decision: from the start of the 2013 school year, students in Years 5–9 would be required to have a parent-provided iPad, while years 10–12 could have a device of their choice.

In the middle school, having tablets flat on the desktop so the teacher can see what students are looking at was a plus for the iPads, as was the immediate access compared to the time wasted starting and switching off laptops.

Teacher comments included:

“The iPads were highly engaging and beneficial. They have been easy to implement in all curriculum areas ...students found them highly intuitive which enabled the



learning outcomes to be maximised.”

“In the Early Learning Centre the iPad was invaluable and a fabulous tool to engage and enrich children’s learning.”

“The iPads were ideal for group activities for reading, very handy for student’s

extension work and a good tool for students who are reluctant to do extra work or students who are a little behind.”

Significantly, the underlying message across all staff was that the effective use of the iPads relied on teacher engagement and innovation. “Technology isn’t an end in itself,” Haake says. “We are still teaching the same rigorous curriculum. A student might choose to present their work in a video, but most would be doing as much pen and paper writing as before.”

Given the school’s comfortable demographic (ICSEA value 1165 against the 1000 national average), many of the students were already iPad owners or had access to one at home, so the announcement did not cause much of a stir “... more of a ‘I’ll bring mine to school,’” Haake says, “the students were already very tech savvy and delighted to have a lighter book load to carry.”

Though parents were asked to provide a 32 GB WiFi enabled iPad, many chose to upsize to a 64 GB model.

Beyond stipulating device minimums: nine inch screen, 30 GB hard drive, a current web browser and capable of running Word, Excel, PowerPoint and pdf files, or equivalent, the school did not stipulate a brand or model. However, of the senior students, around 80 per cent chose a laptop over an iPad and the majority started the year with a MacBook.

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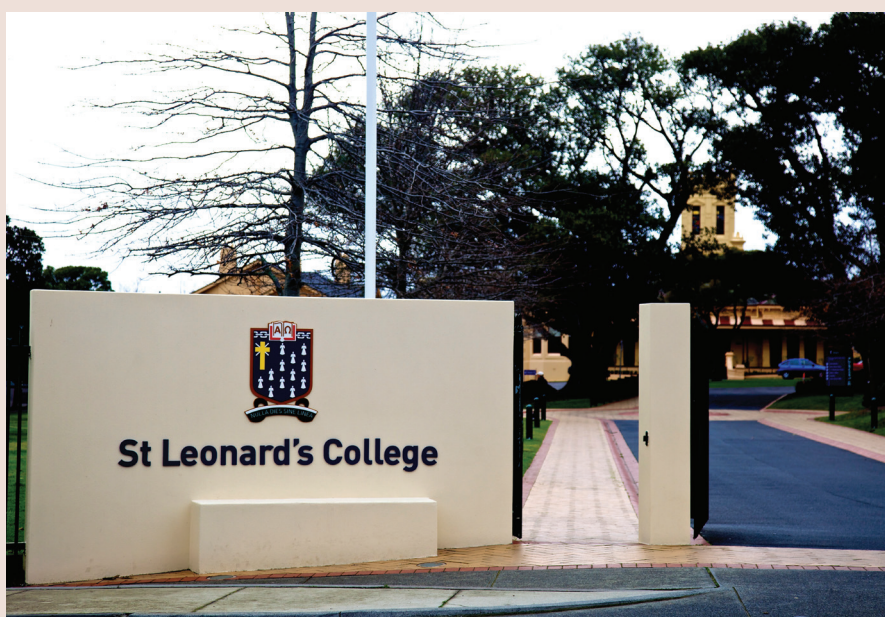
Across middle and senior school classes, students have taken enthusiastically to the online resources

In tandem with the BYOD launch, the school has developed an online content management system to provide middle school and senior students with a wide range of resources. Textbooks for Years 7 through 9 are all e-books this year. Some of the seniors' texts are also e-books, or at least pdf files but academic publishers "still playing catch-up" for VCE and IB texts.

Across middle and senior school classes, students have taken enthusiastically to the online resources, particularly the seniors, who now routinely access the school's server from home. In her role as VCE English teacher, Haake says that discussion time in class is more engaging and more productive when the students have viewed the material in advance.

The school's wireless networks – there are two, one for staff and the other for students – were upgraded to support the use of over 2000 devices. Early tests establishing that peaks of as many as 1600 devices online simultaneously did not significantly slow down response speed.

"I look forward to subjects when I can use my iPad because it makes whatever we are doing more engaging and exciting," one student said. **ET**



School Snapshot

St Leonard's College is an independent K–12 with a student population of 1329 and 168 on the teaching staff.

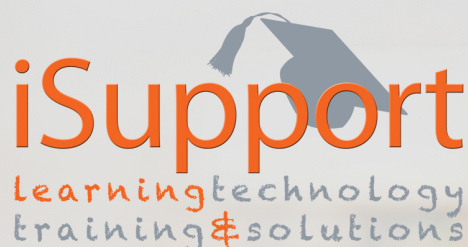
The Early Learning Centre follows the Reggio Emilia approach to teaching three- to five-year olds.

Of the 165 Year 12 students this year, 115 are studying for the VCE and 50 for the International

Baccalaureate. St Leonard's was the first school in Victoria to offer the IB in 1982.

The school's ICSEA value is 1165 with 97% of students in the middle or top quarter.

East Brighton is one of Melbourne's most desirable suburbs, close to Port Philip Bay and 25 minutes by road to the city's CBD.



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