As our girls become accustomed to their Tablet PCs, we look at how it is enriching programs in English, Visual Arts and Drama. This edition also looks at the ways in which our ICT Department supports our students and teachers as they explore the many ways this technology enhances teaching and learning.

**ENGLISH**

Anita Pante, a member of our English Department, outlines the exciting introduction Year 9 English classes have had using the Tablet PCs this term.

We are currently completing a close study of the novel *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee and have been using the Tablet PC to help facilitate and engage the girls in new and meaningful ways. The girls spent the beginning of the term using their Tablet PCs to research the context of the novel and its setting. Students examined a range of articles and primary sources such as interviews and images which gave them a strong understanding of life in the deep south of America in the 1930s.

An important part of this unit of work is the development of students’ analytical writing. The girls have been working on writing small paragraphs that analyse key themes in the novel with the premise that they will build on this writing to develop an argument in an essay. The Tablet PCs have been an extremely useful tool in helping students plan and structure their work. Students have been able to collaboratively write paragraphs with their teacher or in small groups. Being able to manipulate text in Microsoft Word, essentially “cut and paste” text and move it around the page, assists students to clearly structure their ideas.

The Tablet PCs have also allowed students to demonstrate their knowledge of the novel in new and different ways. Students used MovieMaker to create a film trailer that demonstrated their knowledge of the key themes in the novel. As students learn differently, they need different modes in order to express their knowledge. They also capitalised on their strong visual literacy and multimedia skills in their representations of significant moments of the plot or critical aspects of the character’s journey in the text.

OneNote has also been a powerful tool in students being able to organise and track their own learning. Most girls have embraced using OneNote, and enjoy the flexibility of being able to type and write their notes and class activities.

Despite the wonderful changes we have been able to make to enhance student learning through the use of the Tablet PC, we also recognise the value of traditional methods of teaching and learning in our classrooms. Discussion is such a crucial part of the subject of English, and we continue to value the insights and ideas that can be generated through class discussions of our texts and through role play and drama in our classrooms. We are incredibly excited about our next unit of work in Year 9, a non-fiction unit where students will be creating their own documentary. Students will learn about the purpose of documentaries as a non-fiction text and will study several Australian documentaries as part of their study. They will analyse the purpose, audience and context of these documentaries and learn about the ways directors create meaning in these texts through a number of visual, sound, editing and persuasive devices. The students will then have the opportunity to demonstrate their understanding of this medium through creating their own documentary using PhotoStory or MovieMaker. We are enthusiastic to see what the students will create as they have already showcased their outstanding creative talents in a number of tasks this year.

Moving forward to next year, the English Department is passionate about enhancing student learning through the Tablet PCs. We view them as a tool that can help promote stronger language and literacy development in our students. For this reason we have spent this year researching a variety of online software that we can use in our classrooms to support our teaching of literacy. As of next year, all girls in Years 7-10 will receive the Cambridge Language Toolkit, a comprehensive and interactive program that builds students’ language and literacy skills through reading, viewing, listening, speaking, writing and creating.

**ICT HELPDESK**

Who do you call when you have a Digital Disaster or Dilemma? The SCEGGS ICT Helpdesk! Holly Gyton outlines the many services the ICT Helpdesk provides.

The ICT Helpdesk plays a pivotal role in the success of our Tablet PC program, providing students and staff with easy access to a broad range of ICT support services throughout the day. These services include providing information and a proactive education program to try and minimise difficulties before they occur, as well as friendly technical support when the inevitable difficulty does happen.

The ICT Helpdesk staff can provide a multitude of handy tips, advice and workarounds for the digital dilemmas that affect us all from time to time.

SCEGGS ICT Helpdesk is open from 7:30am – 5:00pm, Monday to Friday. Students can drop in before school, after school or at lunchtime to ask for advice or to fix a particular problem. In case of urgent difficulties during a lesson, students may also be allowed to visit the ICT Helpdesk with the permission of their teacher. As our Year 9 students have commented, it took them a little while to get to know their Tablet PC, but one of the best parts has been how supportive the ICT Helpdesk staff have been, “they are friendly, always smiling and do everything to help us out!”
So what are some of the most popular services that our ICT Helpdesk staff provide?

- Quick Fixes: The ICT Helpdesk addresses many issues on the spot, such as software fixes or power management. Students can swap their Tablet PC battery for a charged one at any time or they can leave their Tablet PC with the Helpdesk to be charged when they aren’t using it, e.g. over lunchtime. The Helpdesk staff will also update software for the girls and provide them with advice about setting up technological devices at home.

- Managing files: In this digital age, there is no doubt that digital file management is an essential capability for us all – to avoid that terrible feeling as we realise that something catastrophic has happened to the most serious important file that we have just spent hours working on! As part of our digital education program, our ICT staff provides the girls with their own personal Backup drive on the network, as well as regular advice about the importance of file management. And in the event that a device does fail, the ICT Helpdesk staff can easily restore any files that have been saved on a student’s network Backup drive.

- Printing and scanning: The new print stations located around the school provide access to high quality printing in an environmentally conscious way. These high speed printers default to double-sided printing, provide free scanning and do not release print jobs until they are selected by the student at the printer.

- Providing ‘Hot Spares’: Our warranty arrangements include the provision of a specialised technician onsite the next business day after a warranty issue has been reported. To ensure that the girls can continue working in the meantime, the ICT Helpdesk provides students with a ‘Hot Spare’ Tablet PC until the repair is completed or a replacement has been provided.

- In the event of a disaster: Occasionally, a Tablet PC may be damaged or lost. In the event that this does happen, students should report this immediately to the ICT Helpdesk, who will assess the incident in accordance with the Student Tablet PC Insurance guidelines. The ICT Helpdesk will also provide a temporary Tablet PC for the student while their device is being repaired.

So if our girls (or our parents) have any digital dilemmas with their Tablet PC or would like some ICT advice, please don’t hesitate to contact the SCEGGS ICT Helpdesk who would be only too happy to help out!

**CREATIVE AND PERFORMING ARTS**

**The Tablet PCs have also proven to be highly useful and versatile in the creative and performing arts. The 1:1 Tablet PC program is particularly beneficial when researching, collaborating and creating in the subjects of Visuals Arts and Drama.**

Katrina Collins, Head of the Visual Arts Department, explains that ready access to imagery and information on the internet to utilise in artmaking activities is invaluable. “Access to gallery websites to view the work of artists who may be working in the same style or media of the artists is a great support.”

Year 9 students have planned their Semester Two Pop Art inspired work on their Tablet PCs using Photoshop. These paintings are multi-image works which require the student to select relevant imagery from the internet and compose it using Photoshop. “In the past this would have required lessons in the computer labs which were often difficult to book, so the sequencing of the lessons this term have been seamless. In the past students printed out imagery and made a physical collage but this more efficient approach enables students to try a range of different compositions before settling on the one that they chose to work from.”

Visual Art students also use their Tablet PCs to take notes in theory lessons which has made compiling information from a range of sources much easier. Students have been able to make notes from film, class discussion, notes on the board and they have been able to edit them and compile them into one coherent document. Katrina also points out that “whilst we still value time spent as a class watching films and discussing ideas as social, verbal interactive ways of learning, the fact that students can revisit the films at home or catch up when they have been away will also become increasingly valuable”.

Students of Drama are also taking advantage of the increased opportunities the Tablet PCs provide. Year 9 Drama classes have created OneNote notebooks where students contributed to collaborative workbooks based on their performance groups for the unit on Australian Scripts. They are able to research, film and edit their ideas which are then incorporated in a shared resource file.

Inga Scarlett, Head of the Drama Department, explains that: “Drama is a performance based subject so we are excited to be able to trial the integration of workbook research and process into a performance based lesson.” In a typical performance lesson, students would use their Tablet PCs to brainstorm ideas for improvisation in groups, creating mind maps, and do ‘on the spot’ internet based research on ideas for performance. Students then improvise and devise their performance before returning to their Tablet PCs at the conclusion of the lesson to record the process in their OneNote workbooks.

The Drama Department are also excited about teaching Small Screen Drama with the Tablet PCs. Editing films using Adobe Premiere Pro will enhance this unit of work significantly, allowing greater independence and flexibility both within their lessons and at home.