After a successful semester supporting and integrating the possibilities the Tablet PCs provide in Year 9, we look forward to extending this program to Years 5 to 11 next year. This edition looks at the ways in which the curriculum has been enhanced in the Primary School, Languages, Technological & Applied Studies and Religious Education.

**PRIMARY**

Our Head of Primary, Elizabeth Cumming, reflects on technology in the Primary School and the importance of finding the right balance between current teaching and learning and the new opportunities technology offers.

There is not a girl in our Primary School who has known a world without advanced technology, a world without wireless computers or hand held devices. Before our girls even start school, technology has been part of their everyday life - from a GPS in the family car to playing games on a parent's smartphone. As 'digital natives', they start Kindergarten already equipped with many technology related skills. No-one can predict the world that the girls will enter when they leave school thirteen years later, but we can do our best to equip them with the broadest range of skills possible.

As exciting as learning can be through the use of technology, it is also vitally important to remember that technology will only ever be one of the tools in our classrooms and is not able to give them all the learning experiences and skills they need. Our classrooms at SCEGGS aim to find just the right balance of learning opportunities as we provide a broad, liberal education for our girls.

The introduction of the Tablet PCs to the girls in Year 5 this year has been seamless, largely due to the staff and girls' acceptance of technology and their confidence in its use. Their classroom teachers have devised many different interactive tasks to ensure that girls continue to build their technological skills to aid their learning. Year 5 have used their Tablet PCs to write some wonderful digital storybooks earlier in the year, but at the forthcoming two day Writers' Retreat no technology will be used at all – it will all be pen and paper. In Visual Arts the girls have used Photoshop to make digital artworks, but they have also manipulated a number of materials in other lessons during the year – painting, drawing and working with clay. In Science they have taken part in a number of hands-on experiments, and used their Tablet PCs to record the results on OneNote. In Music the girls have played instruments to create compositions, but have used their Tablet PCs to keep a record of the composition process. These are all examples of teachers using technology where it can do something in a better way, or teach a new skill – but never for technology's sake alone.

From a very young age we teach the girls about the cyber world, cyber safety and about 'stranger danger' on the web. Cyber safety is integrated into our Personal Development program from Kindergarten, with girls from Year 4 onwards taking part in specific programs developed by the Australian Communication and Media Authority. Recently Year 5 took part in an online session, Cyber Detectives, where they learnt the risks associated with internet use and posting personal information online, and strategies to use if ever contacted by strangers online. These are without doubt important lessons for the girls to learn.

Computer technology is already integrated across all subjects in the Primary School. We are really looking forward to 2013 when not only will girls across Years 5 and 6 have their own Tablet PC, but there will be even greater access to technology in each classroom for the girls from Kindergarten to Year 4. This is a very exciting time for the girls and their learning!
They also produced their original weather forecast presentations within the classroom as they were able to access resources, research information instantly and then present to the class from their own Tablet PCs. Latin students worked on a major assignment on the Roman development of Bath in England. They were able to research and organise their findings independently during class time which allowed them to stay on track though the various stages of the project. Similarly, lesson by lesson students researched information spontaneously which enabled them to make deeper connections to the material studied and to expand their general knowledge. From the point of view of classroom dynamics, Tablet PCs facilitate a collaborative approach between the teacher and the students. The teacher guides the students through various activities and research while students benefit from the independence to work at their own pace, process their findings and receive more targeted feedback from the teacher.

Is there any particular subject-specific software that you are/will be using with the students? If so, how does this enhance teaching & learning?

Our department offers four languages: French, German, Japanese and Latin. The major multi-media programs used for language learning are: Audacity, Voki, Comic Life, Photo Story, Powerpoint and Movie Maker. Students use these tools to work and learn both independently and collaboratively. The software provides them with challenging, engaging and enjoyable tasks. Moreover, students can express their creativity freely, take ownership of the outcome they produce and communicate their ideas in the chosen language.

Technology is just one part of the curriculum. What other essential non-IT activities does it have to integrate with?

Whilst we embrace the exciting advances Tablet PCs bring, we still value traditional methods of teaching and learning languages in the classroom. For example, speaking practice in the target language through role-play and drama, class discussions and conversation and debates for senior students remain an integral part of languages as by their nature, they are a vehicle for exchange of ideas and opinions, and critical thinking. Similarly, techniques such as responding to listening and reading comprehensions, composing written responses in a range of text types and styles are core skills that require face to face teaching and guidance on an on-going basis.

What is exciting you and your Department about the future possibilities with this technology?

Technology provides opportunities to bring the language and culture as close and as authentically as possible to students in the classroom. For example, students can access daily news programs, written media, podcasts, songs and music videos of the language they are studying. They can find current and dynamic material which encourages and inspires them to take more educated risks and be more spontaneous with their language learning. It also offers additional resources for students to practise their listening, reading, writing and speaking skills. This in turn promotes independent and self-paced learning and enhances their communication skills, confidence and critical thinking essential for their future.

TECHNOLOGICAL & APPLIED STUDIES (TAS)

Design & Technology and Information & Software Technology are both run with a project-based format. Rob Curtis, Head of the TAS Department, explains that they have always had a high desktop computer to student ratio but the extensive opportunities provided by the new Tablet PCs have proven to be most exciting over Semester 2.

The benefits of having access to a Tablet PC relate to both hardware aspects (PC mode and Tablet mode, along with high speed processing and large hard drive) as well as software opportunities that can be used on such a machine (eg: Microsoft Office, Adobe CS5 Suites, Robotics, WWW access). Also with the school-wide wireless network, students can access the school drives and internet from anywhere around the school. The dedicated student home drives on the Tablet PCs sync with the school network once a student logs on for the day. Not only does this allow students to work from their Tablet PC at home without needing remote access to their files, but it also synchronises and saves their work to the school home drive which provides a backup for students’ work files whenever they logon.

In all technology courses, students receive work files and most resource documents electronically through SCEGGSnet. This method of delivery has proven to be highly successful and will continue in the future. As is the case in all curriculum areas, the Tablet PC is only one resource in our classrooms. Naturally, a major component of our Design and Technology courses will continue to be the development of skills in making the practical projects using a range of different media such as wood or textiles or jewellery.
It is also essential that our students continue to discuss and debate many different issues in the classroom including environmental responsibility, community and social justice, ethics and intellectual property.

Students’ use of Tablet PCs are wide and varied and can be organised in two modes of operation, that of PC mode and Tablet mode. In PC mode, students are utilising their Tablet PCs to take notes in MS Word, complete tasks requiring formatting and layout control using software such as MS Word and Publisher and Adobe InDesign, manage their projects with MS Project. It also allows them to complete graphic design work using scanners and Adobe Photoshop as well as enjoy Lego robotics. In Tablet mode we are seeing new and innovative ways of using computers such as the capacity to annotate documents as a form of note taking and highlighting, sketch using the inking tool, take notes using OneNote, share files using syncing of OneNote, collaborate using a class Wiki and communicate in group work using Skype.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Leonie Armstrong outlines the ways in which Tablet PCs have expanded the opportunities available to staff and students in teaching the research-based World Religions unit in the Year 9 Religious Education course.

Before the introduction of the Tablet PCs, the World Religions research unit of work was given to the students as a paper booklet. OneNote has allowed us to develop a more integrated and interactive research unit, which has significantly enhanced the learning outcomes for the students. Our Year 9 girls are now given an electronic version of this unit, which includes glossaries, interactive maps, worksheets, references and links to relevant sites for each religion. This has allowed the girls to create notes during each lesson, digitally annotate the content either with the pen or the use of the keyboard and save their work all in one safe location – and gone are the days of students forgetting to bring their booklet to class! It is stored safely on the school network.

The digital environment also allows staff to keep an eye on each student’s progress with the unit. Staff can access the home directories of each student and leave comments or suggestions in their Religion OneNote notebooks. There is also the ability to keep track of incomplete work which in the past was difficult in the hard copy format of our booklets.

Having a Tablet PC in the hands of each student also allows for the seamless integration of resources located in SCEGGSnet, the network and the internet. Audio-visual material can be downloaded from DVC on the network and viewed at a convenient time for the student. Accompanying worksheets can be easily accessed from the Religious Education notebook to complement and enhance the understanding of the video.

There is no doubt that technology will only ever be one component of our teaching and learning program in Religious Education. For example, discussion still plays a most significant role in each lesson, allowing students to be reflective with the content and generate ideas and insights in Religious Education. Students may then record these ideas by either typing or handwriting using the stylus, highlight key points or terms while reading material, and access the internet for research purposes and to access SCEGGSnet. They are able to download educational audio-visual material for viewing at home. They can also use the Tablet PC to create their own summary sheet for revising each religion, which is then the only page they need to print out to study for exams.

We look forward to capitalising further on the opportunities created by the Tablet PC program in the year ahead with all our students in Religious Education.