

Mount Ousley Public School 1:1 Laptop & iPad Initiative

Rationale

The Need:

The world has changed significantly in a very short period of time. If our children are to be prepared for tomorrow's workforce, today's education must reflect the demands and expectations of the workforce.

Creativity, collaboration, innovation, communication and problem solving, along with literacy, numeracy and technology skills are cornerstones of the 21st century workplace. The same skills, therefore, have particular relevance for 21st century learning.

Statistically, students who leave school at a young age have an increased risk of living a life of social and economic disadvantage. Many of these students become disengaged from learning at a very early age. The use of technology in classrooms from a young age helps connect children with their learning and makes learning fun. Technology integrated in meaningful ways has the potential to literally turn children's lives around.

It is imperative that we put technology into the hands of our students, to use technology as part of their everyday learning routines. Children should have access to 21st century learning tools wherever and whenever it is appropriate. In this way, we stand the greatest chance of engaging children with their learning, making learning relevant and preparing them for their lives beyond school.

The Program:

In April 2010 a 1:1 laptop program for all students in Years 4-6 was implemented. It soon involved Year 3 students as well. Children are able to use their laptop in class each day and at home each evening. The laptops have become a vital part of children's daily classroom routines in so many ways. Pencils and paper are still used, all aspects of the curriculum are still taught, and traditional books are read and highly valued. However, work is also completed electronically in most Key Learning Areas. Students find their computer work highly engaging and evidence (research conducted by the University of Wollongong) indicates learning outcomes are improving across the board.

The 1:1 concept has been successfully introduced in schools in the US, UK and Australia, and the NSW Department of Education now actively encourages school communities to introduce a Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) program. The 1:1 program here at MOPS is our own initiative; one that places us at the forefront of educational best practice.

The laptop program has now become a laptop/iPad program. Students in Years 3-6 are able to use either a MacBook or iPad as part of normal school routine. The school supports various models of Apple MacBooks and iPads, but is unable to support Android (non-Apple) products.

The Options:

Parents with a child entering Year 3, 4, 5 or 6 are asked to select one of three options:

- (i) to purchase or supply a MacBook or iPad;
- (ii) to utilise a school owned MacBook or iPad; or
- (iii) to choose not to be involved in the program.

Importantly, every child has access to a device. As a proud public school, that is our responsibility. We do not wish any family to feel pressure, especially financial pressure, to supply their own MacBook or iPad. It is a choice for each family to make individually. Having said that, sustainability of the program relies on a majority of families being able to provide their own device.

The Cost:

Rosman Computers in Thirroul (02 4267 4299) is our preferred supplier for MacBooks and iPads, but of course families are free to source devices wherever they choose. The bundle options put together for our school with Rosman Computers may be found within the online ordering portal on our website. The school does not recommend any specific model MacBook or iPad; the choice is yours and each family will have different circumstances to consider. We recommend parents look through the ordering portal or visit the [Apple site](#) for details of different models.

Are the basics like reading, writing and maths neglected?

No, to the contrary, they are enhanced. No part of the curriculum has been removed with the introduction of the 1:1 program. Some things however are done differently to capture the interest of our students. Do you still see children reading paper books? Yes. Daily. Of course, some reading is electronic too. Do children still use exercise books to do their maths? Yes. And some maths activities are completed electronically because sometimes that's the best way to teach a concept.

The curriculum we teach is not optional. It is mandated by the Board of Studies and we have a legal obligation to teach the whole curriculum. This, of course, includes writing and handwriting. We know as educators that for someone learning to write (whether it's writing texts or learning handwriting skills), it is important to practise daily. This has not changed. Some writing is done on electronic devices rather than on paper, but children are still taught handwriting skills just as they always have been.

Technology is actually one of the best tools we have for teaching the basics of literacy and numeracy. We can't separate technology from the basics, nor should we attempt to do so. We continue to use other resources and teaching strategies to teach the basics, but because children like using computers so much, computers have become one of the most powerful resources for teaching reading skills, spelling, writing conventions, times tables and other maths concepts. In each of the classes at Mount Ousley, we have used laptops and iPads to teach spelling rules, various aspects of grammar, telling the time and times tables. Without exception, these lessons have engaged children in the most positive ways. The same concepts taught in a more traditional way without the use of technology, would certainly not achieve the same results. Using laptops and iPads in no way diminishes our focus on teaching the basics; in fact technology enhances the focus.