



## Technology in Schools: Strathcona Gets Stratospheric

In 1948, IBM Chairman, Thomas Watson, predicted: "I think there is a world market for, at most, five computers." Fast forward to 2009. Text messages faster than a speeding bullet. Digital portfolios. Wiki CVs. High-tech animated videos with synchronised speech and music. Sophisticated blogs. Emailed PowerPoint presentations with fly-ins and audio. Internet discussion forums. Interactive whiteboards. Writing and producing short TV segments...

Welcome to the brave new world of modern secondary school students...

Maturing alongside the internet, today's teenagers are computer savvy and they expect information and communication technologies (ICT) to be part of their learning experience.

Even Luddites can see that e-learning is not a fad. Research shows that school computer use improves organisational skills, literacy and numeracy, and leads to better collaboration and analysis. But where is all this latest and greatest technology heading? Are students using it for

'good' or 'evil'? How can schools guard against e-fraud, e-spam, e-bullying and e-porn? Can teachers ever catch up? What career paths will open up for students?

The Rudd Government's computer technology package (part of a \$4.2 billion budget upgrade to state and independent schools) looks to integrate technology from Prep through to Year 12. The money has put pressure on schools to find new ways of using ICT, but is this a bad thing? Victorian classrooms boast one of the best student-to-computer ratios (3:1); however, is there a danger of getting carried away with technology for technology's sake?

The Head of Learning Technologies at Strathcona Baptist Girls Grammar School in Melbourne's eastern suburbs, Dr Tim Kitchen, stands in the Strathcona television (STV) studio, in front of the 'infinity wall'. The floor and curved wall is green (which does not appear naturally in skin tones). When you're video-taped in front of the infinity wall (and don't wear green), Dr Kitchen explains, it's easy to replace the green in post-production

with any other environment - moving or still - for example, a backdrop of the pyramids.

At Strathcona the girls cover stories across all year levels and make fortnightly news reports for STV. They make DVDs of camping trips, tape drama productions, spotlight Years 7s' first days, interview and film teachers, capture school music nights, guest speakers and presentations.

Dr Kitchen is a popular teacher. How can he not be? He uses computer packages like Garage Band to produce digital music in the classroom and Final Cut to make movies! He says there has been a lot of interest from other schools in STV, which has been operating for over two years. "Visiting schools are seeing that this is what kids just love!" Dr Kitchen says. "Anecdotally, close to 100 per cent of my Year 10 students have a mobile phone and most use it to text messages. Some of these mobile phones have access to the internet and many have cameras. Some of them are personal PDAs [Portable Digital Assistants], providing a calendar, a contact database and other digital organisational tools. This is how young people