eLearning Case Study
Ringwood Secondary College

Context

Ringwood Secondary College is situated in the Eastern Region, is in Like School category 2 with 1370 students with a low NESB factor. This school was selected as centre of ICT expertise and innovation and to support whole school as part of the Department's C*reating e-Learning Leaders* (CELL) program.

This case study is based on an interview with Mr Michael Phillips, Principal (mphillips@ringwoodsc.vic.edu.au) in June 2007.

Leadership and developing an ICT Vision

The principal has been at the school for 10 years and has a strong passion for using ICT to enhance student learning. The school has a history of developing three year ICT infrastructure plans but found that inevitably the plan was out of date in 18 months as technologies change rapidly. Staff were keen to integrate ICT in the curriculum but there was no overall plan to do so. The early adaptors of ICT at the school were supported by a *Computers across the Curriculum Coordinator*. In the late 1990s the school realised that the ICT infrastructure was unsustainable given the explosion in available technologies, connectivity and network design issues and the increasing demand to use ICT in the classroom. It was resolved that the computer infrastructure needed to change if student learning was to change.

The leadership decided to:

- Broaden the leadership in ICT beyond two people
- Develop a professional learning plan
- Develop a robust ICT infrastructure plan

A team was created to develop a 5 year vision for the use of ICT for the school. This team focussed on desired teaching and learning changes and key strategies that might affect change. The school stopped expanding the network and developed an ICT infrastructure plan. Purchasing of software by individual faculties was stopped. KLA budgets were realigned to facilitate centralised purchasing. A full time technician was employed to provide central ICT support.

To move from some teachers "opting" to use ICT to a school culture changing where it was "expected" that all teachers integrate the use of ICT in their teaching the following strategies were used:

- ICT professional learning was incorporated in every teacher's professional development plan
- Leadership team members modelled the use of ICT themselves
- a goal of integrating ICT in the teaching and learning programs was included in the School Charter

These three initiatives created some change but it was incremental, not cultural. At this stage, ICT was not embedded in student learning. To effect cultural change, in the last three years, the school has:

- implemented a major restructure of the leadership structure which included the creation of two new positions, eLearning Leader and ICT Projects and Services Leader
- decided that the integration of ICT should not be a "separate" Charter goal but should be embedded in all goals
- made a symbolic change impacting on all staff by introduced electronic role marking for all classes and distributing all administration notices by email

The key strategies that have helped the school to change from an invitational "opt-in" culture to an expectation for all staff to model 21st Century knowledge workers were:

- Investing in support for staff by rearranging how time release was allocated
- Creating eLearning leaders (CEL)
- Being a pilot school for the UltraNet project
- Focussing a Leading Schools Fund initiative on embedding ICT in teaching and learning programs

The CEL program created resources for staff to engage in significant professional learning. Twenty eight staff have completed the Intel *Teachers of the Future* program. This created a critical mass of teachers who were working collaboratively to plan units of work embedding the use of ICT in student learning.

The school then embedded these practices in the next School Annual Plan by setting targets such as, all teachers being involved in a professional learning team; all teachers creating digital resources and adding these resources to the school intranet.

The school's *Leading Schools Fund* initiative created time to develop ICT mentors who had expertise in effective use of ICT in the classroom who were able to support the professional learning teams and encourage staff to experiment and take risks.

In parallel, the school introduced a laptop program at Year 9 (which has since been extended to later years) which has meant that the use of computers by students is not optional.

The schools involvement in the UltaNet trial cemented some of the cultural change to embed ICT in student learning with more sophisticated facilities for teachers to plan courses, share resources, and provide feedback to students and for parents to engage with their child's learning.

Learning, teaching, assessment and reporting enabled by ICT

This school has now changed the school culture to the point that it is now expected behaviour for all teachers and students to embed ICT in teaching, learning and school administration processes.

The school sees the future where every student will have a device accessing the school Intranet at school and from home, from anywhere and at any time. The school Intranet will become much more sophisticated with the introduction of UltraNet so that eventually, this system will be the core of the school for all teachers, students and parents.

ICT Professional learning

In the past, the school started with professional learning opportunities focussed on the use of software and skills development organised on a faculty basis. The school has changed from faculty groups to a professional learning team structure.

More recently, a comprehensive professional learning program has been implemented facilitated by teachers at the school who were already effectively using ICT to engage and extend student learning. Most professional learning opportunities are organised at the school with appropriate links to Department initiatives such as *Global Projects.*

In 2000 the school installed 10 electronic whiteboards as a deliberate strategy to immerse teachers in ICT tools. This strategy did not work as an isolated strategy. It only worked when there was a complementary professional learning opportunity for teachers to learning that "ICT is not about tools, it is integral to 21st Century learning"

The school currently has a planning team of the two ICT Leaders, specialist ICT support personnel, the UltraNet Project coordinator and the Leading Schools Fund Coordinator.

Learning spaces and places and developing Learning Communities
The school has embedded technology in every learning space with cabled and wireless access to the network. Purpose built computer rooms for different subjects have been created which in one case involved a tiered structure to allow the teacher to be able to see every computer screen used by students in design classes. This room also doubles as a mini lecture theatre.

As the laptop program has progressed through the school, more and more students have their own computer.

The staff room has been refurbished to remove individual teacher desks in favour of large central tables at which teachers collaborate and work.

Data projectors have been installed in 12 rooms with another 8 portable projectors. Eventually, data projectors will be installed in every learning space.

Infrastructure and technical support
The school operates a dual platform operating environment with Macintosh and personal computers. ICT infrastructure and hardware has been standardised creating economies of scale for purchasing and reducing complexity. Infrastructure and hardware is updated every 3 – 4 years

All printing has been centralised to high speed printers.

A sophisticated data centre has been established with redundant back up.

Technical support has been centralised including a laptop support centre

Advice for other schools

- Stop "growing like topsy" approaches to using technology and prepare a comprehensive plan to embed ICT in all functions of the school. The plan needs to clearly state the vision for what you want to do and why, the key

strategies that are to be used. Make sure the plan is realistic, allowing for different rates of change by teachers but ensuring that new standards, expectations and processes are developed

- Create time for teachers to engage in professional learning
- Realign resources to support teachers. Create new ways for teachers to collaborate and share. Ensure that professional learning opportunities are focussed on actual classroom practice with opportunities for staff to observe each others' practice
- Ensure the ICT infrastructure is robust. Standardise ICT infrastructure and hardware and review technical support arrangements. Buy appropriate equipment (not the cheapest)
- Create "sand pit" projects for teachers to experiment with the use of new approaches and technologies to embed ICT in student learning. If the "sand pit" projects are successful, plan and support processes to scale up the approach across the school
- Ensure that leaders have high expectations and model good practice
- Link projects and initiatives together focussed on the Annual Plan goals. Do not have a separate goal focussed on the use of ICT.
- Identify champions to lead the change process
- Create a critical mass of teachers embedding ICT in student learning as a base for moving to create the expected culture that all teachers will embed ICT in their teaching practice.
- Focus on the goal of changing to an "expected" school culture of embedding ICT in student learning. Persist and insist that teachers keep moving forward on this agenda. Assist teachers to share knowledge and experience.