

Tablet Pilot Program Feedback: Term 1 2011

ICT is now a natural way of working in the 21st century, a seamless part of creating, communicating and investigating the world. Technology pervades every aspect of young people's lives, and there is no doubt that ICT provides motivation and engagement in the class room. However, research shows that putting more computers into schools will not in itself improve educational outcomes.

To maximise the learning potential of new technology, it is critical to take account of the ways in which students learn, and the nature of the subject discipline being taught. To this end, has conducted a pilot program investigating the learning potential of tablet technology in science, history and design and technology. Foremost in our assessment has been the question, 'How can we use the tablets to *enhance* our students learning?'

Summary of findings to date:

- The Dell Latitude Slate has strengths in drawing and brainstorming. (Possible future application would be interactive collaboration using DyKnow; this was tried with Classroom Presenter with limited success.)
- The Dell Latitude Slate's weaknesses are its processing capacity, its user-friendliness as a result of running Windows 7, and the functionality of its hardware.
- Students themselves found the tablets difficult to use. After a short period of use, senior students were reluctant to use them, whilst junior students were still enthusiastic. However after five weeks junior students were also complaining about using the tablets due to hardware and software issues.

Current recommendations going forward:

- These Dell Latitude Slate tablets should be used for task-specific applications (such as drawing) as an add-on tool to existing computers. Due to the performance capacity of the tablets and their general useability they are not an alternative to a high processing laptop or notebook.
- This program has demonstrated that Windows 7 tablets are not user-friendly enough for classroom integration, which specifically requires a tool which will work quickly and easily for all users regardless of prior experience.
- Alternative tablet devices or operating systems could have additional uses in the classroom; however these have not been explored at this time.
- Staff trialling new tools need to have working access to all hardware and software at least three months prior to use in the classroom. This will enable teachers to prioritise learning with the new hardware and software rather than succumbing to technical problems.
- A specific IT staff member should be allocated to this and any other pilot programs so that the technical aspects of the program can be addressed effectively. This person needs to have a significant portion of their time allocated to the success of the project.

To ensure the best fit for the current and future needs of teachers and students would advise that ICT projects continue to be evaluated by a team of teachers to determine their effectiveness in improving pedagogy prior to the purchase of hardware and software.