What is smart technology for the smart classroom?

Online learning environments are becoming part of best practice learning and teaching worldwide. They are already used in a range of schools in Australia and across the world.

Teachers and principals in government schools across Victoria are making major changes to the ways students are taught. They are working with the latest technology – new computers, the Ultranet, digital and flip cameras, interactive whiteboards and dozens of software programs and online resources for individual subjects – to support their students’ learning.

It’s not simply about technology – it’s about what technology can do for students and teachers to make learning deeper, more immediate and more powerful.

Based on the best ideas from international and Australian experts, our teachers are making technology do more to help students learn individually and in groups, to help them know and understand their chosen subjects and interests more profoundly.

This makes it a very exciting time to be learning in a Victorian government school. When asked about what technology meant to him, one student from the Connections 2010 classroom said:

“Many forms of technologies are being used to assist students such as myself to bring learning into the 21st century. An example of this is the use of blogs, wikis and the use of web apps such as Google Docs. These tools allow students to work together in an online environment and comment on each other’s work. No longer is learning strictly focused on rote learning material from a textbook. Instead, learning is dynamic and a fun process.”

For more information, visit http://www.education.vic.gov.au
Ultranet – very smart technology for the smart classroom

At the heart of the smart classroom is the latest technology that connects it to the whole-school community – and the wider world – and supports quality learning and teaching.

With input from principals, teachers, IT technicians in schools and experts, we have designed a statewide, secure website that can be accessed via the internet and serves all 1575 schools in our system.

The Ultranet includes attendance records, timetable, learning progress information for each student, teacher feedback, and in-class or at-home tasks for every student. Its online tools are web 2.0, including wikis, blogs and discussion forums.

Through the Ultranet, teachers can extend their innovation and creativity as teaching and learning practices evolve. They can access a powerful group of digital learning tools, resources and student data in one place, that is available anywhere, anytime. Teachers can create and share resources and expertise with each other and between schools online.

Students can create their own online learning portfolio and take part in online learning activities.

Parents can observe and support their child’s learning from home. In the Ultranet, they can see up-to-date and meaningful information about their child’s learning progress. If their child changes school, that child’s learning progress and information will be passed on via the Ultranet to the new school.

As you would expect, the Ultranet is a secure system for an online ‘closed community’. It uses strict privacy and security measures and operates under a set of guidelines for users, particularly set up to protect children. All spaces for students are moderated by a teacher. Parents can only see information about their child; teachers can only see information about students in their schoo; and students can only see their own information.

The Ultranet is like a ‘classroom without walls’, a space where learning is visible as students move from class to class, year to year and school to school. It’s a technology that is integral to the smart classroom and relevant to students’ lives. Through it, they will learn and develop skills to prepare them for life and work in the 21st century.

For more information visit http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/directions/ultranet/default.htm
Resources for the Smart Classroom

FUSE

FUSE is an internet portal enabling teachers to find new learning materials and resources to make classes more informative and fun for students in the smart classroom.

FUSE stands for Find, Use and Share. It gives teachers access to quality education resources and allows them to locate online resources developed by Victorian organisations, such as the State Library of Victoria, Museum Victoria and Scienceworks. It functions as a content library for the Ultranet, the website linking all Victorian government schools.

Clare Rafferty, eLearning Leader at Ringwood Secondary College, testifies to the success of the program:

“I love FUSE because I can turn a good lesson into an engaging one by using an image, video, learning object or other resources from FUSE to grab students attention and challenge their thinking. Using these types of materials also helps students develop the digital, visual and information literacy skills they need to thrive in the 21st century.

It’s a win-win [situation] because I know I will be able to access quality resources quickly and have my students accessing, learning and creating their own resources to evaluate and explain their new knowledge and understandings.”

For more information, visit