There have been a lot of exciting developments since Bulletin 1. We will be renaming the program Laptops 4 Learning, to reinforce the focus on computers as tools for learning and not as a rollout of ICT equipment. The program is aligned to all six priority areas contained in the Office of Schools Plan. Please remember that the program office is here to help you and we welcome any comments and suggestions. There is now a program office email address for you to use: laptops4learning@det.nsw.edu.au.

Dianne Marshall, A/Program Director

UPDATE AS AT 23 FEBRUARY 2009

Laptops
The preferred supplier for the laptops is expected to be announced by the end of March. There were 21 Expressions of Interest for the contract and six vendors have been asked to provide a detailed Request for Proposal by 6 March. The vendors are ACER, ASI, ASUS, DELL, Lenovo and HP.

There have been a number of questions asked about the rollout of laptops to students. Firstly, we need to emphasise that this is a four year Commonwealth program. In 2009 the Department will meet the Commonwealth Government’s objective to bring the computer/student ratio down to 1:2 in schools identified as having the greatest need for ICT. These schools were involved in Round One applications and will be the first to receive an allocation of laptops for years 10 to 12. These laptops will not be permanently assigned to students but remain a school resource.

By the end of 2009 all year 9 students in NSW public schools will be allocated a laptop for their individual use. It is envisaged that these students will take their laptops home each night to charge the battery and use at home. Transfer of ownership will occur for these students upon completion of year 12. Students will take their laptops with them if they transfer to another public school. Laptops will be returned for school use if the student leaves schooling or to attend a non government school.

In 2010 the next cohort of year 9 students will receive their laptops. The additional laptops supplied to schools in 2009 will remain a resource for use with years 11 and 12 students.

There have also been a number of questions from parents seeking to purchase laptops. As you can imagine, it will be quite a task for the preferred supplier to provide more than 100,000 laptops to over 500 sites by the end of 2009. This matter has been referred to Terry O’Brien, Policy Project Officer to consider the policy ramifications.

Schools with increasing enrolments have expressed concerns they will not receive enough laptops for their year 9 cohort. Please be assured that the final distribution to year 9 students will be based on the latest enrolment data.

Wireless
There is a commitment to provide wireless connectivity coinciding with the rollout of the laptops. This is going to be an impressive undertaking considering that there are 467 central and secondary schools. Following consultation with the NSW Secondary Principals’ Council, the wireless network will be installed in two stages.

The first installation will provide coverage of a set of classrooms in close proximity and the library. This allocation will be based on the number of students and classrooms in each school.

The second installation stage will aim to provide coverage of all classrooms and is anticipated to be completed by the end of Term 1 2010.
Schools for Specific Purposes

The Department will be working closely with Schools for Specific Purposes. As indicated in Bulletin 1, there is a commitment to providing the best suited ICT equipment where the laptop is deemed not to be appropriate. The cost of the alternative ICT equipment will be inclusive of the school’s overall allocation.

Policy development

Policies to support the laptop program are being guided by consultation with: NSW P&C, NSWSPC and NSW DET Directorates and Units including Equity Programs, Distance Education, Multicultural Programs, Aboriginal Education and Training, Disability Programs and of course Information Technology Directorate.

Policy Project Officer (and seconded principal), Terry O’Brien has requested secondary principals via the NSWSPC Bulletin to ask their Student Representative Councils to add the Laptop Program to their Term 1 meeting agendas. She asks them to identify any student hopes or concerns regarding issue of laptops to Year 9 students. SRC presidents are invited to forward these directly to her on laptops4learning@det.nsw.edu.au.

Professional Learning and Curriculum Resources

Barbara Bober, Connected Learning Project Officer (and seconded principal) has been working to ensure that Professional Learning programs will focus on enhancing Quality Teaching and Learning in a laptop classroom.

Teachers will be supported at school, regional and state levels to ensure that they have access to a comprehensive range of curriculum support materials as well as training in hardware and software applications. Further to this, opportunities will be provided for teachers to reflect on and share ideas for best practice across learning communities.

Consultation with DET Directorates, NSWSPC and teacher professional organisations will be ongoing.

Why are we doing this? What are the potential benefits of laptops in schools?

A literature review on one-to-one mobile computing was prepared for Alberta Education in Canada
http://education.alberta.ca/media/528965/litreview.pdf

Based on preliminary studies of large scale implementations of 1:1 wireless computing in Canada, the U.S. and Australia, the following expected and unexpected results are reported:

- attainment of 21st century skills (e.g., critical thinking, problem-solving, team work, communications skills and ICT literacy);
- improved writing skills, academic achievement, and student attitudes and work habits;
- increases in the quantity and improvements in the quality of student work;
- increases in student motivation, engagement, interest, organisation, and self-directed learning;
- improvements in student attendance and reduced student attrition;
- improved student-teacher interaction and relations;
- improvements in information and communication skills among students and teachers;
- transformation of teacher practice;
- increased teacher enthusiasm and retention;
- increased professional productivity and greater collaboration among educators;
- positive changes in the teaching and learning environment; and
- increased parental and community involvement and improved home-school communication.

2009 Timelines
(as at 23 February 2009)

April
Rollout of wireless commences.

May
Teacher professional learning commences.

May
Laptops trialled.

June
Stage 1 rollout teacher laptops.

Late July
Round One and Year 9 laptop rollout commences.

For further information contact
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