

All Hallows' School

Overview

In late 2004, Brisbane-based All Hallows' School was looking to provide all pupils with increased access to PC's, despite the fact that there were over 14 individual computing spaces comprising 580 PCs throughout the campus.

The school clearly wanted to find other options which were more affordable, flexible, portable and inclusive. In 2005 it began looking toward a mobile computing option in the form of HP iPAQ 2400 and 2700 series Pocket PCs.

Now, 14 months on the school is using 200 HP iPAQ Pocket PCs across its senior and middle schools, with 19 teachers also currently using the devices.

By implementing an HP iPAQ programme for pupils and teachers, the school has freed up its computer labs for more specialized activities, whilst maintaining an increased level of computing access for the rest of its pupils and creating a more interactive learning environment.

Business Challenges

As with any school, All Hallows' School must strive to provide the best possible education facilities and opportunities for its 1,300 students, as well as inspiring learning as much and in as many ways as possible.

Towards the end of 2004, the school began looking into ways it could introduce an enhanced learning environment for its pupils. The aim was to get them more involved in the learning process by giving them alternative and varied access to information resources.

At the same time, the school was looking into how it could optimise the use of its 580 on-campus PCs and computer labs to maximize opportunities for all its students. John Pembroke, assistant to the principal – Technology & Analysis at All Hallows' School decided to undertake some research into how the labs were being used in an effort to establish what extra resources might be needed. He discovered that many of the students were actually using the school's PCs for basic internet research and word processing.

Pembroke commented, "Average booking levels for our PC labs are 97 per cent. Whilst word processing and Internet use is obviously an integral function of any school's IT systems, this level of 'generic' use meant that there were fewer opportunities for pupils to use the labs for more complex work."

It was immediately clear to Pembroke that the answer lay in mobile technology, and that the school needed an alternative to notebooks which were all too expensive for many students. At the same time, the final choice still had to be based on a one-to-one computing model and have notebook style functionality. Pocket PC's quickly became the subject of ICT department research to see which devices could reasonably address the needs of the students and staff.

How HP Helped

According to Pembroke, Pocket PC's became a real possibility when it was seen that the school could set them up with wireless network access. The department began testing the different Pocket PC options within its own environment and swiftly found that HP was the only viable choice.

Pembroke says, "We tested different models to see what could give us what we wanted as seamlessly as possible. Realistically, our options were relatively slim, with just three vendors to choose from; HP, Palm and Dell. Palm was quickly ruled out because of the integration problems it would have created with our system-wide Windows OS platform. In addition to compatibility, we also needed real assurance that we had a strong support network and knowledge base. I'd read of too many projects like these that couldn't work, simply because there wasn't the right support environment in place."

In the end, Pembroke chose HP's iPAQ Pocket PCs, "HP simply had a greater local support network and level of knowledge in the area of mobile computing, and its iPAQ Pocket PCs are well known and dependable. Our local IT partner, ASSURED IT and HP already had a very good relationship with each other, and we knew that together they would be able to solve any technical problems."

Brisbane based ASSURED IT created a campus-wide secure wireless network for the school, which gave access to the network file servers, the Internet and student and teacher e-mail. Following this, implementation of the Pocket PC programme has been deliberately measured, to ensure the school was fitting the right equipment and that it would be used in the right way by both teachers and students. The first stage involved testing of the product to see which software packages could be used as well as to check Internet functionality and monitoring.

"We were actually surprised at how simple the testing stage of the process was in that we didn't really encounter any stumbling blocks at all. We were quickly ready to begin our initial pilot programme with a selection of year 11 students by July 2005 – not bad for a team who have to teach and maintain all other IT systems at the same time. Now, another seven months on, the pilot programme has proven a great success and we have another 175 students across both our senior and our junior school with the devices," said Pembroke.

From a support perspective, ASSURED IT has created a complete mirror of the All Hallows' system and maintains a range of spare iPAQs. Should All Hallows' run into issues with the network, software or machines, ASSURED IT can run scenarios to mimic the problem and organize fixes for it, as well as being able to provide working iPAQs to replace those that occasionally need servicing.

In addition, both HP and ASSURED IT have continued to work on developing a range of applications for the school to allow them to expand both teacher and student use of the iPAQs. Pembroke has also utilised a range of fold-away keyboards to make classroom and meeting use more efficient and to avoid further educational issues with Pocket PC use.

Value Delivered

All Hallows' School and its partner school, Lourdes Hill College, also applied for and received an ASISTM (Australian Schools Innovation in Science, Technology and Mathematics) Federal

grant worth \$60,000. The award entry, 'Little Hands Nurture Enquiring Minds' was developed in conjunction with ASSURED IT and Queensland University of Technology (QUT), and is now paying for the development of teacher and pupil training and an HP iPAQ enabled curriculum.

The grant has also allowed the school to under-take full monitoring of the Pocket PC programme, through QUT. In Pembroke's own words, "The grant has given the school the opportunity to judge further expansion of our programme based on research rather than a whim."

Whilst students are using the iPAQ outside the classroom for Internet based research, e-mail and word processing, in the classrooms, teachers are using them to create more interactive curriculums by preparing work-sheets before class and pushing these out to student's iPAQs in the classroom. Students can then use whatever resources they have available on their iPAQs to help answer the work-sheets, and forward information on again to others in the class. In maths in particular, the school is now investigating graphics calculator applications, and ways of using spreadsheets to deliver content into maths classrooms to expand computing exposure in this area.

Currently, 19 All Hallows' School teachers are using iPAQs as part of their working and lesson structure and generally, as both time and labour saving devices.

About All Hallows' School

All Hallows' is a large centrally located school, which caters for students from a wide variety of socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. It offers an extensive range of excellent academic, cultural and sporting opportunities. In its spiritual, pastoral and academic life, the school seeks to promote personal growth, the development of an informed conscience and commitment to work for social justice in the wider community. For more information visit allhallows.qld.edu.au.

About ASSURED IT

ASSURED IT is an IT Systems Integration Company located in Brisbane, Queensland, specialising in infrastructure design, supply and implementation. ASSURED IT aims to continually produce innovative solutions to ensure that their customers achieve the most from their IT investments. More information about ASSURED IT is available at www.assuredit.com.au or by calling (07) 3909 7800.