State of the Nation: Catholic Education

Target Ratio of Computers to Students

No specific ratio of computers to students have been set. However, the following minimum standards have been set for schools:

- each school to have a collaboratively developed Information Technology plan
- each teacher to be able to use, and assist students to use, email, Internet and multimedia
- regular student access to facilities for email, Internet, multimedia and word processors
- provision in school budgets for Information Technology hardware, software and professional development.

Approach used for IT professional development for teachers

In 1997 one reference teacher from each school was trained, through a three day course, in the TALENT (Teachers and Learners Engaging in New Technologies) materials. This training dealt with:

- TALENT Discovery: Beginning Computer Awareness
- TALENT on-line: The Internet and email
- Information skills
- Software available across Key Learning Areas
- Key Websites for classroom use
- Values in Information Technology
- Copyright Issues
- Building a Website
- Setting up Small Computer Networks.

In 1998, more principals and teachers are being trained in these topics at regional office and school level.

IT focused resources provided to teachers

In addition to the TALENT material described above, a manual Going 'On-Line' - A Leader's Guide to Educational Technology has been produced to assist school leaders in managing the development and implementation of an Information Technology plan.

Catholic Schools in South Australia have responsibility for making decisions at the school level in relation to information technology. These decisions are made across a broad range of areas including infrastructure, professional development, resource management and curriculum development. A representative group of principals, deputy principals, information technology managers, teacher/librarians, country teachers formed the Education and Technology Working Party. This working party deliberated for 18 months and delivered a strategic plan for Catholic schools in SA in late 1997. The strategic plan identified the following directions:

- Schools should manage information technology through the use of a considered information technology plan developed in consultation with stakeholders. Elements of the plan should include the school vision, educational outcomes, identifies system functionality and establishes a framework for a set of actions, both short and long term.
- With the increasing shift to electronic resources, schools need to plan for student access to the Internet. By the end of 1998, all schools should have an Internet access and should be planning to increase access via the use of computer networks.
- Whilst Catholic Education in South Australia has not adopted a benchmark for the computer to student ratio, schools are expected to improve access to information technology to all students in schools. This means schools should plan to reduce the student to computer ratio at a rate which is manageable and affordable to the school community.
- Resource management is the responsibility of the school. The implementation of a standard staff, student and school software management system has been a major project for schools. The Matcom product, DUX, is now in 85 schools, with the financial package being implemented over the next 2 years.
The strategy states the importance of supporting staff in their professional development. The importance of professional development was emphasised by suggesting that equal spending on hardware and professional development was required for successful integration of technology in the classroom. Schools adopt a number of strategies to assist staff. For example, a mentor system places an experienced and confident user with a new user so that skill transfer and confidence can be effected in a non-threatening environment. ‘Good practice’ demonstrations at staff/faculty meetings allow staff to share their success. On-site, after hours workshops, are developed by schools who have the facilities and expertise for staff members to work on a large group basis. These workshops are often skill focussed, although staff training should adopt an approach which is curriculum focussed. The support of the leadership in the school was an important factor in successful implementation of information technology.

Schools are able to access courses and materials provided by private providers for professional development through a user pay system. Courses range from Microsoft training courses to ‘Integrating the Internet’ delivered via University of South Australia short courses. Catholic schools make good use of the School of the Future which presents courses for skill acquisition as well as practical teaching ideas for the classroom.

Documentation available to schools include a set of guidelines developed by the Education and Technology Working Party in the area of hardware/software, professional development, Internet access and services and financial options. As well, websites for Catholic Education in SA (http://www.ceo.adl.catholic.edu.au) and nationally (http://www.ncec.catholic.edu.au) have been developed for publishing, and in the future, distributing materials electronically. Through close association with EdNA (Education Network Australia), other resources are made available to schools. (eg the excellent planning document ‘Learning Technologies : A Planning Guide for Schools ’ produced in Victoria has been made available to Catholic schools in SA)

Catholic Education Centre: Victoria

Victorian Catholic Sector
http://www.ceo.melb.catholic.edu.au

• No target ratio has been set by the CECV.
• Individual schools may have set computer to student targets and in pilot projects in Melbourne, the ratio of computers to students is between 1:5 and 1:10.

There is a variety of approaches to professional development of teachers.

The emphasis is on using IT in the learning context. So, in developing teacher skills, the emphasis would be on the practical and effective application of IT in the learning environment. IT is viewed as a tool for learning.

The developing view of professional development in this area recognised the need to address a number of factors:
• The teacher’s stage of development in the use of technology (entry, adoption, adaption, appropriation, invention)
• Skill development in the use of technology
• Development of curriculum and teaching and learning strategies and approached
• Development of classroom management and organisation skills
• Development of critical evaluation skills.