The Mount Ousley 1 to 1 Laptops for Learning Program

Rationale

The Need:
The world has changed significantly in a short period of time. If our children are to be prepared for tomorrow’s workforce, today’s education must reflect the demands and expectations of the workforce.

Creativity, collaboration, innovation and problem solving, along with literacy, numeracy and technology skills are the cornerstones of the 21st century workplace. The same skills, therefore, have particular relevance for 21st century learning.

Students who leave school at a young age have an increased risk of living a life in poverty, and of being socially and economically disadvantaged. Many of these students become disengaged from learning at a very early age. The use of technology in classrooms from a young age helps connect children with their learning and makes learning fun. Technology integrated in meaningful ways has the potential to literally turn children’s lives around.

It is imperative that we put technology into the hands of our students, to use technology as part of their everyday learning routines. Children should have access to 21st century learning tools wherever and whenever it is appropriate. In this way, we stand the greatest chance of engaging children with their learning, making learning relevant and preparing them for their lives beyond school.

The Program:
In April 2010 a 1 to 1 laptop program for all students in Years 4-6 was implemented. It now involves Year 3 students as well. Children are able to use their laptop in class each day and at home each evening. The laptops have become a vital part of children’s daily classroom routines in so many ways. Pencils and paper are still used, all aspects of the curriculum are still taught, and traditional books are read and highly valued. However, work is also completed electronically in most Key Learning Areas. Students find their computer work highly engaging and evidence (research conducted by the University of Wollongong) indicates learning outcomes are improving across the board.

The 1 to 1 concept has been successfully introduced in schools in the US, UK and Australia, and the federal government continues to roll out a 1 to 1 program for senior high school students. The 1 to 1 program here at MOPS is our own initiative; one that is leading us to the forefront of educational best practice.

The Options:
Parents with a child entering Year 3, 4, 5 or 6 are asked to select one of three options: (i) to purchase or supply a MacBook (cost for new bundles detailed below); (ii) to have the school provide a MacBook while the student is enrolled at MOPS; or (iii) to choose not to be involved in the program.
**The Cost:**
The bundle options put together for our school with Rosman Computers are as follows.

11" Macbook Air (1.4GHz dual-core Intel Core i5 processor, 4GB RAM, 128GB flash storage) bundled with an extended 3 year warranty, iLife (iMovie, GarageBand, iTunes, iPhoto, iCal, QuickTime, PhotoBooth and more), iWork (Pages, Numbers, Keynote), Comic Life, Animate It, a 500GB back-up drive and neoprene sleeve.  
Cost: $1,310.00

11" Macbook Air (1.4GHz dual-core Intel Core i5 processor, 4GB RAM, 256GB flash storage) bundled with an extended 3 year warranty, iLife (iMovie, GarageBand, iTunes, iPhoto, iCal, QuickTime, PhotoBooth and more), iWork (Pages, Numbers, Keynote), Comic Life, Animate It, a 500GB back-up drive and neoprene sleeve.  
Cost: $1,510.00

13" Macbook Air (1.4GHz dual-core Intel Core i5 processor, 4GB RAM, 128GB flash storage) bundled with an extended 3 year warranty, iLife (iMovie, GarageBand, iTunes, iPhoto, iCal, QuickTime, PhotoBooth and more), iWork (Pages, Numbers, Keynote), Comic Life, Animate It, a 500GB back-up drive and neoprene sleeve.  
Cost: $1,410.00

13" Macbook Air (1.4GHz dual-core Intel Core i5 processor, 4GB RAM, 256GB flash storage) bundled with an extended 3 year warranty, iLife (iMovie, GarageBand, iTunes, iPhoto, iCal, QuickTime, PhotoBooth and more), iWork (Pages, Numbers, Keynote), Comic Life, Animate It, a 500GB back-up drive and neoprene sleeve.  
Cost: $1,610.00

13" Macbook Pro (2.5GHz dual-core Intel Core i5 processor, 4GB RAM, 500GB flash storage) bundled with an extended 3 year warranty, iLife (iMovie, GarageBand, iTunes, iPhoto, iCal, QuickTime, PhotoBooth and more), iWork (Pages, Numbers, Keynote), Comic Life, Animate It, a 500GB back-up drive and neoprene sleeve.  
Cost: TBA

**Purchase price is correct as at 17 September 2014.**

**Some Questions & Answers:**

**Why Apple?**

Many people ask us why we prefer the Apple product when we live in a primarily PC world. The Isle of Man is an independent authority in the UK, much like Norfolk Island is in Australia. There are 35 primary schools on the island, with 4400 MacBooks. The following is a quote from their website.

Apart from Apple’s creative added value, Graham’s ICT team has also found that an Apple strategy in primary schools delivers significant cost benefits. “There is a reduced amount of training time for Apple software, and the cost of maintenance is very low. We look after 4,400 Macs with two technicians. The view is we would expect 1:40 support if they were PCs. In that case we would need 100 technicians!”
Of course the cost is a consideration, but the most important reason for using Apple is that the software is vastly superior for what we do in education. It allows us to do our job a whole lot better. Just have a look at the types of work samples we have on our website. And what about when kids leave the Apple environment and move into the PC dominated world? No problem! Children are digital natives, unlike we older folk who tend to worry about which platform is more appropriate. Children don't distinguish; they see a computer rather than a particular platform, and therefore have no trouble adapting from one to the other.

*Are the basics like reading, writing and maths neglected?*

No, to the contrary, they are enhanced. No part of the curriculum has been removed with the introduction of the 1 to 1 program. Some things however are done differently to capture the interest of our students. Do you still see children reading paper books? Yes. Daily. Of course, some reading is electronic too. Do children still use exercise books to do their maths? Yes. And some maths activities are completed electronically because sometimes that's the best way to teach a concept.

The curriculum we teach is not optional. It is mandated by the Board of Studies and we have a legal obligation to teach the whole curriculum. This, of course, includes writing and handwriting. We know as educators that for someone learning to write (whether it's writing texts or learning handwriting skills), it is important to practise daily. This has not changed. Some writing is done on computers rather than on paper, but children are still taught handwriting skills just as they always have been.

Technology is actually one of the best tools we have for teaching the basics of literacy and numeracy. We can't separate technology from the basics, nor should we attempt to do so. We continue to use other resources and teaching strategies to teach the basics, but because children like using computers so much, computers have become one of the most powerful resources for teaching reading skills, spelling, writing conventions, times tables and other maths concepts. In each of the classes at Mount Ousley, we have used computers to teach spelling rules, various aspects of grammar, telling the time and the times tables. Without exception, these lessons have engaged children in the most positive ways. The same concepts taught in a more traditional way without the use of technology, would certainly not achieve the same results. Using computers in no way diminishes our focus on teaching the basics; in fact technology enhances the focus.