



## **IEU Policy - Information Technology in Schools**

### **Preamble and Context**

Information Technology (IT) has changed the nature of schooling and education in Australia providing benefits and challenges for students, teachers and support staff alike.

Many systems and schools are aware of research that indicates significant improvements in student learning when IT is combined with appropriate teaching and learning methods to produce information literate students. The same systems and schools are under parental and community pressure to incorporate the new technologies into their school programs and educate students in the appropriate use of current and emerging technologies given that IT is a basic tool within most if not all work environments. As a consequence, schools and systems have developed technology policies and programs to meet demands. This is to be welcomed but the introduction of IT into schools to this point has been fragmented and under resourced.

Information Technology is expensive but as schools become saturated with this technology the cost of equipment is far less than the cost of supporting the use of this equipment across the curriculum spectrum. Schools and systems have recognised that IT is not a one-off cost, but an ongoing high demand budget item for hardware, technical support, and for training and professional development. As such, the issue of equity of access to IT for all students and teachers, in all types of school systems, becomes of grave concern.

The introduction and use of IT into schools has been characterised by a neglect of training, professional development, technical support and occupational health and safety information, leaving experienced teachers and support staff with feelings of

inadequacy. As younger teachers and support staff who have grown up with the technologies and systems that permeates society replace the aging school educators and support population, the need to continue and increase the level of support has increased. Schools have, in the main, either employed specialized staff to cope with the influx of technologies in the school and develop IT policies and programs or have relied on a system wide approach to develop these.

Where initially the introduction of new technologies in schools had caused an increase in stress for the school employees through a lack of understanding and knowledge, the emerging concern is around safety and the appropriate use of the technologies in a professional capacity.

There is growing concern among teachers and other school staff about the issues relating to Information Technology and its implementation in schools. As schools provide teachers with personal devices that allow the school community to be in constant contact with the teacher and each other boundaries have become blurred.

Where once students left the school at the end of the day and were not seen until the next teaching period on the following day, they now have access to teachers on a 24/7 basis.

Parents, students and school management alike expect that communications with the teacher be promptly attended to. Schools and systems need to set clear and precise boundaries around these communications to reflect a sustainable working environment keeping all participants safe from the inappropriate use of these technologies.

## **The IEU has identified the following key issues**

### Professional Issues:

- the provision of appropriate and timely training including pre-service training; and
- the need for funded professional development programs within schooltime.

### Industrial Issues:

- appropriate staffing and release time for both management and technical support;
- acceptable use policies and protocols;
- proper remuneration;
- occupational health and safety - rights of workers and responsibilities of employers;
- equity in relationship to access for students and staff; and
- class size ratios.

### Curriculum Issues:

- the integration of IT into current teaching and learning programs; and
- the development of Australian software;

The issue of appropriate resource provision impacts across every area.

## **Information Technology Development in Schools and Systems**

To ensure that Information Technology is used in schools to enhance teaching and learning, employers should develop policy and procedures which provide a systems level infrastructure for IT implementation with guidelines for a process of planned school level IT development over time.

### At Systems Level

The policy and procedures should:

- ensure proper ongoing resourcing;
- plan to provide budgetary, technical (hardware and software), OHS and curriculum advice (especially through including the use of specialist consultants);
- plan for staffing;
- plan for technical support;
- outline reasonable timelines for implementation;
- plan to ensure equity of access for all groups (female and male

students, teachers, support staff, special needs students, etc);

- provide for ongoing training and professional development programs in regard to the integration and incorporation of IT into the curriculum and school life in general; and
- set standards including those for Occupational Health and Safety;

### At School Level

Policy and procedures should:

- require a planned approach to whole school IT development;
- budget to provide recurrent funding for all aspects of school IT implementation (eg: hardware, software, and associated infrastructure, staffing, technical support, training and PD, etc);
- reflect systems level policy where appropriate;
- provide for training appropriate to the needs of all staff;
- plan for ongoing professional development to support the integration of IT into the school's curriculum programs and systems and meet other relevant needs;
- provide strategies for equal access for all groups;
- provide healthy and safe work spaces and procedures for all staff and students free from discrimination and harassment;
- address organisational issues including appropriate teacher-student ratios especially where practices of student access to teachers via emerging technologies (eg email, Facebook, Twitter etc) are encouraged and supported by the school;
- ensure occupational health and safety standards are met in respect to space, furniture, equipment and access;
- develop guidelines on communication (via email, sms, social media etc) with students and parents in relation to legal status, workload, complaints and potential risks (eg child protection allegations);
- develop guidelines and notification of surveillance supervision, blocking of email, monitoring of individual employee accounts and work-based ICT systems and advice on privacy in line with the relevant legislation; and

- develop and disseminate reasonable expectations regarding care and usage of school equipment in and outside the workplace, eg in respect to laptops, mobile phones and other portable/ personal IT devices.

### **The Implementation of Policies and Procedures**

The IEU supports the following principles and strategies in implementing the above procedures:

#### Support Staff

- support staff should be consulted about their professional development needs and adequate training must be provided to meet emerging technology issues and promote multi-skilling;
- the increasing technological skills of support staff should be taken into account when determining appropriate support staff roles, classifications and salary levels; and
- there is a need to ensure that the increasing use of technology does not replace human interaction.

#### Teaching Staff

- every teacher should have free access to appropriate training and professional development in relation to hardware, software and classroom management practices and their integration of IT across the curriculum; and
- policies should ensure that teachers have access to technology as a tool to facilitate the preparation of teaching materials, programming and assessment and reporting.

#### General Principles

- enhancing learning is the main focus in the development of information technology in the school environment;
- every student and teacher should have access to current information technology resources; and
- membership of school technology committees should represent the school community and include key learning areas, library, IT, OHS, a member of the leadership team and representatives of parents and

student bodies.

### **Other Issues and Action**

Our union will continue to lobby for support and adequate funding from government and educational authorities.

Our union will continue to provide information through its various publications, website and IT training in the absence of suitable employer organised programs.