



The Future is Now

Until 2011, Chris Gatt never really saw himself as a coordinator or a leader. From time to time, his name was mentioned as a possible year level coordinator but he was very happy to continue to be a committed senior secondary teacher of media, English and psychology at Northside Christian College, as he had been for all six years of his teaching career. He did not have leadership aspirations and was not sure he had leadership qualities.

In the middle of 2011, though, he found himself fascinated by an Independent Schools Victoria online course about ICT and teaching practice. 'The course was an epiphany, an "ah-ha" moment, for me,' said Mr Gatt. 'It hit home the value and importance of ICT within teaching practice. I could see how ICT is essential to teaching in the 21st century.'

The school's Principal, Stephen Leslie, could see that Mr Gatt could play a role, a leadership role, in the school's push to using new technology.

Further professional learning by Mr Gatt, and Year 5/6 teacher Annelie Zuccolo, was not merely about technology, apps and gadgets. 'It was very philosophical,' said Ms Zuccolo, who is also the school's Primary ICT Coordinator. 'It got you thinking about teaching practices and methods. It made me realise that technology needs to be in the hands of the students in their own classrooms, not separate from them, in a computer lab that you have to book in advance.'

'It was a re-inspiration for my teaching,' said Mr Gatt, 'like having a fire lit under me.'

In Term 4, 2011, Ms Zuccolo introduced iPads – just six for her class – as part of a six-week trial involving a dozen Independent schools. For Ms Zuccolo, a former secondary school media teacher, using iPads in the classroom was a natural progression. 'I could see possibilities with various apps. I could see that the students could become more engaged with their learning, more stimulated.'

The six-week iPad trial provided Northside Christian College's ICT planning group with real data and successful strategies to use in the planned iPad Pilot Project for 2012. This project required all students in years 5, 6 and 9 to purchase an iPad 2 for daily school use. All teachers of these year levels were provided with iPads by the school and Mr Gatt and Ms Zuccolo built on the successful 'Techie Tea' concept begun by the Independent Schools Victoria SSNP Advisors.

Northside Christian College is a coeducational Prep to Year 12 school in Bundoora, with 280 students.

Challenge: To enhance teaching and learning with the latest Information and Communication Technology (ICT).

Actions: Two teachers lead the way in eLearning.

Results: The school has rolled out an iPad program for all students from Year 5 to Year 10 in 2013.

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– Stephen Leslie, Principal



Techie Teas have been held fortnightly for over a year now, where new teaching applications and tools are demonstrated. Mr Gatt had thought some of the school's younger, newer teachers would be the first to get on board but has found that older teachers (some with 30 years of classroom experience) have been very quick to latch onto new ideas.

Ms Zuccolo and Mr Gatt have been critical to the successful rolling out of the iPad program at Northside Christian College. In 2013, all students in years 5 to 10 have and use a digital device as a part of their learning resources.

'This new technology, combined with innovative programs and pedagogy, can push students to take charge of their own learning, to take ownership of their education,' said Mr Gatt, who, in 2012, was appointed eLearning Coordinator for the whole school.

'Part of my role is to encourage my fellow teachers to embrace new technology, to try to lead them to the kind of epiphany I had.'

Mr Gatt recalled his own scepticism to new technologies when he started teaching in 2006. 'A Year 11 boy showed me a YouTube clip, but I wasn't very impressed. Now I can't imagine teaching without YouTube.'

Mr Gatt and Ms Zuccolo were initially guided by Lynda Cutting, an Independent Schools Victoria SSNP Advisor. 'Chris and Annelie have an inspirational and enthusiastic view of how teaching and learning can be improved,' said Ms Cutting. 'They are now sharing this with the rest of the staff, and a second layer of teacher leaders are now coming on board.'

'There is nothing more satisfying and exciting to me than to see young, talented teachers realise that they can use their energy and gifts beyond the classroom walls, and be movers and shakers at a whole-school level,' said Northside Christian College's Principal, Stephen Leslie.

'Chris and Annelie have not only led and implemented a new approach to teaching and learning, but they have done so in a manner that has earned the respect and trust of their colleagues, students and parents. This is no small achievement.'

Mr Leslie also pointed out that the initiatives are a whole-school project, supported by the leadership team from the outset and made possible by the Operations and Technical team's hard work to ensure infrastructure would meet the increased demands.

'We also gratefully acknowledge the help and encouragement of the National Partnerships Advisors in this exciting journey.'

Other Successful Schools

The six-week iPad trial has also been successful at:

- Al Siraat College
- Australian International Academy of Education
- Gilson College
- Henderson College
- Highview College
- Ilim College of Australia Inc
- Melton Christian College
- Oakleigh Grammar
- St John's Greek Orthodox College
- Sunshine Christian School
- Trinity Lutheran College.

The eLearning Leaders project has also been successful at:

- Australian International Academy of Education
- Al-Taqwa College
- Good Shepherd College.

