

Tertiary Education Guide

Enter a brave new world of teaching

By NATALIE ELIAS

DOES a tweet in Twitter equate to a week in a wiki? If you think these questions are referring to a singing bird and an exotic holiday location then a visit to a local classroom may be in order.

A plethora of new technologies are being introduced at education institutions across the nation as supplementary education tools.

From online chat rooms to video conferencing, it's all about efficiency and increasing interaction, according to University of New England (UNE) lecturer in information communication technology (ICT) education, Sue Gregory.

"There is a variety of collaborative online tools such as wiki and blogs which can be fast ways of getting information as well as encouraging a teamwork environment," she said.

A wiki is made up of a database of pages where visitors can make comments and swap ideas and information, while a blog refers to an online journal where one can chronicle personal thoughts or experiences.

Many of the courses at UNE post course-work online with associated discussion boards for students.

"Students are able to ask how to do certain things and also share discov-

eries with each other," Mrs Gregory said.

She said chat rooms had been particularly important for distance education students.

"I can give them a designated time when I will be in a chat room and they will know they can always contact me at that time," she said.

"This is very important considering they do not have the advantage of on-campus access to lecturers."

Distance education students can also utilise interactive whiteboards to complete assessment tasks.

Interactive whiteboards involve the desktop of a computer being projected onto an interactive board which can be controlled by touching its surface.

Mrs Gregory believes tools such as interactive whiteboards increase student interaction and are particularly valuable in students with disabilities.

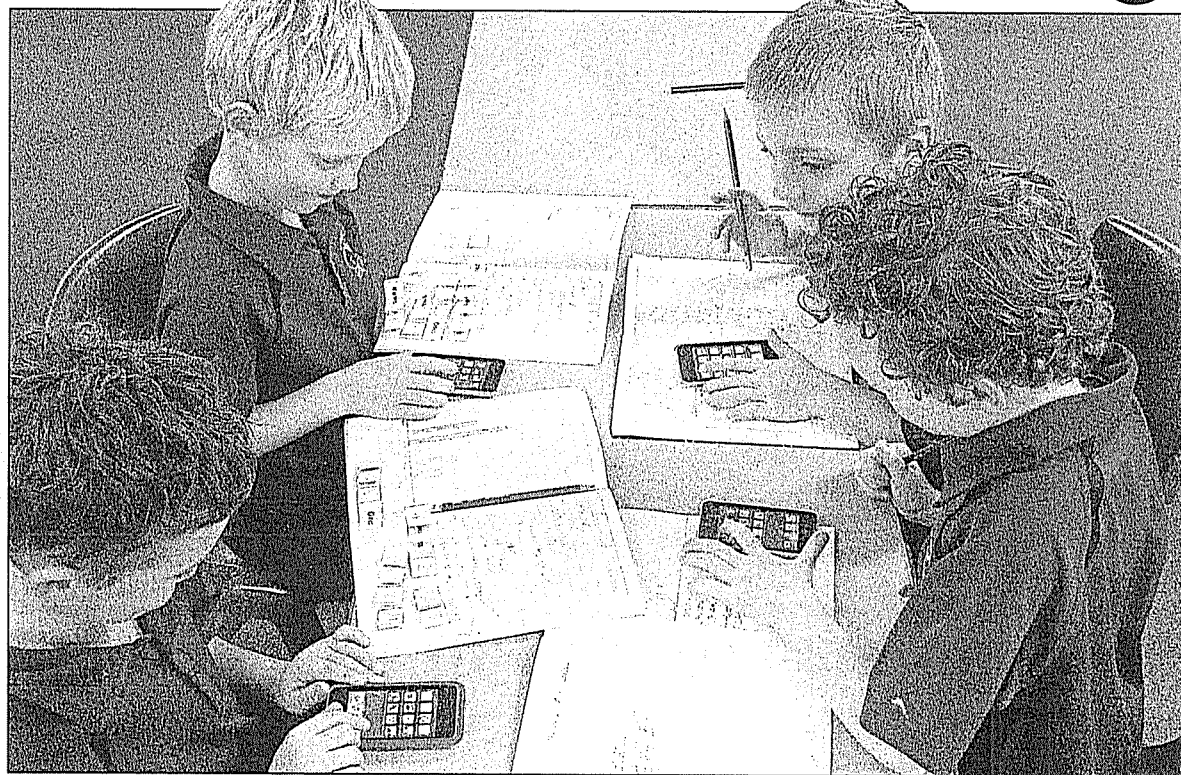
"It involves students through touching and feeling and I have seen this work particularly well with partially blind students," she said.

Mrs Gregory gave the example of a group of schools in northern NSW who, through the use of video conferencing and an interactive whiteboard, were able to be taken for a tour of NASA by an astronaut.

Even the social networking site, Twitter, which allows users to send and read short messages known as tweets, is being used in the classroom.

Mrs Gregory said Twitter was popular among teachers as a forum to openly discuss issues such as the recent debate regarding NAPLAN (National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy) skills testing.

Teachers can also utilise Twitter to inform parents of their children's homework.



Ungarie takes a bite out of Apple

STUDENTS at Ungarie Central School (UCS) are riding high on the wave of modern technology rolling into school classrooms across the State.

The Apple iPod Touch was introduced to UCS in 2009 for all students in Years 5 to 8 and this year has expanded to include students in Kindergarten to Year 4.

The introduction of iPods began as a Country Areas Program (CAP) initiative called "iSkool Rocks" and included eight other Central West and Riverina schools.

Devices such as iPads and iPhones are also being introduced in many classrooms.

Mrs Gregory said these devices

According to teacher, Michelle Roscarel, the iPods have been introduced not to replace current teaching methods but as a complementary educational tool.

"It's a bit like a calculator. It is an additional tool to aid in the learning process," she said.

Mrs Roscarel believes the iPod provides another tool to help reach students who might not benefit from more conventional teaching methods.

A number of programs or applications (apps) have been loaded onto the iPods which aim

offered instant access to a world of information.

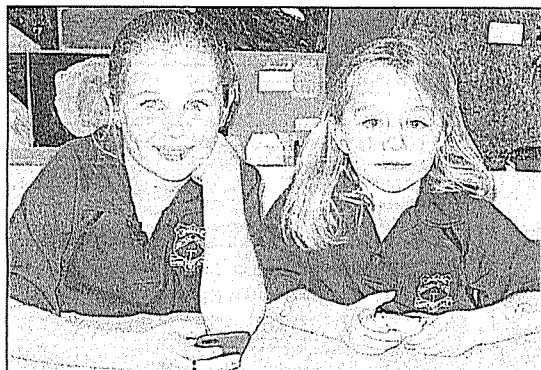
Interactive video game consoles such as the Nintendo Wii more com-

monly used as entertainment devices are also being adopted by some schools to increase the level of physical activity among students.

Mrs Roscarel, along with teacher Alison Wason, dedicate specific time each week to support the use of interactive technology in the classrooms.

This includes keeping the iPods updated and sourcing any apps that may be of benefit in the classroom.

UCS students, Jarod Robb (Year 3), Angus Williams (Year 2), Jack Wason (Year 3) and Josh Roscarel (Year 2) are pictured taking part in a numeracy group work activity.



UCS student, Vanessa Robb (Year 5), peer tutoring Abby Wason (Kindergarten) in literacy and numeracy activities.