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NBN expands learning opportunities for kids, says landmark study

Students who used to hand in C-grade work are now producing A-grade work – Janelle Reimann, Principal of Willunga High School

The National Broadband Network (NBN) is a powerful tool capable of lighting up young minds and improving educational outcomes for children, according to teachers participating in a landmark study into Australia's first NBN-enabled schools.

The report, *21st Century Teaching Strategies for a Highly Connected World*, shows educational benefits are already flowing through to children in those schools connected to the NBN that participated in the study.

“Even more children will benefit as the ongoing rollout of the network allows more and more schools across the country to connect to the NBN,” said Kate Cornick, General Manager of Education at NBN Co. “Every Australian home, business and school will be connected to the NBN by 2021 by fibre optic cable, fixed-wireless or satellite, with internet speeds in line with countries such as Japan and South Korea.”*

A comprehensive, three-month study conducted by Victorian educational consultancy ideasLAB on behalf of NBN Co, drew on the experiences of 60 teachers and educators at PLC Armidale in NSW, Willunga High School in SA and the TAFE teacher training institute in Armidale NSW.

According to the Principal of Willunga High School, Janelle Reimann, “The NBN has facilitated a revolutionary change in the delivery of content and co-contribution of learning input. Students who used to hand in C-grade work are now producing A-grade work.”

Among the findings:

- An overwhelming majority of teachers involved in the study (96 per cent) believe the NBN will allow students to increase the quality of their work;
- Access to superfast broadband, like that over NBN fibre, will also enable them to improve the way lessons are delivered (86 per cent)

ideasLAB Assistant Director Richard Olsen said: “The NBN is helping to break down the walls of the classroom. We found that online, collaborative learning supported by fast, ubiquitous broadband is motivating our children to become even more engaged and successful in the subjects they learn.”

“Australia's teachers need to re-imagine the pedagogical, technical and contextual consequences now that arise from teaching and learning in this new environment. By embracing the opportunities the NBN allows educators can deepen the learning experience and improve educational outcomes in Australia,” added Olsen.

New approaches to teaching and teacher training in schools with the NBN include:

- History students studying at home for their higher education certificate during the school holidays by collaborating with peers and teachers using the online community, Edmodo;
- Science students connecting with experts at UNSW's Museum of Human



Media Release

Disease to see dissections of healthy and diseased hearts via HD videoconferencing

Kate Cornick, General Manager of Education at NBN Co, said schools must embrace digital tools such as better broadband to ensure Australian students are not left behind the rest of the world.

“According to the latest world rankings, Australia is 21st out of 34 for fixed line broadband penetration, lagging behind New Zealand, Estonia and South Korea.

“The good news is most Australian educators understand the power of online learning and the benefits of high-speed broadband both at school, and increasingly in the home. The potential is extraordinary and it’s what we need if Australia is to remain globally relevant in the 21st century,” Ms Cornick said.

Download the full report here: www.nbnco.com.au/educationreport

** Your experience depends on some factors outside our control, like your equipment quality, software, broadband plans and how your service provider designs its network*

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Results Summary – 21st Century Teaching Skills for a Highly Connected World

- 96 per cent of teachers agreed that the NBN will increase their capacity for professional development and learning
- 93 per cent of teachers said it will allow them to expand their personal learning networks
- 86 per cent said the NBN will enable them to teach in more powerful ways
- 79 per cent said the availability of the NBN will lead to an increase in the quality and relevance of teaching
- 96 per cent believe the NBN will allow students to achieve more and increase the quality of their work
- 82 per cent said that the breadth, depth and relevance of their learning experiences will be increased
- 89 per cent said students will be able to engage in richer, deeper and more ambitious inquiry-based projects
- 93 per cent of teachers said students will be able to learn with and from others.

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Notes to Editors

** The 21st Century Teaching Skills for a Highly Connected World was prepared by ideasLAB and NBN Co in October 2012.*

About the pilot:

The 2012 program took place from June to August and involved 60 teachers from Willunga High School, Presbyterian Ladies' College Armidale (PLC) and New England TAFE Armidale (TAFE). Teachers participated in a professional learning program that was designed to explore new possibilities and understand how the NBN has the potential to open up in their classrooms to the world. They worked in teams on a curriculum-based project relevant to their current practice and student needs. Over eight weekly online sessions, teachers were exposed to virtual pedagogies and online technologies, to simulate thinking and expand their view of possibilities. These new approaches were then used in class. At the culmination of the program, the teams presented their projects and outlined plans for the future. The report provides case studies that explore the types of new opportunities that the NBN provides for schools and their students.