

# A Changing Learning Landscape

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**In the past decade of educational transformation, perhaps nothing has changed more than the relationship between teachers and students and the information being distributed in the classroom. In earlier years, the teacher was the major provider of content, and the tools that dominated the classroom were textbooks and chalkboards. Perhaps the most undesirable result of this environment was that it bred a passive student, over-reliant on the teacher.**

A rapid series of relatively recent events has changed the educational landscape forever:

- Google became a public company in 2004 after being founded in 1998
- Wikipedia was formally launched on 15 January 2001 and gained its one-millionth article in 2006
- YouTube was created in February 2005 and today 100 hours of video are uploaded to YouTube every minute
- The first iPad was released on 3 April 2010

In the past, teachers gave life to learning for generations of students by designing the learning environments of their classrooms. However, they were operating in an environment of scarcity that would make today's teachers cringe. As the availability and accessibility of information increase, this new economy of information is transforming the practice of teaching and the roles of both teacher and student.

## THE PASSIVE WATCHER HAS BECOME AN ACTIVE LEARNER.

In his book *Visible Learning and the Science of How We Learn*, John Hattie wrote: "It is possible to sit in a classroom, away from its focal centre, cause little disturbance, and virtually never be noticed. Observational studies have suggested that this is not an uncommon experience. So often, students seem to come to school to watch teachers working."

No longer do our students come to school to watch teachers working. They come to learn, to find inspiration, to work together, to acquire skills, to build character, to develop into well-rounded individuals.

At St Leonard's College, STL Link has transformed the delivery of content and enabled our teachers to collaborate to design the very best online learning opportunities. Students are able to watch and learn from embedded videos, images and documents both in the classroom and beyond it. The passive watcher has become an active learner who can explore curriculum content, develop their own media rich content to share with their peers, and explore what is quite literally a world of learning material.

Two years ago, St Leonard's College had fewer than 50 WiFi access points. Today we have over 150 access points so students and teachers alike are assured of superb internet access wherever they go on campus. From years 5 to 10, the iPad too is transforming the way we teach and learn. Powerful creative tools, interactive textbooks, and a universe of apps and content create endless



learning possibilities, all on a device that is extremely easy to use.

Students don't just watch, listen, or read with an iPad; they create, explore, question and challenge. Our app list helps to make every learning task engaging and inspiring for both student and teacher: a multimedia presentation, a photo documentary, an interactive eBook with embedded student created video content. The work students need to do becomes the work they want to do.

St Leonard's College is the first school in the world to introduce the App4 electronic diary app solution, and thus our teachers are easily able to communicate with their students and assist them with their organisation. Teachers can 'push' home learning tasks into their students' diaries, and parents are able to access their child's electronic diary from any internet enabled device and monitor the progress of home learning tasks.

Equipped with these new teaching and learning tools, St Leonard's College teachers have improved and adapted their practice to ensure the very best

learning environment for our students. Many teachers are operating in a 'flipped' classroom to allow more time for discussion and work on questions and assessment tasks. A flipped classroom is one in which students gain first exposure to new material outside of class, usually through reading or lecture videos, and then class time is used to

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do the harder work of assimilating that knowledge through strategies such as problem-solving, discussion or debates. Early data suggests that the 'flipped' model has yielded benefits in academic results for our Senior School students.

Other teachers have gamified (introduced games into) their curriculum, embedding achievement levels, points and choice into the academic content of their curriculum. Through such methods, the range of in-class tasks has expanded to enable a greater level of student engagement. Teachers are now actively working in teams to design engaging and thought-provoking learning environments, both actual and virtual.

STL Link, coupled with the use of students' own devices, has given our teachers the means to introduce a more rigorous and varied curriculum with greater focus on interactive, project-based learning across all subjects. Students learn independently by participating in interactive group research projects and exploring a variety of curriculum content that caters for the needs of both the more able and those who need more explicit instruction.

Giving students more responsibility for their own learning has made them more engaged and better prepared in the classroom. This, in turn, is making them better prepared for their future.