

My teaching space

Preparing my teaching space

Smart Classrooms strategy

More and more, state schools are using newer computers and faster internet connections to bring new and exciting learning opportunities to their students.

This is helping more teachers use ICT such as the internet as a natural part of teaching. It's also making many assessment and administration tasks easier.

The Smart Classrooms strategy is fuelling progress by uniting state government investment with innovation in schools.

The strategy is making a big impact. Smart Classrooms is:

- automating and streamlining administration within schools
- developing stronger partnerships between everyone who can make a difference to the educational outcomes of students
- rolling out superior technical support and re-engineering ICT systems
- providing more teachers with a tool-of-trade that most knowledge workers have had for years — a computer
- helping schools engage the digital generation.

The strategy is found in the department's *Information and Knowledge Strategic Plan 2007–2010*.

Computers for Teachers

The Computers for Teachers (C4T) initiative is part of the department's Smart Classrooms strategy, and will provide laptops for professional use to every Queensland state school teacher working two or more days a week.

Laptops are assigned to teaching positions and will allow teachers to better connect with their students — members of the digital generation.

The department is committed to providing you and your school with the latest Computers for Teachers laptops for use in the classroom. This means that when your laptop nears the end of its warranty, it will be replaced with a new machine — the model will be determined at the time of distribution. The new laptops will feature a new three-year warranty and laptop accessories.

If you would like to learn more about the Computers for Teachers initiative, visit www.education.qld.gov.au/smartclassrooms/strategy/si_computers.html

Physical classroom layout

Learning and teaching spaces come in all shapes, sizes, contexts and locations: some with classroom walls, others bounded by the learning experience you create. It is important to create safe, caring and supportive environments for learning where students have a sense of belonging and connectedness, and are able to bond with you and develop the confidence that you understand them. The layout of your teaching space communicates subtle messages about what you value in learning. It should be adaptable to changing teaching and learning styles, contexts and expectations.

Your classroom is the physical expression of your learning philosophy. Learning spaces (physical and online) support and enhance good pedagogy. To learn more about designing contemporary learning spaces, visit www.learningplace.com.au/sc/transform

While the placement of equipment, furniture and resources in the space are generally your choice, in secondary classrooms, you may be sharing with other teachers. When this is the case, check with your colleagues as to where your class can store textbooks and other materials, and where posters can be displayed. If you do share with another teacher, ensure that you are considerate and leave the room clean and tidy. When it comes to starting a lesson, wasting time cleaning the room can be extremely frustrating for teachers and very disruptive for students.

Considerations

- Carefully consider your needs as a teacher and the needs of students; particularly ensure that every child can see and hear from every part of the room, and that there is plenty of space to move around and help students.
 - Ensure that you manage the particular physical and behavioural needs of all students. For example, some students may require support to access and move freely in the room, or need to be positioned near the whiteboard to view text.
 - Design your teaching space to optimise natural light and temperature.
 - Do not block areas of egress such as doors and hallways.
 - Your furniture placement must allow for ease of movement and support flexibility in learning modalities.
 - Where are the computers set up, and what devices are needed to support learning? Computers are usually located near data outlets unless they are configured with wireless.
 - Where will your desk go? Do you even need a desk? Consider other ways of working and learning with your students.
 - Where will most movement occur and why? Consider your traffic areas. For example, if a quiet research or reading area is at the back of the classroom, students will need easy access to minimise disruption to the rest of the class.
 - How will you arrange students' desks? How can you move the seating arrangement to suit the learning activity or needs of the students?
 - Where will you store resources that require student access?
 - Who will be working with the students? If you have a teacher aide or parent volunteer, you will need space for them to work in small groups; a larger desk at the back would be ideal.
- If you work in the early years, will you use an easel or whiteboard? If so, where will students sit on the floor?
 - A cupboard or a desk at the front of the room near the door is convenient for storing in and out trays, the homework box, class roll and any other organisational items.

Hints

- Try designing the room to scale on paper first to plan where everything will go.
- By sitting in small groups, students develop cognitive and social skills through the sharing of ideas, interaction, cooperation, and learning to be tolerant of others.
- Always ensure you can make eye contact with all students in the class.
- Avoid drilling or nailing into your walls — ask the janitor or grounds person to do this.

Visual stimuli

Creating a warm and welcoming learning environment is important for students. While being conscious of leaving space to display student work, there are a range of posters and other materials which are useful for quick reference. These items can usually be borrowed from the teacher reference section of the resource centre. They may include:

Early years

- weather chart
- birthday chart
- sharing session roster
- colours
- days of the week, months of the year
- map of Australia or world globe
- numeracy posters, for example, money, basic addition and subtraction rules
- literacy posters, for example, letter recognition, basic words
- posters related to unit work.

Middle years

- numeracy posters, for example, multiplication tables, shapes, formulae
- literacy posters, for example, grammar rules, punctuation
- editing symbols chart
- reminders on how to edit
- world map or map of Australia
- globe
- posters related to unit work
- current events.

Senior years

- posters related to subject areas
- bulletin boards for student notices and announcements
- current events — school and wider community
- industry events and announcements as related to subject areas, for example, for the subject of dance – audition notices for upcoming productions, posters advertising upcoming productions, dance studio application forms, and more
- job opportunities related to subject areas
- career options associated with subject area.

Hints

- Display student work as soon as possible. Parents love to see the work of their children on display in the classroom.
- While it is important to have colour and visual stimuli in your classroom, be mindful that you do not over-clutter your room — ensure that it remains stimulating, not distracting!

eLearning spaces – the Learning Place

The Learning Place is the department's comprehensive eLearning environment providing secure access to an innovative range of digital tools, resources and eSpaces for teaching and learning collaboration and networking.

The Learning Place provides:

- staff and student learning spaces
- access to more than 20 000 quality assured digital resources
- resource collections called Learning Pathways to enhance and support teacher and student learning
- oneChannel for live and on-demand professional development programs
- web conferencing through iConnect
- eLearning (Blackboard) learning management system with virtual classrooms and ready-to-go courses
- communication project rooms including blogs, forums, chat, comic chat, podcast lounges and polls
- collaborative online projects including Travel Buddies, RAPS and virtual field trips
- professional learning communities
- expert advice and high level support.

The Learning Place provides staff with a separate eLearning environment to participate in professional conversations via staff blogs and status updates. Students have their own learning space and cannot access the staff space.

The Learning Place gives teachers and students access to thousands of high-quality digital resources and powerful tools for finding the resources to match learning and teaching needs.

eCurriculum, resources, websites, teaching ideas, images, videos and learning objects are organised in a number of ways, and accessed through a single search tool in the staff and student spaces.

eCurriculum is a practical and comprehensive online collection of mathematics, English and science resources. Teachers can adapt and extend this collection to develop quality learner-centred programs.

The materials are quality-assured and align with QCAR Essential Learnings current scope and sequence planning documents. They will also be aligned to the Australian Curriculum.

The collection provides access to information and resources for English and mathematics for Years 1 to 5 (with years 6 to 8 to be progressively uploaded by February 2011) and science for Years 4 to 7.

Each item in the collection contains:

- yearly overviews
- learning and teaching sequences
- assessment information
- advice on ways to support student learning
- engaging interactive activities for students.

Hint

Choose *Browse by Gateway* and then select the *Beginning, Establishing, Returning and Supply Teachers Gateway* to find useful digital resources.

Ready-to-go courses are quality assured student eLearning courses. These can be searched for in the Learning Place course catalogue. Simply select a course title for further information and register for the course. A teacher can then add information and tasks accordingly to personalise the course for learners.

A **virtual classroom** is a private online space teachers can use to support student learning. Just like a face-to-face classroom, a virtual classroom is a busy place that is adaptable to changing teaching and learning styles, contexts and expectations.

A virtual classroom might contain:

- group or individual learning activities and student home pages
- discussions or chats with students, parents or guests
- quizzes and surveys
- homework activities and assessment documents
- full online courses with modules of work, unit overviews, calendar and timetables
- forums, blogs, wikis and synchronous chat sessions
- student grade/mark book and criteria sheets
- WebQuests, Hotlists and Scavenger Hunts.

Hint

Students can access their virtual classroom during and outside school hours. Teachers can search the Resource Centre from within their virtual classroom and add resources like learning objects, images and videos directly to their course.

Project rooms are excellent eSpaces for communication activities involving students, online guests or colleagues. A project room can have numerous discussion forums, chats, blogs, podcasts and a group poll. The benefit of having a project room is that it keeps all activities in the one place, making it organisationally convenient. Teachers can also link to a project room from their virtual classroom space. Teachers can organise collaborative writing tasks and reflective, knowledge or learning journals, and critique creative writing, assessment responses or directed writing exercises. Most importantly, project rooms are a communication space for students to publish their thinking and their own writing.

Hint

Visit the Learning Place communication area to learn how to use these web tools.

The online help section will show you how to get started. Alternatively, contact your local Smart Classrooms Mentor or the friendly Learning Place team for individual support.

Collaborative online projects are virtual spaces that can be used to collaborate, coordinate or participate in activities, and to record data around a group project. These spaces are ideally suited to collaborative projects that involve groups of learners who are geographically isolated from each other, who may want to collaborate, share or publish around a similar topic. Project spaces include Raps, Travel Buddies and virtual field trips.

Hint

Visit the Learning Place Collaborative Online Project area to find out how to participate in a project or coordinate your own online project.

Things to consider

- Your students will be able to access curriculum resources during and outside school hours, unlike most school intranets.
- Teachers absent on sick leave or attending a professional development activity can leave work for their students in their virtual classroom and check progress.
- Students on holidays can check in with their class.
- Assessment items can be tracked through the use of self-marking quizzes and short answer items in the grade book.
- Students' progress during collaborative projects can be tracked.
- Students can work together conveniently after class hours.
- Students can submit drafts, plans and assessment items through the digital drop box.
- Students can only access their own virtual classroom via their DET login and password.
- Align your teaching practice with the ICT Student Expectations to identify the ICT knowledge, understanding, ways of working and skills that students in Queensland state schools are required to develop from Prep to Year 10. They are to be used as a curriculum resource to support the implementation of the QCAR ICT cross-curriculum priorities. Further information is available at www.education.qld.gov.au/smartclassrooms/strategy/dp/studentict.html

Staff space is available at
<http://staff.learningplace.eq.edu.au>

Student space is available at
<http://students.learningplace.eq.edu.au>

Resources

Digital content – access to reliable quality digital resources

Digital content is imperative in teaching and learning in the 21st century. eLearning designs and develops a wide range of high-quality digital content and resources, including online courses. A team of educational, technology and creative experts work together to:

- develop high-quality digital content and resources that enrich educational and professional development experiences
- provide a range of advisory services in the development of digital resources and their integration into professional practice.

This, and other content, is available through the Learning Place.

Technology and ICT resources

You may have access to the following items in your classroom or through the resource centre:

- computers and technology devices
- data projector
- web cams and recording devices
- digital, still or video camera
- interactive whiteboards
- MP3 players
- multimedia packages
- overhead projector
- science equipment
- mathematics equipment
- software programs
- TV/VCR/DVD player.

Find out how to access these items. For access to faculty-specific items such as sports equipment, drama costumes or musical instruments, directly contact a teacher in that faculty.

Assistive technologies

During your years of teaching, you will be supporting and teaching students that have a disability. Many of these students will either require, or significantly benefit from, the use of technologies that will enable them to access the curriculum or enhance their learning opportunities. Such technologies are known as assistive technologies.

Assistive technologies include hardware that allows students with disabilities to access the curriculum where their disability may restrict their access to conventional tools and computers. Hardware can include alternative keyboards such as the BigKeys and IntelliKeys, alternative pointing devices including trackballs, joysticks, touch screens and interactive whiteboards, and specialised hardware such as braille devices.

Assistive technologies also include software to provide support in understanding curriculum content, and in increasing their speed and efficiency in producing work. There are literally hundreds of assistive software applications available. Some more common titles include Clicker 5, Board Maker, textHELP Read and Write, Co:Writer and IntelliTools Classroom Suite.

Assistive Technologies may also include devices which enhance the students' abilities to communicate. These devices are known as alternative and augmentative communication devices, and could include the TechTalk, Dynamo, and Handheld Impact, to name a few.

Many of the assistive technologies benefit all students, and provide significant opportunities for teachers to make their classroom and the learning inclusive for all students, and to support their pedagogy.