

LAPTOPS CHART PECKING ORDER

Year 6 students at Seaham Public School are living the education dream of the 21st century.

By Linda Doherty



Already proficient at emailing, blogging and text messaging, the Year 6 students at Seaham Public School are now using laptop computers in the classroom to write stories, create artworks and learn how to touch type.

School principal Stephen Palmer says Seaham Public School introduced laptops for all 28 Year 6 students to enhance their education and engage them in school by using technology they are familiar with.

"The students are still doing the Year 6 curriculum but the laptop is now the tool to get the work done rather than exercise books," Mr Palmer says. "The kids are just blossoming."

Bill Unicomb, the Year 6 teacher and assistant principal implementing the switch to laptops, says he is already seeing students producing higher quality written work.

"They always want to work, they are writing longer stories and experiment more with language," Mr Unicomb says.

These same students are also involved in traditional rural pursuits online like raising newborn chickens under heat lamps in their classroom and growing native trees from seed.

The laptops have come in handy to chart the growth rate of the chickens and create spreadsheets to work out the tree income and expenditure budget. The school – located near Maitland – is working with the National Parks and Wildlife Service to re-vegetate local wetlands. Last year students, teachers and parents planted 400 trees; this year the goal is to plant 1000 trees.

The saplings are also sold to farmers, Landcare groups and the local council. Year 6 uses these funds to sponsor a child in Nepal

as part of their global connections unit of study.

A self-confessed technology buff, Mr Unicomb says the students are at times discovering new uses for the laptops before even he does.

"It's a learning curve for me as well," he says. "It's two-way learning by experimentation. Everyone gets the chance to share the knowledge." ■

