

Computers In Homes in Cannons Creek, Porirua



AIM:

Computers In Homes aims to empower the communities of decile 1 schools with the knowledge and skills to become active participants in our online world.

PROJECT TO DATE:

Mayor Jenny Brash and Graham Kelly launched Computers In Homes at Cannons Creek School in July 2000.

Twenty-five families were part of the scheme. The programme involves:

- A recycled computer and software for each family
- Unlimited Internet access for the first six months
- Phone connection where needed
- Training sessions
- Technical support
- Family signing an agreement to look after the computer, supervising their children on the Internet and to training at least one other family member or neighbour the skills they have learnt.

There are three other pilots nationally in New Zealand.

Research to Date:

The research carried out by Victoria University initial reports at www.computersinhomes.org.nz Preliminary evaluation of the impacts of providing computers in homes has produced some surprisingly positive results:

- The students' parents are *learning new skills*: keyboarding and word processing, email, writing letters, family budgeting using spreadsheets, accessing the internet.
- They are using these new skills to *obtain employment*, in some cases for the first time, or to advance in their existing jobs.
- Some parents have *entered tertiary education* for the first time, and use the computer for assignments and research projects.
- The parents are becoming *more active in the life of the school*; communicating with the principal and staff by email, and using the school website.
- The parents become *more active in the life of the community*, because they can use email, writing letters for others, minutes of meetings etc.
- The parents are *following the progress of their children more closely*, both by communicating more effectively with the school and by observing and assisting the children on the computer at home. Truancy among students in the families has fallen.
- The parents can *reduce the isolation they feel* from being 'stuck at home'; they email friends and family, often overseas, they engage in Internet banking and shopping, and use the Internet as a source of information and entertainment.
- Direct learning outcomes are still being studied, but it is already apparent that the students from the projects have increased their interest in learning, and their progress has become an issue for their family members.
- Each family involved agrees to *teach* another family member or friend the skills that they have learnt. This impacts on the community by spreading the ICT skills and knowledge in the community plus increasing the self esteem of the parent that becomes the teacher as they feel they have a worth and can add something of value to another learning.
- It is evident that the motivation of these families to improve their situation is very high, and the Computers-in-Homes initiative has provided a practical and non-threatening means for them to do so.

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The pilot was planned for two years, the next steps for the project in Cannons Creek need to be resolved. The 2020 Communications Trust has been talking to elearning Trust Porirua about the project.

In progress a pilot programme with Whitireia Polytechnic and funded by the Ministry of Education. Parents have been receiving one to one based tuition in their home to work on an individualised plan to improve the parents' literacy levels. This has been very encouraging and early results indicate that parents go on to access other courses after gaining the self-confidence through training at home.

Possible scenarios for the next 3-5 years in the Cannons Creek project:

1. The project ends
2. Keep the current families involved and motivated by:
 - o Ensuring affordable ISP access for all
 - o Sustaining technical support and upgrading the machines
 - o Continuing training and accessing further training courses for families where appropriate
 - o Continue parent meetings
 - o Find out from the parents what they would like to do e.g. study through the Internet and work out ways of resolving these needs
3. Expand and develop the programme to bring in more families and keep the current families actively involved including the points in 2.

Other Considerations:

Stockholm Challenge

The project has received a wide range of media coverage in the two years to date including being a joint winner in the Education category in the Stockholm Challenge in 2001. (www.challenge.stockholm.se)

The 2020 Communications Trust has been funded by the Todd Foundation to develop the online learning manual (www.computersinhomes.org.nz) and translate this into Maori, Samoan and Tongan. This will be released in February 2003.

The upgrade of the machines opens more opportunities for the families to be involved with active research programmes. For example the Trust was recently asked about the families trialling a CD ROM for reluctant readers. Unfortunately the computers the families currently have do not have CD Rom drives and are not enabled for sound. By upgrading the machines there would be a wider opportunity for families to be involved in research programmes and better experiences for the families.

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