

Smart technology boom in students requires parental intervention

January 14 2014, by Nic White



Mr Tryhorn says the school encourages students to connect their devices to the school's network and promotes it as being faster and more reliable, rather than using force. Credit: Brad Flickinger

The increasing availability of mobile phones and tablets to school children is forcing schools to reconsider their approach to web filtering as students abandon controlled campus networks for public wireless.

Schools have spent more than a decade locking down [internet access](#) under their control, blocking inappropriate content, games, [chat rooms](#) and [social networking](#) to keep [kids](#) on task and out of harms way.

However the task is becoming increasingly difficult with smartphones now ubiquitous and many [students](#) bringing tablets and laptops equipped

with 3G and 4G connections to school.

WA Catholic Education Office ICT coordinator Brett Clarke says because [mobile internet](#) will only become simpler, cheaper and faster and continue to democratise access, schools should be focusing more on educating students to become responsible users.

"A lot of this is a knee-jerk reaction, I think blocking things just drives the behaviour underground, superficially you think you're doing the right thing but really you're ignoring it and aren't in a position to help them," he says.

Tim Tryhorn, IT systems manager at a WA independent school says his school filters the internet on campus and school-owned laptops,

It is more of a safety for when they (the students) make a bad decision or stumble upon something, and to protect the network from malware, he says.

"The internet is not a nice place for the inexperienced so we want them to be in a safe, monitored and filtered environment, whether they realise they need it or not," he says.

"Ultimately we're still dealing with kids with limited life experience."

Mr Tryhorn says the school encourages students to connect their devices to the school's network and promotes it as being faster and more reliable, rather than using force.

Mr Clarke says that kids accessing content that they shouldn't be is more of a student management issue than a technology issue.

"It's the same as them smoking behind the shed or looking at dirty

magazines – the technology is just the vehicle," he says.

Mr Tryhorn says the solution starts at home and parents must step up and not leave everything to the school.

"Parent involvement seems to be reducing at a time when they need to be taking more responsibility for what they're kids are doing on the internet," he says

"While we can filter and educate them here, most of the problems happen from home based computers because parents aren't aware of what their kids are doing or aware of the dangers."

Provided by Science Network WA

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