Boys and Technology: 2nd Annual Conference
Learning together in tomorrow's digital age
Crowther Institute
29-30 August, 2011, Melbourne, Australia

Summary of Proceedings

The 2nd National Boys and Technology Conference was held at the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Conference at the end of August this year. One hundred and eighty delegates from across Australia and New Zealand attended the two-day event. The theme of this year's conference was mobile technology and its impact on learning and the learning environment.

Keynote speakers included Steve Harris, Principal of Northern Beaches Christian School and Dr Gerald White, Principal Research Fellow, Teaching Learning and Leadership at the Australian Council for Educational Research.

Steve Harris used his experience creating the dynamic learning environment of Northern Beaches Christian School to outline a vision of learning for the graduating class of 2025. By then, Steve suspects the primary focus of schools will be to provide a functional, relational community as a launch pad for learning. Students will select a 'base station' from which they select from a wide range of course options delivered by a range of diverse providers – blended, online or face-to-face. Schools will be the 'new villages' making use of 'coaches' and they will not look like the schools we know now. Acknowledging the change needed for this to occur, Steve shared the ten key factors in promoting change: shared vision (& lots of it), intuition, risk-taking, collaboration, team-work, creativity, embedding ideas, action, lots of Professional Development and creative curriculum models.

Dr Gerald White used his knowledge of educational research to identify key ICT trends in education. These were the teachers & the quality of the teaching, mobile technologies, the use of current learning theories, social networking especially Facebook, the education for online safety, the use of ICT to improve engagement & performance, shifting delivery methods included blended learning and home-school and increasing digital fluency.

The breakout sessions offered to delegates were diverse, covering all aspects of teaching and learning with mobile technologies as well as the bigger issues of using cloud computing and developing school strategies. Jonathan Nadler, an Apple Distinguished Educator working with Queensland's Learning Innovation Centre shared his experience with mobile devices and his vision for teachers to 'help every student teach themselves'. The Crowther Centre's Brett Fitzsimmons presented the work he had undertaken in developing apps with Year 10 boys, successfully building an app for students in Year 3 Mathematics.

As in 2010, at the first National Boys and Technology Conference, the student voice was one of the highlights for all who attended. While the life of the students in the graduating class of 2025 was the focus of much of the discussion, it was the students of 2011 who impressed with their honesty in a moderated panel discussion. When asked their opinions on a range of topics relating to the use of technology in their classrooms and lives they proved to be insightful and forthright, positive of the ways technology enhanced their lives and learning but at times scathing of the ways schools provided or controlled that technology.

The key message of the two days could be summed up in four letters – B.Y.O.D. Bring Your Own Device came through time and again in keynote, breakout and discussion sessions. Schools need to be prepared to provide robust and secure wireless network to allow students to connect *anywhere* and *anytime* with the device to which they have an emotional connection. This may be a tablet, netbook or laptop. The curriculum needed must be *relevant* and allow for *collaboration* and *thoughtful, deep discussion.*