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THE EDUCATION Technology GUIDE

The Future Of TECHNOLOGY IN SCHOOLS

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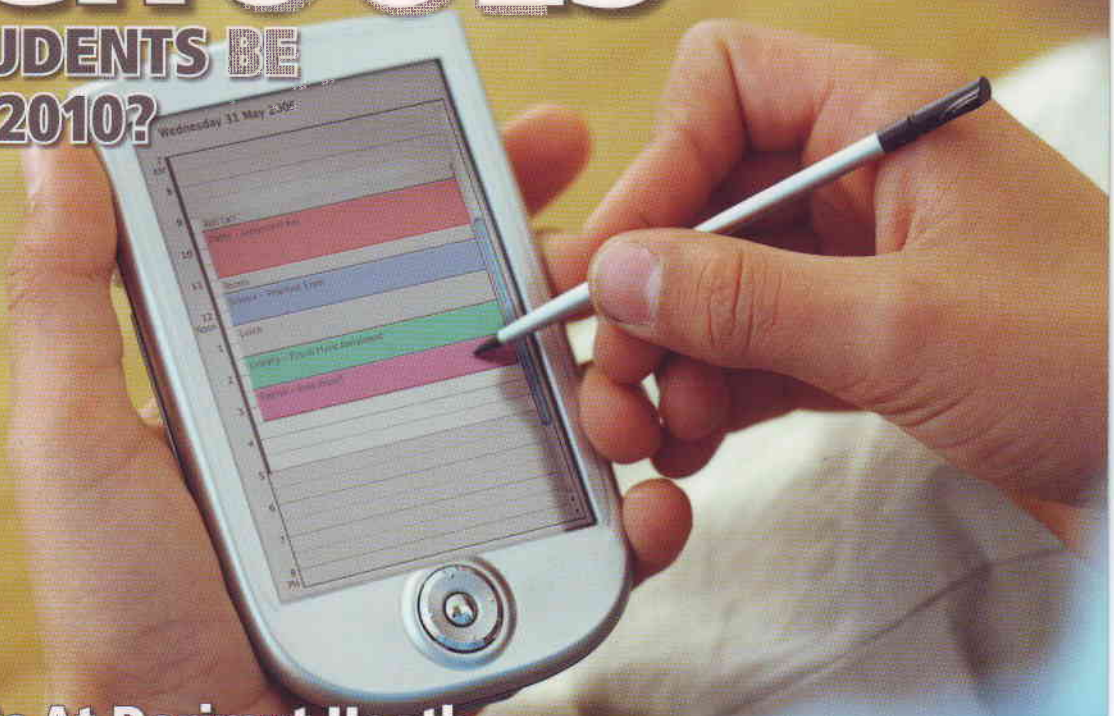

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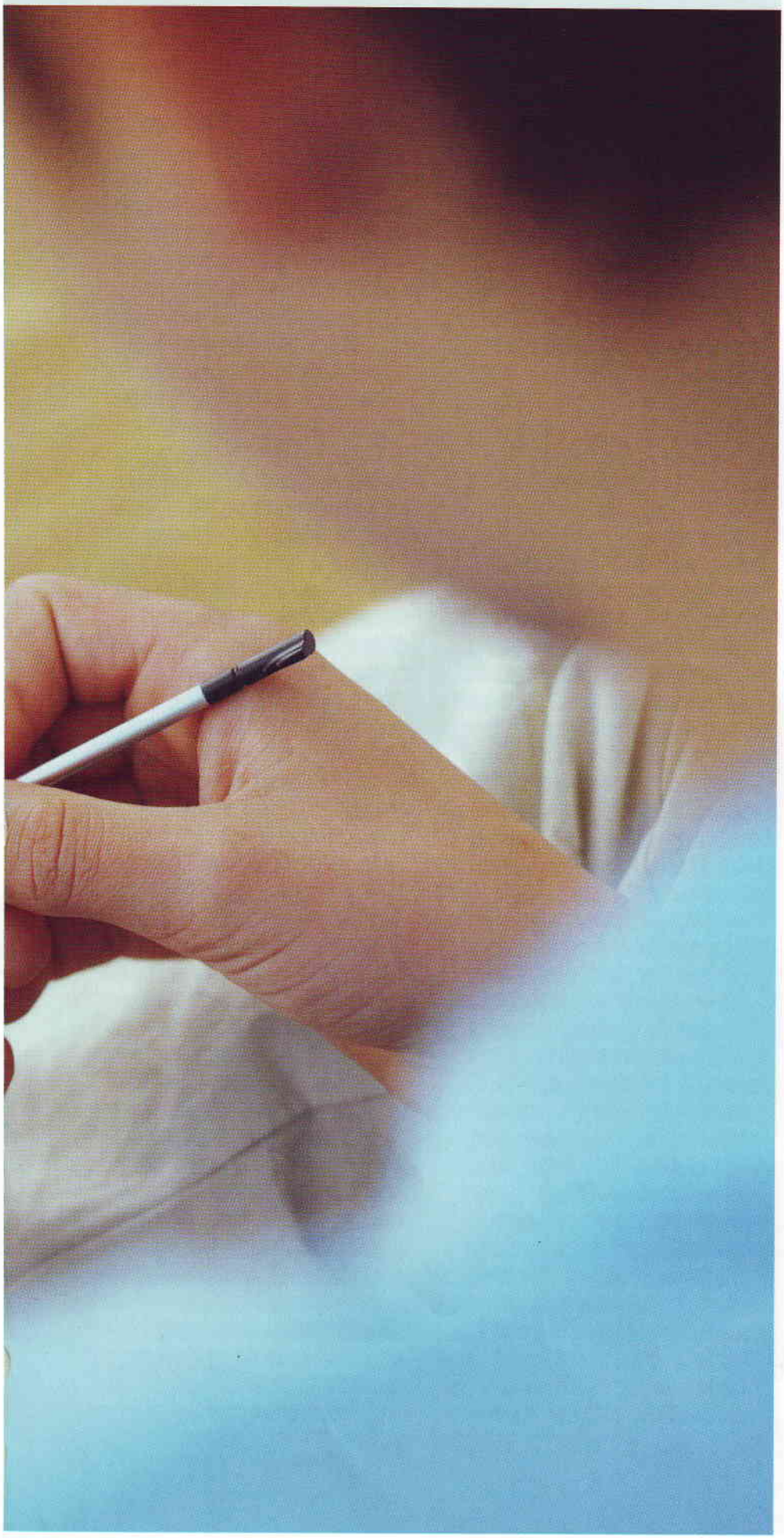

By Carol Daunt
LearnTel

Normality takes a turn towards technology in life and schools.

6am: Monday 15 November 2010

Nova wakes early to the sound of her handheld alarm reminding her that today is the day for her live video link with students in Japan, Russia and Canada. Her team has been working collaboratively on a cultural exchange and today they debate the issues.

She sends an SMS from her handheld to her team and their teacher to remind them to check their wiki before they meet later today. They use the wiki to collaborate on the paper they will post to the school's website about their cultural exchange program.

8am: Travel

During her bus journey to school Nova listens to the two podcasts her RSS feed picked up overnight and downloaded to her MP3 player. She also catches up on reading the e-book that is a set text for ancient history. She loves the way the e-book has animated recreations of ancient civilisations embedded into it.

She dictates notes into her handheld and the voice-recognition software translates this into text so she can post both the audio and the text to her blog once she gets to the next wireless hotspot.

9am: Interview Teachers from Last Century

Nova is working on a history project that looks at education last century. She has to meet face-to-face with two teachers who were in the classroom in 1995. They are meeting at the local park where she can use the wireless connection to enter text directly into her blog as she interviews the teachers.

She is amazed to hear that in the last century students' only access to computers and the Internet was through 'labs' set up in classrooms with up to twenty computers networked together. They (the teachers)

are amazed to see her handheld which acts as a phone computer, PDA, camera and videoconference system. She shows them how it is voice activated and will connect to any website or send an email via voice command using wireless to connect to the New Generation Internet.

She is also surprised to learn that students had just one teacher for each subject and didn't collaborate with students in other countries or even at other schools.

10am: Problem Solving Class

Nova never misses her problem solving class – she loves to hear how her classmates in other schools approach issues. She has decided to attend this session from the group webinar room rather than link in on her own from her handheld. The group webinar room has lounge chair seating for up to ten students to connect via tablet PCs. She realises that this is the new generation computer lab – like those the teachers from last century spoke about.

11am: Work on Assignment

The assignment on global warming is due on Friday. Nova wishes she were back in 1995 when assignments weren't submitted electronically and digitally time stamped so the teacher knew exactly when they were submitted. She also wishes that teachers didn't "cc" her parents on their marking when they emailed it back to her!

As she works through her spreadsheet on research data she finds some figures that don't seem right. She uses presence technology to check her address book and finds that Hugh is available on VoIP so she clicks the 'meetme' button in the spreadsheet and invites him to join her. Hugh is able to tell her that the figures are right and represent an unusual event last century.

1pm: Team meeting

After a quick lunch Nova's team meets in the school canteen where they can use the wireless network to access their wiki. The team has been using a wiki to work collaboratively on this project for two months. The wiki enables them to make changes to their presentation from wherever they are. This is the final face-to-face meeting before the link.

2pm: Videoconference Link

Nova's team uses the group videoconference room for their link-up. The session is a

Handheld: Handheld devices are pocket-sized computing devices that combine a variety of functions eg computer, phone, diary, address book, camera. The number of functions included will increase in the future.

SMS: Short message service – text messaging on mobile phones. It has its own shorthand – see: http://www.digi.com.my/products/prepaid/enjoy_sms_dictionary.jsp

Wiki: A group of web pages that allows users to add content, as on an Internet forum, but also permits others (often completely unrestricted) to edit the content.

Podcast: An audio or video file that you can download to an MP3 player such as an iPod. It's the 21st century version of the walkman!

RSS: A format for delivering regularly changing web content. Many news-related sites, blogs and other online publishers syndicate their content as an RSS feed. Users subscribe (free) and their computer downloads the new information without them having to search for it.

MP3 Player: A digital audio player that stores, organises and plays digital music files. The latest versions handle data files and video.

E-book: An electronic (or digital) version of a book. They can include animations, video and audio along with text and pictures.

Voice-recognition software: Allows you to use your voice to command a computer to undertake tasks and will also translate voice into text, e.g. dictate a letter that is translated into a text document.

Blog: A website for which an individual or a group generates text, photographs, audio files, and/or links on a regular basis. No programming skills are required. The term is a shortened form of weblog. Authoring a blog, maintaining a blog or adding an article to an existing blog is called "blogging". Individual articles on a blog are called "blog posts", "posts", or "entries". People who use blogs are "bloggers" and they exist in the 'blogosphere'.

Wireless: A method of communication that transmits data between devices without cables or cords, chiefly using radio frequency and infrared waves.

PDA: (personal digital assistant): Handheld devices that were originally designed as personal organisers, but became much more versatile over the years. A basic PDA usually includes a clock, date book, address book, task list, memo pad, and a simple calculator. They synchronise data with a PC or laptop.

Videoconference: A set of interactive telecommunication technologies that allow two or more locations to interact via two-way video and audio transmissions simultaneously. Systems were traditionally room based but are now integrated into mobile phones and laptops.

New Generation Internet (NGI): The next version of the Internet that will be bigger, better and more reliable. It's already being introduced overseas.

Webinar: A seminar that is conducted over the world wide web using web conferencing software. In contrast to a Webcast, which is transmission of information in one direction only, a webinar is designed to be interactive between the presenter and participants.

Tablet PC: A mobile computer shaped in the form of a notebook or a slate with the capabilities of being written on through the use of a touchscreen. A user can use a stylus or penabled pen to operate the computer without having to have a keyboard or mouse.

Presence Technology: Allows a network user to know when another user is connected to the network and available to receive and immediately answer a communication. It shows how they are available, e.g. text, voice and/or video.

VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol): The routing of voice conversations over the Internet or any other IP-based network. Also called IP telephony and Internet telephony.

ePortfolio: A portfolio based on using electronic media and services. It consists of a personal digital record containing information such as a collection of artefacts or evidence demonstrating what one knows and can do. Blogs are becoming a popular medium for ePortfolios.

m-Learning: Learning accessed via a mobile device, e.g. mobile phone, PDA.

multipoint link between the four countries with another two sites in each country linked to view the debate and to ask questions at the conclusion. Hundreds of other students around the world will access the video stream that will be put on the school's website after the event.

"We're hurtling towards a mobile society where everyone will have access to information wherever they are."

3pm: Update ePortfolio

Before she heads off to sports training, Nova updates her ePortfolio. She has been collating her ePortfolio since she joined the school as a junior. It consists of a blog with various text, audio and video files linked to it.

Is this really the scenario in 2010?

No – it's more likely to happen before then! All of these technologies are available now. If you're not sure what some of them are, check the descriptions and try them out.

(Tip: A good place to start is www.wikipedia.org - the online encyclopaedia that anyone can edit!!)

We're hurtling towards a mobile society where everyone will have access to information wherever they are. Students will be accessing their education by m-Learning and collaboration will be paramount. This promises to be a rich learning environment for students and an exciting challenge to teachers to design for a very different environment. But there is no need to tear down all the bricks and mortar just yet!