

# winner of the 2009 ICTEV leader of the year:

**Anne Mirtschin, Hawkesdale P-12 College**

Anne Mirtschin is the 2009 recipient of the ICTEV Award for Outstanding Leadership in the use of ICT in Education.

## INTRODUCTION

Anne Mirtschin, B Comm., Dip. Ed. is a secondary teacher of 27 years. Having always taught in country schools, she has now taught at Hawkesdale P-12 College for the last 20 years. Anne's subject areas are information and communications technology (ICT) and commerce (accounting). She has been the recipient of a NavCon Scholarship to New Zealand for the NavCon conference in 2001, taught students who won the Victorian award for best student movie with Kahootz, and on two other occasions had two who were in the top three places. Anne won the *Best Teacher in Kahootz in 2006* for Victoria. Using various media with students to allow them to adapt to the literacy that most suits them has always been a passion for Anne, who now works one day per week as the Barwon SW Regional Innovations Liaison Officer and hence works closely with the Innovations and Excellence Next Generation Division of DEECD.

Sixteen months ago, Anne commenced a backyard blog (<http://backyard.globalstudent.org.au>) as part of a rich picture case studies grant with DEECD. Anne and her Grade 6 students were working with the volunteers at the Penshurst Volcano Discovery Centre to produce podcasts on their Kanawinka Geopark for use in the visitor centre. This has since led to all students, Grades 4-10, classes Prep to 9, most staff and the school itself, having blogs. Students can access their work 24/7/365, as can parents. Their work is online and transparent. Parents comment on student's work as do even grandparents living in England. Experimenting with Web 2.0 tools and their application to the classroom has been a passion and videoconferencing and virtual classroom work is now being used as much as possible in her ICT classes. Anne's students have participated in many global projects, one of the most exciting being the flatclassroom project. The group has been accepted into the latest project, with even more countries involved. This year, she is experimenting with the use of these tools beyond her ICT classes into accounting and Year 12 VCE classes. In 2008, Anne received the honour of being announced the joint MS Innovative Teacher of the Year award, for Victoria.

## IN RESPONSE TO AWARD CRITERIA

### ADVOCACY, SUPPORT AND PROMOTION OF THE USE OF ICT IN EDUCATION

#### **Achieve excellence in ICT in education innovation and development and works tirelessly to improve the quality of education**

Throughout Anne's teaching career she has always supported and promoted the use of ICT in education. As she loves experimenting with new software types, she is always looking for new media for students to use. Hence their success with the use of Kahootz in its early years.

As the Regional Liaison Officer for the Barwon SW region, Anne is constantly seeking innovation in schools in her area. She spent several afternoons in Melbourne at the DEECD in August, 2008, with policy makers and personnel from the Innovation and Next Practise Division concerning the work and progress they have made with blogging and its place in VELs.

In 2008, Anne and Jess McCulloch, a teaching colleague, received teacher professional leave to research 'Laying the eplanks in a Web 2.0 school'. They identified eight eplanks and set up a wiki at <http://www.eplanks.wikispaces.com> to map their findings. They commenced WIWOW (Walk In Walk Out Wednesdays) where staff from Hawkesdale could wander in on a Wednesday afternoon with any questions that were related to computer usage. This was a very popular activity and much of the successful uptake of Web 2.0 and blogging in their school has been attributed to it. Teachers from nearby schools have started to wander in as well and it has led to 'Talk It Tuesday' with Knowledge Bank at DEECD which is held every second Tuesday and allows questions to be asked, sharing of ideas, connections etc. It is online and Elluminate is used as the platform.

As blogging is now established, further experimentation is taking place with videoconferencing and virtual classrooms (and other Web2.0 tools). A successful linkup with Jean Pennycook who is researching Adele penguins and the impact of global warming on them, in Antarctica, gave us a glimpse into a virtual school. All teachers and all classes from Prep to Year 9 were gathered in their classrooms and the linkup was made with discoverE, virtual classroom software. A colleague, Lorraine Leo from Boston, USA connected them and they had the software developers, other global teachers from South America and Taiwan and some Grade 6 Boston students in the class as well.

Each classroom teacher was responsible for the chat, talk and audio. Jean spoke to them for an hour using photos and answered the constant stream of student questions – truly student directed learning. Further experimentation with virtual classrooms is taking place at the beginning of 2009, with Year 7 students and the Ping ([www.pingmusic.com.au](http://www.pingmusic.com.au)) music project, where a virtual teacher from a radio studio in Melbourne is teaching Hawkesdale students, and students from two other rural schools, how to create musical stories using audacity and other online sites. The Melbourne Symphony Orchestra are also involved and the school have an artist in residence one day per week. This is quite pioneering and the students and teachers are learning much about how the virtual classroom needs to be worked to engage and empower students. This project and the flatclassroom project is providing them with experiences in student digital citizenship, appropriate behaviour and cultural tolerance.

In 2008, Anne was honoured to receive the award of joint winner of the *MS Victorian Innovative Teacher of the Year Award*.

#### **Assists in the building of partnerships to advance the use of ICT in education (e.g. school and community partnerships, school and industry partnerships)**

Hawkesdale College have had an informal partnership with the Volcano Discovery Centre volunteers in Penshurst. Their volcanic region, Kanawinka, has just been awarded geopark status. Hawkesdale have produced publicity brochures for the centre, a website and in 2007 produced podcasts for them. This year, 2009, they will continue to develop resources for Kanawinka.

Another partnership that Anne is endeavoring to develop is that with parents – she ran some morning coffee mornings in 2008 to keep them informed, evening information sessions and keep ICT updates in the community newsletter.

The most successful projects have involved the various stakeholders, e.g. the live blogging with the Premier and Minister for Education, involved the school's technician being in the classroom with them to ensure all ran smoothly, the education officials, the government, the Head of Telstra and two schools who enjoy the benefits of their policies and decisions. The linkup with Antarctica involved the software developers, a research scientist, teachers from across the globe, Grade 6 students in Boston and all teachers and classes to Year 9 at Hawkesdale.

Currently Anne is working with the software developers, Elluminate from USA and discoverE in Australia, to discover why they have problems in certain aspects of the program loading i.e. the web tour etc. Solving these issues will make it easier for everyone to use Elluminate.

### **Plan, develop and implement programs to advance ICT in education**

The State Library Association Victoria and the Educational Channel of DEECD were interested in promoting blogging in the classroom, so Heather Blakey, a successful blogger, was employed, with a grant, to help setup and promote globalstudent/globalteacher blogs. As a recipient of a rich picture case studies grant, the use of Web 2.0 tools was an essential component of this. Therefore, Anne was keen to blog and worked closely with Heather to determine the approach, direction and uses for blogging in the classroom. She still regularly contributes to the home blog of globalteacher/student and has maintained her association with Heather, to continue to push blogging to all boundaries.

As part of Anne's association with the DEECD and after several meetings with them, she documented the value of blogging and its place and associated assessment in the VELS (Victorian Educational Learning Standards) and has left it with the DEECD policy makers.

Classroom2.0 is a global classroom with teachers and other parties who are interested in education, the emerging technologies and advancement of the use of Web 2.0 tools for improving learning outcomes. Steve Hargaddon from the USA, is the organizer of this site which now has more than 17,000 global members. Anne is a welcoming host on this site and her role includes welcoming new members and mentoring and answering any general queries that members may have. This has led to some valuable connections and Anne has used these for further collaboration and communication and use in her own classroom. Online meetings have also been part of this role with Steve and interested and pioneering educators.

*School Beyond the Walls* – another social networking site, predominantly with European members and the flatclassroom project are two other areas of global education that Anne has been working with. Due to a valuable connection with Lorraine Leo, in Boston USA, through Classroom2.0, Hawkesdale got involved in the Vendee Globe project, a French yacht race that takes sailors sailing around the globe solo, non stop. Issues studied have been global warming, pollution of the waters, latitude/longitude etc. Lorraine Leo has come into the virtual classroom to teach Anne's students about this exciting race and also about her school in Boston.

*The Ping Music Project*, as outlined above is an example of implementation of a virtual classroom project, bringing music to remote areas in rural Victoria.

*Flatclassroom Project* – This is an exciting project where the classroom walls flatten and we teach beyond our country and our students are involved in groups from various countries including the Middle East. Vicki Davis of Camilla, Alberta, USA and Julie Lindsay of Qatar Academy, Qatar commenced the projects where students work in small groups, learning about Web 2.0 tools and their effect on education, science, arts etc by using wikis and nings for communication, connection and collaboration. The final product is an individually produced video on their findings. Part of this video is outsourced by a student in another country that is grabbed from the ning and added to the student video and then uploaded back onto the ning for judging by global judges.

Global staff meetings take place at 6am or 7am in the morning using Elluminate where they plan, prepare, organize and reflect upon the projects that they are involved in. Many are also on a weekend, due to time zone differences.

Anne has experimented with Skype for video conferencing and involving slideshare to share photos of e.g. Australian culture, Hawkesdale's school and farm with Canadian students who were studying Australia and Pacifica as part of their syllabus. Anne spoke to 120 students in their auditorium from her home late at night. An already established wiki informed Anne of what they had learned, a facebook noticeboard gave the questions they wanted to ask and immediately after, the same noticeboard gave her valuable feedback on her virtual class.

Live blogging is another area that Anne enjoys experimenting with. After sharing blog post prompts with a school in Connecticut, they blogged live, using [www.coveritlive.com](http://www.coveritlive.com) students in the USA were in their homes, being directed by their teacher in his home, whilst Anne's students were in her computer lab. They managed to find out a lot about each other and students asked questions that teased out the difference and similarity in cultures. Anne has repeated this several times and at the end of each semester, has run a video conferencing session and 'show and tell' using Skype. So, the students can show them vegemite, blue tongued lizards etc. They have demonstrated cheer leading, sang their national anthem with pride and showed Anne's students what they had for supper the day after Thanksgiving Day. (Pumpkin cheesecake was one, much to the intrigue of the students.) The students love this sort of connection.

Another successful connection is with a school in Russia. On their second video conference session, they were part of a 5 minute news item on Russian TV. The TV crew came to the Russian school to film the video conference. We were fortunate to see their traditional Russian dances, food, art work

and wooden stacking dolls. In turn, Anne's students had a bearded dragon, cockatiel, blue tongue lizard, vegemite, footy etc.

### **Provide advocacy for ICT in education to the extent that their work is used as a model for others**

Anne's student blogs have been used as a role model for the Diploma of Education section of the University of Melbourne, many conference presentations, inservices for school computer technicians at inservices, ultranet coaches etc (She knows this, because people who have sat in on the sessions have told her.)

Anne's work has been featured on several sections of the DEECD website, including Shine and the Education Channel. One of Hawkesdale's Year 7 girl's blogs is set as a model for others to peruse on the Education Channel website. Various teachers and technology coaches from the USA have asked to use Anne's work to share with others at presentations. Work has been featured on Elluminate, *theedublogger* (<http://www.theedublogger.edublogs.org>) etc. Many of her posts have been tagged in *delicious* and *diigo* and links from her posts are often made in other teacher's blogs.

### **SETTING DIRECTIONS AND EXHIBITING LEADERSHIP**

#### **Mentoring and leadership of groups and individuals**

Anne's host role with Classroom 2.0 ([www.classroom20.com](http://www.classroom20.com)) involves welcoming and mentoring members. In her class blog she shares experiences, frustrations, reflections, tips, tutorials etc at <http://murch.globalteacher.org.au> and also at her teacher blog <http://murcha.wordpress.com> (which was nominated for the edublogs 'best teacher blog' in 2008). This attracts on average 50-60 readers per day from across the globe and has had up to 210 readers per day.

*Talk It Tuesdays* – Anne helped to initiate this program, based on the success of WIWOW, which is held once a fortnight with Tamara Carpenter of Knowledge Bank, DEECD. Teachers can come online for an hour after school, seeking help or sharing ideas and just connecting. Anne is a Network leader for the flatclassroom project commencing February, 2009, with even more countries involved. See <http://netgened.wikispaces.com>. She has made many conference presentations over the past 10 years and especially in 2008 when keen interest has been shown with her work and Web 2.0.

Anne worked with Richmond Primary School and staff from the Education Channel, DEECD, to set up a live blog when the Premier, Head of Telstra and the Victorian Minister for Education came to Richmond PS to launch the new broadband linkups. Anne is an active member of various teacher mailing lists. Over the last 18 months, Anne has mentored many people through emails, comments on blogs and others who request assistance when attempting these new

tools.

Anne was the first overseas host for the weekly 'day in a sentence' (a global collaborative work initiated by Kevin Hodgson, USA) that encourages teachers to reflect on their week or day in a sentence. Anne now regularly hosts this project.

In 2007 and 2008, Anne worked closely with Heather Blakey, who was employed by the Education Channel, DEECD, and SLAV, the School Library Association of Victoria, to set up global teacher/student blogs experimenting, developing and implementing best practise in blogging. She has posted to global teacher and global student on a regular basis, sharing experiences and advice. Her work has encouraged many other schools, teachers and classes to take up blogging.

In January, 2009, Anne took three of her Year 9/10 students to Qatar for the Flatclassroom conference. This was an amazing experience and although two other Australian teachers were present, Anne's were the only students from Australia. They worked on global issues that were of concern to them, after working in groups of four or five with students from other countries. In February 2009, she is one of two leading teacher/mentors for the flatclassroom project. Don Tapscott is the author of *Grown Up Digital: How the Net Generation is Changing Your World*. So, in this latest flatclassroom project, the next level of 'flattening' is to not only have classrooms connect but to have the classrooms connect in new and more far-reaching ways with the authors of their books. See <http://netgened.wikispaces.com/Organization>

In 2008, Anne presented at many conferences, including local, statewide and national. Some of these were online sessions, most face to face.

#### **Contribute to ICTEV work and actively participate in the professional communities of this organisation.**

Anne has presented at the ICTEV conferences over the last 3-4 years. She has written articles for Interface over the last number of years and the ICT in Education journal in 2008.

She presented at the ACCE conference in Canberra 2008 on the topic 2.0 fusion to save confusion (the importance of developing personal learning networks).

#### **Conduct research and/or write about ICT in education**

Due to the nature of their work, they have participated in many research projects.

- 2008 *Teacher-Directed Collaborative Online Communities* commissioned by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Victoria, to be

conducted by Dr Enrico Canale and Dr Pam Macintyre from the Faculty of Education at The University of Melbourne.

- 2007 'Digital Technology in and out of school' a comparative study of the Nature and Levels of Student Use and Engagement with Anne Marie Chase, University of Western Australia.

- Mal Lee and Dr Glenn Finger using focus groups to research 'student learning in the home' Griffith University (Griffith University, Queensland, Australia).

- Anne has written many newsletter and magazine articles.

- Anne has set up a wiki that shares many of the resources that she has found <http://ejourneys.wikispaces.com>. The feedjit map shows the extent of readership of this site.

#### **Inspire others to strive for excellence**

- Anne's blog (<http://murcha.wordpress.com> or <http://murch.globalteacher.org.au>) inspires excellence from others. Comments are regularly received from national and global readers telling her so. Samples of Anne's work and that of her students are transparent and online for all to see and use. Work has been uploaded – digital stories to teachertube, podcasts to podomatic, conference presentations and other presentations to [www.slideshare.net](http://www.slideshare.net)

- Anne has presented at many conferences, both face to face, and online, in 2008 to share her work and experiences.

- In January, 2009, Anne and three students attended the first flatclassroom conference in Qatar where they met their global classmates face to face and again were mixed in groups across countries, to make a presentation on a global issue that was of concern to them. This presentation was made to the staff and students present at the conference for judging and the best presentation will become the next global project for the flatclassroom. This was an amazing event which pushed Anne's girls beyond their comfort zones, exposed them to foreign cultures, put some in groups where the common language was Arabic and not English, yet allowed them to work together and discover that they all have common interests, goals and concerns. Students came from Qatar, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Ethiopia, Pakistan and USA. As an extension of this, Anne is now a lead teacher and mentor for the netedgen flatclassroom project in 2009.