

Enabling Students and Enhancing Community

RedCAT, a catalyst for change and developing community at WA's Leschenault Catholic Primary School

Optimising listening conditions and learning spaces is a key driver for Leschenault Catholic Primary School Principal, Paula MacKenzie, and her staff. It is vital to them that lessons and instructions are delivered to suit the competencies of all children at the school.

“Particularly for children at the early primary level, children need to hear the clear pronunciation and formation of spoken words,” said Paula MacKenzie.

According to Paula, anecdotal evidence suggests there are greater numbers of children with auditory processing and related disorders across all schools.

“There used to be perhaps one child in a class with auditory learning difficulties. Now we may have six or seven in every classroom. It's up to us as a profession to provide optimal learning environments for all our students, whatever their learning ability.”

Having used Hear and Learn's RedCAT audio systems in previous schools, Paula was keen to implement the system when she was appointed to Leschenault Primary four years ago. Paula wanted to introduce the technology into the Junior Primary School first, framing the development of language learning.

“The Hear and Learn technology enables children to hear not only the sounds of words crisply clear, but the formation of sounds, and that's very important for young children when they're learning words and how to pronounce them. These children are accumulating the beginnings of language at his level,” said Paula. “They are learning about initial language, how it sounds and the blends of sounds, so it's vital they are able to clearly distinguish those sounds.”

With a curriculum “packed” with learning opportunities and school activities, there is also the welfare of teaching staff to consider. Paula believes RedCAT positively supports both Leschenault Primary's staff, as well as students, with the delivery of instruction.

Background classroom noise can, at times, be overwhelming. By delivering clear audio throughout classroom spaces, RedCAT significantly reduces the strain on teachers' voices while ensuring the clear delivery of sound to every student.

“It improves the students' ability to concentrate,” said Paula. “Reporting to their peers using a RedCAT microphone encourages them to think about composing their sentences. It becomes almost a performance.”

Thanks to an active and supportive Parents & Friends (P&F) Association, RedCAT units are being installed throughout Leschenault's primary school classrooms.

To demonstrate the benefit of the system, Paula MacKenzie used RedCAT at a February 2016 P&F meeting so parents could experience for themselves the difference it made to audio quality. For P&F President Taryn York, the rollout of RedCAT technology through the school was an ideal opportunity for the school's close knit community to get behind the project.

“As a P&F we focus on not one particular year level, but on projects that will benefit every student,” said Taryn. “We wanted to support all our children, but particularly the increasing numbers of children with audio processing problems, from an early age and close the gap in their language development by helping with pronunciation and letter crispness, and raising our literacy programs too.”

Pre-primary and Year 1 were the P&F’s initial focus for the RedCAT system, followed by Hear and Learn Flexcat Pods for the Year 6 classrooms. Numerous functions and fundraisers, including the Rainbow FunRun, Quiz Nights and Raffles, have galvanised the support of the school’s approximately 350 families to realise Paula MacKenzie’s “wishlist” for Hear and Learn technology throughout the school. Taryn readily acknowledges the willing support of the school’s community.

“There’s an amazing camaraderie among families at Leschenault Primary,” said Taryn. “When a school’s parent group are like that the children pick up on it too and then they want to become involved in the P&F’s activities.”

“There ‘s a big push from the P&F to support literacy, particularly students with auditory processing problems. As a community we would like to see all our classrooms fitted with Hear and Learn technology, including our Indonesian language room.”

With classes of up to 30 students, the benefits of the RedCAT system for staff are evident too.

According to Year 2 teacher Bridget White, at Leschenault Primary School RedCAT is utilised as a two way communication tool with obvious, and some supplementary, benefits.

This is the first year Bridget has used RedCAT in a classroom and she’s appreciating the even audio distribution as well as its acceptance by her students.

“We have long classrooms and class groups of around 30 students, so the RedCAT wall mounted panel is a practical solution to sometimes uneven sound in a space like that,” said Bridget. “It doesn’t matter where you are in the room, the sound is crisp and clear.”

Less obvious socially developmental benefits of the classroom based system include teamwork, responsibility, and the support and encouragement of peers.

“My kids just go and get the microphone and set it up each day. They know about the docking station and recharging the units; it’s really become part of our everyday, almost an expectation that they’d use the system all day, every day. It’s just what we do.”

“When the students are reporting to the rest of the class, wearing the microphone is a bit of a novelty they enjoy. For children with any level of learning difficulty, from the mild to the more challenging and particularly for any undiagnosed conditions, the clarity of sound delivered by RedCAT means they can all deliver a clear sound and message to the whole class, uncomplicated by any of the background noise of a normal, active classroom full of engaged children.”

“It makes classroom learning a positive and accessible experience for all our students.”