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“Just Like Wearing a Piece of Jewellery”

An audio technology system has become an integral part of Proserpine’s St Catherine’s Catholic College Primary School classrooms, and its Acting Principal wouldn’t have it any other way.

Hear and Learn’s RedCAT audio technology has become part of everyday life across all the Primary School’s classrooms.

“We couldn’t do without them,” says Acting Principal of St Catherine’s Primary School, Dianne Stevens.

Initially the technology was introduced to assist the teaching of a couple of students with hearing and developmental challenges. Its success saw it become part of St Catherine’s learning enrichment program and, later, standard issue and used in every St Catherine’s Primary School classroom.

“We want to provide optimal learning environments for all our students, irrespective of their learning ability or what stage they’re up to,” said Ms Stevens.

RedCATS are now located in every classroom from Prep to Grade 3 and Grades 4-6 across both school campuses.

Architecturally the school’s classrooms range from the traditional large and “airy” older style, high ceilinged classrooms to smaller, contemporary spaces. Ms Stevens believes the adaptability of the RedCAT technology that has made it so successful at St Catherine’s.

“Not only can it be used in any classroom configuration, but the Hear and Learn IT technicians are available to address any problems with the system.”

Research confirms that when children are spoken to in a regulated, positive tone and related to in a calm and positive manner it significantly contributes to their social and emotional development, particularly their positive self esteem.

And the students of St Catherine’s are not the only ones to benefit from Hear and Learn’s technology. Teachers particularly appreciate the assistance RedCAT gives them with voice projection.

“It means they don’t need to raise the volume of their speaking voices in order to be heard over a classroom full of enthusiastic students,” said Ms Stevens.

“We don’t allow raised voices in our teaching spaces, but the RedCATs enable our staff to talk at the same tone and volume as their normal speaking voices and they can be heard clearly by every student in the class, no matter what activity is taking place.”

The overall impact is that classroom spaces are more calm. A calmer classroom means calmer students who are more receptive to the learning experiences and the curriculum. Calmer students mean better teaching and learning outcomes for everyone.

“We are very, very pleased with the RedCATs from a whole school point of view,” says Ms Stevens.

For teaching staff, the technology offers considerable an immediate benefits.

“From a health and safety aspect, less strain on teachers’ voices means a less stressful working environment more relaxed classrooms, reduced sick leave due to strained vocal chords.”

The beauty of the technology means that although the teacher’s speaking voice is maintained at a regular speaking level throughout the day, each student in the teaching space experiences a clear and direct delivery of the audio, regardless of where they are in the classroom or the activity taking place at the time.

“When the students are packing up the room the teacher can be heard, even from the back of the room, just as clearly as when all the students are sitting quietly together in the reading area. It’s a brilliant system.”

Teaching staff at St Catherine’s are finding the RedCAT audio technology is particularly useful during in class presentations. According to Ms Stevens, often it’s the shy and softly spoken students who benefit the most.

“Our students are so relaxed with the system. I had one Primary student tell me that, when she put on the microphone to give her presentation to the class, it was just like wearing a piece of jewellery.”

“Our parents are also aware of the implementation of technology across our school with interactive whiteboards and iPads, so the RedCATS were just absorbed by the school community as a further element of that technology,” says Ms Stevens.

The advantages of the RedCAT system are also being recognised throughout the school’s wider community. The clarity of the RedCAT system has become the envy of local Whitsunday Parish priest Father Bell who, according to Ms Stevens, believes it is “better than the PA system used in the Whitsunday Parish church”.

While Fr Bell’s advocacy for RedCATs is appreciated at St Catherine’s, parents of the school also experience its audio benefits during meetings and larger whole class information sessions, including the annual Prep Information Night.

Distribution:

Whitsunday Coast Guardian

Whitsunday Times