Web services for schools and TAFE

NSW public schools and TAFE NSW are at the forefront of teaching and learning in the electronic age. With the introduction of web services for schools and TAFE, students and staff are able to extend the boundaries of the classroom to engage with a dynamic, expanded ‘virtual’ learning community.

The NSW Department of Education and Training is offering over 1.2 million students and 130 000 staff a personal, password-protected portal, providing access to an email account, safe filtered Internet browsing, and collaborative web services such as chat, list services, forums and web publishing.

This means that everyone in the NSW public education and training sector has access to the vast knowledge resources of the Internet as well as unprecedented opportunities for collaborative learning.

Wide-ranging consultation with schools and TAFE NSW has assisted in the development and implementation of this enormous project.

The initiative provides safe, secure and appropriate access to web services and products. Internet web sites are screened by filters when accessed from schools and TAFE NSW colleges and campuses. Email is also filtered, and the use of services such as chat must be supervised by staff.

Parental permission is required for students under 18 years of age to have an e-learning account, and all personal information is managed according to privacy legislation.

The provision of web services for schools and TAFE is a multi-million dollar initiative of the NSW Government.

NSW public education and training is now a world leader in the equitable and innovative use of new communication technologies in teaching and learning. Comprehensive training and support resources assist students and staff to fully benefit and enjoy the amazing electronic classroom of the 21st century.

The benefits for teaching and learning

This initiative provides tools to shape a new landscape for teaching and learning with increased opportunities for collaboration and expanded access to information.

Teachers can build strong collegial networks, sharing expertise, teaching approaches and resources. Students can more fully engage with their learning through pursuing individual interests and sharing ideas and information with others beyond their TAFE college or school.

The NSW Department of Education and Training gives equal and fair access, not only to the information resources of the Internet, but to the tools that can help turn information into knowledge and understanding.

Further information about this initiative is available on the Department’s Internet website at: http://www.det.nsw.edu.au/webservices click on web services for schools and TAFE, under section Special Features.
The web services

The Web Services

Staff and students in NSW public schools and TAFE NSW are eligible for an e-learning account which will provide access to a personal Internet portal. The portal is the home page that allows access to email, the Internet and web services that support collaborative learning. Services provided include:

Email
Personal email accounts are hosted by the NSW Department of Education and Training. Accounts can be accessed at any computer with an Internet connection and are protected by filters to screen out inappropriate content.

Chat
Computer ‘chat’ provides a powerful tool for sharing ideas and fostering learning. A chat session occurs in a virtual space for chat members to type in their computer messages and responses to a ‘live’ discussion. A ‘chat’, for example, enables students to swap ideas and information, coordinate a joint project or debate a point of view. Chat sessions can be set up only by teachers who closely supervise discussions.

Forums
Like chat, forums are a tool for collaboration and communication but do not operate in ‘real’ time. Each session acts like a notice board, and students and staff who have access to a forum can read and post messages about topics of interest to them. Through enabling discussion on a range of topics at the same time forums provide a very useful resource for learning and teaching.

List Services
List services enable ease of communication amongst a group of students and teachers via email. Messages and replies can be sent simultaneously to members of the group. List services support collaborative learning where, for example, students working together on a project can coordinate their roles, ideas and information quickly and efficiently. Student list services are set up by teachers, who monitor communications to ensure appropriate use.

Web Browsing
Students and staff have access to the Internet via their personal portal when logging on from computers in public schools and colleges and campuses of TAFE NSW.

A block list filter of banned websites, such as pornographic, violent or racist sites is managed by the NSW Department of Education and Training to ensure safe and appropriate web browsing. Schools, colleges and campuses can manage their own block list filter as well.

Web Publishing
The facility to publish material on the web offers enormous potential for sharing resources and expertise. The opportunities include publishing simple documents, such as an exemplary student essay, through to developing personal web sites with sample work, resources, links and other facilities. Protocols for identifying images or individual work protect personal privacy.

Remote Access
These services can be accessed from home or other locations through a private Internet Service Provider. The Department’s filtering software is not available when browsing the Internet from remote locations; therefore parents are strongly advised to use filtering software on home computers.