

applied innovative commercial NACCO

School Connect

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School Connect (www.schoolconnect.co.nz) is a support and resource sharing system for a cluster of six primary schools in the Dunedin area, led by Jenny Clark and Iain Bonney at Opoho Primary School. It is part of a Ministry of Education project to encourage sharing and exchange of teaching resources of common interest. Clusters can also reduce running costs for the individual schools since many resources can be shared.

School Connect is a distributed intranet for the members (staff) of the school cluster. The system enables the teachers to share resources (school materials) securely on the web. A bonus for the cluster is that teachers will be able to gain knowledge about the information technology (IT) side of teaching. The business objectives are to:

- lower the running costs and fund allocated to each school.
- increase efficiency and consistency in learning.
 - share documents and files of mutual interest.
- bring schools together into a cluster to encourage sharing of teaching resources and ensure consistency in teaching throughout the region.

The system was developed using a Software Development Life Cycle approach with a heavy emphasis on prototyping and early delivery of a functional system. Early prototyping was used as an effective tool to determine the system requirement in the analysis phase and to determine the look and feel in terms of physical design in the design phase. In both the Analysis and Design stages, we focused on having series of prototyping sessions as ways of getting the client feedback and to trigger the flow of ideas.

The early delivery of a functional system met the school requirements for the new school year as well as ensuring that the final system was the result of extensive testing and supported use. 'Features'

such as problems caused by users forgetting to logout of the chat room were addressed as part of the project.

The system is dynamically driven (Cold Fusion and MS-Access), secure, allows file sharing, has both synchronous chat and bulletin board functions, has calendar and event functions, has profiles of schools and teachers, along with links, news and photo galleries, and is administered via the web. In a future project we aim to develop a shared purchasing system.



Quality Learning sides

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