

**INTRODUCTION AND USE OF**

**NEW ZEALAND ONLINE LEARNING CENTRE**  
**PROGRAMMES AND TOOLS**

**AT**

**TAIPA AREA SCHOOL IN 2004**

**A CASE STUDY**

## BACKGROUND

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Taipa Area School is situated on the shores of Doubtless Bay next to Taipa Beach in the Far North of the North Island of New Zealand. Its roll of 550 students, 56% of whom are Maori comes from a largely rural population. The school is decile two and caters for a wide variety of students from Year 0 to Year 13 including 15 adult students.

Since 2001 Taipa has been a FARNET school along with the 9 other secondary and area schools in the Far North (an area stretching north from The Bay of Islands and Opononi ).

The school was first introduced to Class server through an ex Taipa teacher, currently teaching at Kerikeri High School and the Physics curriculum leader for FARNET, Andy Dyson and FARNET Co-ordinator Nancy Groh who arranged a demonstration of the tools. Those at the demonstration were impressed with the tools' potential and so Nancy arranged for the national co-ordinator, Graeme Warburton to visit and to demonstrate the tools at schools in FARNET.

The demonstration at Taipa was attended by a large proportion of the Taipa staff including the principal and also teachers from other schools. Such was the enthusiasm of the teachers who attended that more than half the teaching staff of Taipa18 in all registered.

Nancy Groh also made herself available to assist schools to train key staff to use the tools. Taipa's DP, Tony Foster and HOD Science James Newman were the first to receive training at the end of 2003 and by the beginning of 2004 they had developed their first resources using class server and began trialling their usage with students in their Science, Biology and Chemistry classes. The response they received from their students was positive and particularly Tony but also James shared this with other staff who also became more interested in being trained to use the tools. As a result training for those staff interested took place after school on a Monday each fortnight during term two with Tony Foster, supported by Nancy Groh when she was available, doing the training.

## PROCESS FOR GATHERING INFORMATION FOR THE CASE STUDY

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Ten teachers who had received training in using the NZOLC tools were interviewed using an 8 question survey. Five of these teachers had used the tools with students and five had not.

Three groups of students were interviewed using a student survey. All those interviewed have received instruction and used class server in Science, Chemistry, Biology and/or English classes and some are also part of an E-Valuation programme in which the class server tools are used for students to reflect on themselves as learners, the quality of their learning strategies and the teaching strategies of their teachers.

The students interviewed were from:

- Year 13 Biology (entire class) – 6 students
- Year 12 Physics (volunteers) – 4 students out of 8
- Year 11 Science (volunteers) – 5 students out of 33

All of the year 11 Science class were also participants in the E-Valuation project.

By the middle of term 3 when this survey was undertaken 10 teachers had received training in using the tools. Of these 10, 5 were using the tools or had used them with their classes. All of the 5 teachers interviewed who were not using the tools nevertheless said they valued the tools and wanted to use them.

- “I want to use class server to help extend my resources so that I can individualise my programme for my kids. I want to set up a mark book for the kids available online for them to use at home or at school.” Year 2-3 teacher.
- “It will be good for putting all resources in one place: lessons, assessments, achievement data, entering the data once and not having to repeat lists over and over again. We’ll be able to track kids and results from primary right through intermediate and secondary.” HOD Primary.

I want to use class server to differentiate my programmes and to provide online literacy skills for students. Secondary teacher

Reasons these teachers gave for not yet using the tools were stated as being:

- The time consuming nature of preparing resources using a different format. The 5 teachers estimated that it would take them from 40 minutes to 1 and a half hours to prepare a resource for one hour of tuition.
- The need to be more skilled technically particularly with using Excel, FrontPage and Html design to feel confident about using the tools more regularly.
- The complicated process of getting their students’ class lists onto the class server. Teachers who want their classes on the class server must see the DP (Tony) who gets the names from the school’s MUSAC files, emails the names to Nancy who converts them to a CSV file and emails the file back to Tony who then has to go through the file and re-sort the students into class lists again and enter each name on the class server. The whole process takes up to two weeks. This process was considered to be a time consuming and frustrating barrier to using the class server tools and teachers would like this process to be quicker and easier.
- The school’s internet screening system that does not allow students to visit all the sites they need to without them having to see the school’s network administrator first to have the sites made available.
- Technical difficulties in getting in gaining access to the class server area.

Teachers would also like to have access to the NZ resources online beyond FARNET and wonder why this access does not extend to FARNET schools. They believe it would be helpful to see what use other teachers have made of the tools outside FARNET but still within New Zealand where all schools follow the same curriculum. They are pleased with the Physics resources that are available to them through FARNET.

The five teachers who have used Class Server with their students have created 27 resources. The DP Tony has taken a leading role in resource development both developing the majority of them himself and offering support and guidance to the other teachers. The resources are mostly formative assessment tools designed to help students focus on key points, look up answers they don’t know and practise answering questions on topics they are studying for NCEA. They consist of mainly formative assessments short answers or multi-choice

Some of the short answers for example in the English resource are designed for them to gain the information on characters and themes that they will need to write a literary essay. The teachers are using these resources to enhance rather than to replace their existing programmes. The E-Evaluation programme is being used by students in Year 11 Science to focus on improving the strategies they and their teacher use to engage with the Science curriculum.

The number of resources that have been prepared so far are:

- 20 for Science, Chemistry and Biology (DP and HOD Science)

- Three for Physics (Physics/Maths teacher)
- Three for literacy (Literacy support teacher)
- One for E-Valuation (DP and Literacy support teacher)
- One for English

The teachers using Class Server value it as a teaching tool for the following reasons:

- Its ability to manage curriculum and assessment resources all in one place.
- “I could make a resource I developed available to individuals in a class and the students could submit work without having to use email. This reduced the risk to our network from viruses. It allowed me to conduct online dialogue with individual students in my class about their work. It also gave me a mark book for my class and an automatic marking function so that kids got very fast feedback on their work.” (Biology teacher.)
- It has potential as a diagnostic tool particularly if it could be linked up with Asstlel.
- “It enables me to vary how I deliver lessons and has the potential to help me individualise my programme more.” (Chemistry teacher)
- “It provides another way of delivering content that kids like. I’m using class server today with my year 12 class because they requested it.”(Physics teacher)
- “The kids liked the interactive Science units that I downloaded and I’ve made and used quizzes and tests to vary the types of activities for kids.”(Science teacher)
- “It’s quite good for homework exercises for those who have access from home.”  
(Maths teacher)
- “Most students find it very positive. It’s private, colourful and the click-on buttons make it simple to use. Students can do work from home and it gives them quick feedback. Students can submit work to me in class and I can give them their results before the end of the period.”(Biology. teacher)
- The five teachers who are using class server also wanted more time and further training to further develop the resources. They would like to use Flash media and learn how to create Java applets so that class server can be used as a teaching tool as well as for diagnostic assessment activities.

These teachers believed it would be useful if:

- Class server programmes could break down results so that results for specific questions could be analysed.
- A classification system designed for the New Zealand curriculum instead of the USA curriculum could be developed and units of work classified under this system.

They see the tool as having enhanced potential if these issues could be addressed.

## Student Opinions

15 students who had used class server were interviewed on the way in which the tools of class server have affected their learning.

Of the students interviewed:

- Two year 13 students had used class server in two subjects Biology and Physics and 4 had used it in one subject Biology between 10 and 15 times.
- Two year 12 students had used class server in 3 subjects - English, Chemistry and Physics and 2 had used it in 2 subjects – English and Physics. Students interviewed had used the tools 10 to 20 times mainly in Physics.
- Five year 11 students had used class server in Science and for E-Valuation between five and 10 times.

All of the students surveyed believed that their learning had benefited from using class server:

## Year 13

Year 13 students liked class server because it allowed them to work and gain extra practise at home, it motivated them to finish work, and allowed them to receive results quickly and to discuss them with their teacher online. They believed that one of its most important benefits was that it made them think more actively about their work as they did it.

- “I like the questions as they help me to think about what I’m learning. It also helps me to get the work done.”
- “It was useful for studying the current issues we were studying. We haven’t used it enough.”
- “It told me where I’m at.”
- “It made me learn because I had to look up the answers before I could answer the questions.”
- “The questions helped me know what was important, the key things I need to know to be successful.”
- “The exercises from home. I can easily see where I went wrong and then make corrections.”
- “The set homework exercises give you a directed area to be looking at – (It) – clarifies what you should know.”
- “It set deadlines for my homework that made me complete it.”
- “I liked typing answers instead of writing them down.”

Although the students had experienced some frustrations with access they all wanted teachers to use class server more with them both in class and at home.

## Year 12

Year 12 students valued class server activities because they made them think about their work, the results were available straight away, they could learn at their own pace, the tools were enjoyable to use (typing instead of writing) and they added variety to the programme.

- “It’s good as revision. Using the class server is better than writing as you can practise exercises and get answers without getting bored.”
- “Guiding questions make me think more about work than I do when copying off the board or summarizing from books.”
- “It makes work more interesting. More interactivity and the use of colour helps me to remember better and this helps for exams.”
- “There’s more variety in the types of questions and you can figure out an answer and change it easily before submitting.”

- It provides a different method of learning that helps set the learning in your brain.”

Despite class server not always recognizing passwords and picking up irrelevancies such as spelling and spaces as errors, Year 12 students would like to use class server exercises more and particularly value the quick feedback that class server facilitates.

## Year 11 Science

Year 11 students were using class server both in Science and for a reflective online learning journal pilot. They valued the use of the online learning tools for motivating them and helping them think more about their learning, making them more aware of tests and what they need to know and do to be successful, for the privacy that the tools allow and for the variety and greater interest the class server activities brought into their learning activities.

- “E-Evaluation online helps think about me as a learner. It helps me to be a bit more focused.”
- Results are returned more quickly.”
- You get to do something differently. It’s nice to type instead of write all the time. It gives you more knowledge about using computers as well.”
- “You get to rate yourself and even if it’s right or wrong no one else gets to see it.”
- “The questions show me about my work environment and I hadn’t thought of that before. I would like to use them (the tools) more often say 2 periods a week and 3 ordinary.”
- “Good for showing me my work habits, how I work better.”
- “Class server has made me more interested. I have difficulty with English and often I know the answer but can’t put it down (on paper). Not having to type or write is good. Being able to click a button. I get more right and it makes me want to learn more.”
- “It makes you want to work harder. When you get back your results you see what the correct answers are. So you study more about it so you don’t get the same thing wrong next time.”

The students stated some frustration at the slow computers and the lack of access to some of the websites that they need but all valued their use of class server activities in their studies and reflections on them and all wanted teachers to use class server more frequently.

## CONCLUSION

- Class server is valued by all the teachers and the students interviewed as being a useful and motivational tool that enhances the learning opportunities of students.
- Some technical problems with the school’s network system and with the tools themselves are perceived as barriers to the school using the tools more widely.
- Teachers want more time to be trained and to prepare resources for use in their classrooms. They want to extend the range of functions that they use and to use class server as a teaching delivery tool as well as a formative assessment tool so that greater differentiation can occur within their classrooms.
- Students want to be able to use the tools more frequently in their programmes and value the variety they provide and the more thoughtful and interactive way in which they work while using the tools.

Alison Collett, August 2004