



SPANZ

SECONDARY PRINCIPALS' ASSOCIATION OF NEW ZEALAND INC.

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President
Graham Young
Tauranga Boys' College

Thursday, 12 October 2006

President's Comment 30 – ENROL / Wireless Security

Dear Colleague

At a recent meeting with the Minister, the Hon. Steve Maharey, I raised two issues around electronic management systems. The first was with respect to the lack of interoperability between accredited student management systems and the recently launched ENROL system. The second was to do with my concerns about the security of school wireless networks and the ability of unauthorised users to access student data. The Minister's response follows:...

“ENROL/SMS INTEGRATION:

It is correct that these two systems are not currently interoperable. The size and complexity of this project has resulted in the need for a “building block” approach to allow this functionality to occur. The current intention is that there will be a three stage process:

- a) *the release of ENROL in August 2006 to replace the current paper-based system*
- b) *the rollout of the National Student Number, approved by Parliament earlier this year, to enable accurate student data matching. This is due in mid-2007*
- c) *the integration of the two systems in 2008.*

For further information regarding the SMS Accreditation process please contact Paul Seiler, SMS Project Manager, phone 04 463 7605 or paul.seiler@minedu.govt.nz

Wireless Security

The Teacher Laptop project has resulted in the rapid growth of wireless networks in schools. The expansion of wireless networks has provided more flexibility in how laptops are deployed and enabled networking functionality to be available in areas of schools that may not yet be cabled. This additional functionality needs to be weighed up against the greater challenges of wireless security.

Schools need to ensure that wireless installations are properly secured when being deployed in a school environment. The relative ease of installing wireless access points has often taken precedence over the implementation of the correct level of network security. I understand that a number of schools have deployed wireless access points that are designed for home use and may not have the security features that a business would require.

As part of the SMS accreditation process, vendors are required to have basic levels of security built into their applications. However the issue in this situation is security at the network layer (i.e. connecting applications together) rather than the SMS application itself.

Most reputable brands of wireless hardware have suitable security features built into the hardware and software. Unfortunately these features are not always enabled in the school environment, often due to the challenges of configuration.

I am also advised that software is available for download from the Internet which could allow unauthorised users to potentially capture information that is sent across insecure wireless networks.

Schools wishing to implement wireless networks therefore need to ensure that the required security features are enabled in order to protect student data.

Given the complexity of many school installations the use of technical support staff who are familiar with the particular requirements of ICT in the school sector is to be recommended. For further assistance with this matter please contact Douglas Harre, Senior Consultant, ICT Unit, Phone 04 463 8588 or douglas.harre@minedu.govt.nz ”



Graham Young
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Secondary Principals' Association of New Zealand