The release in March of Apple’s new iPad2 has created quite an interest in schools internationally. The challenge of using this latest information computing technology in schools is how best to use it to enhance student learning, improve learning outcomes, individualise student learning programs, and to extend student’s learning.

The Essington School Darwin took delivery of one hundred and thirty of the latest Apple2 iPads from the first batch into Australia and have more on order. This followed an invitation to Principal, David Cannon, and Middle School teacher, Daniel Hogg, to attend the annual Apple International Leadership Summit in Singapore in March. This coincided with the release of the latest Apple iPads in the United States. Since then a group of innovative Essington teachers have been busy preparing for the introduction of its new iPads into the classroom.

The necessary technology systems have been set up and teachers have also been reviewing hundreds of applications (apps) designed for use with the new iPads. These apps will allow the School to further enhance and extend its curriculum. Teachers and students are also hard at work developing their own applications.

As part of this planned introduction of iPads into the classroom, students have been learning to use iPads in class and exploring the possibilities of learning with iPads. Principal, David Cannon, said: “These slim, glass slabs of high technology are ideal for loading text books and a large amount of supporting learning resources on to them. Their mobility then allows them to be used anywhere, at school or home or outdoors”.

The use of iPads for learning ‘anywhere’ and in the outdoors was put to the test on a recent overnight camp to Bare Sand Islands outside Darwin Harbour. Here the star mapping ‘apps’ was used by students to identify and learn about the various stars and constellations above them. This was achieved by just pointing the iPad in the direction of the stars students wanted to learn about. The Essington School Darwin is initially targeting applications in Literacy, Numeracy, Science and Study of Society and the Environment to use on the iPads in class.

Teachers are also accessing applications that assist students to organise their notes and learning, and to individualise and extend their learning beyond their year level. Teachers are being assisted with integrating this technology into their teaching by educational consultants, XciteLogic, from Perth. These consultants are working with Apple computers nationally to assist schools set up this new technology. In Semester 2 professional development opportunities will be provided for all teachers with the current group of presenting teachers will continue their action research work on iPads in their areas of education.

The School is also linking with schools interstate and overseas, including Asia, to monitor 'best practice' learning models being developed elsewhere. A number of international schools have embraced these new iPads and see them soon replacing laptops in schools.

Principal, David Cannon, said: “Our two year plan for the introduction of iPads across the school is very much focused on ensuring they are used to individualise learning, engage students in learning, and to further increase educational outcomes”.

Essington School Darwin and its Senior College, The Essington International Senior College, Charles Darwin University are limited and early enrolments for 2012 and 2013 are encouraged.

For further information, please contact the school on Phone: 8985 0100 or email enrolments@essington.nt.edu.au.