

CASE STUDY: Balwyn High School & Stile Education

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- Andy Smith, Balwyn High School’s Director of Learning: Science.

Balwyn High School’s vision is to help its students achieve academic excellence by fostering intellectual growth and personal development. The school prides itself on being a ‘learning community’, encouraging a strong work ethic that values achievement and maximises the potential of each student in a rapidly evolving knowledge economy.

Understanding that today’s younger generations have grown up in a digital world — rich with multimedia and always up-to-date — the school’s science department sought to contemporise its mode of lesson delivery by introducing digitised resources, with the aim that this would also improve scientific literacy.

Overview

In researching Stile, Balwyn High School said that it ticked a lot of important boxes for the school including its e-learning model, focus on scientific literacy, differentiation, accessibility from any device, and easy integration into existing school systems.

In semester two of 2016, Balwyn High School decided to undertake a trial of Stile with its year 10 cohort for a unit on kinematics. Following a successful trial – whereby Balwyn High observed a number of benefits to both students and teachers from incorporating Stile – the school made the decision to roll the program out to all its science students across years 7-10.

The impact

Today, Stile is used to by approximately 1,000 Balwyn High School students who have enthusiastically embraced the program according to the school. Stile has also been eagerly adopted by Balwyn High’s science teachers, with the school reporting that they continue to advocate for its ongoing use.

Commenting on Stile’s benefits to teachers Andy Smith – Balwyn High School’s Director of Learning: Science – said, “It has certainly helped teachers save time on lesson planning and has challenged some to change their pedagogies and take on more of a facilitator role, rather than that of a lecturer.”

Teachers have reported that Stile's interactive multimedia features facilitate engaging, student-directed and self-paced learning. Students have cited that they most enjoy the high levels of interactivity in Stile's lessons and the multiple-choice quizzes that give them instant feedback on their progress.

"Stile has improved student engagement and has helped drive self-directed learning. Students have moved away from spending most of their time taking notes, and now spend their time exploring and interacting with lesson content. The multimedia nature of Stile and the ability to provide students with instant feedback is the main reason the majority of our 7-10 science lessons are built around Stile. The program allows us to customise the out-of-the-box Stile lessons — something we can't do with traditional textbooks," said Mr Smith.

Balwyn High School predicts that as a result of introducing Stile, student engagement and scientific literacy will continue to increase. "Stile has greatly improved student engagement as we move further away from 'chalk-n-talk', PowerPoint-driven lessons. Scientific literacy skills amongst our students are also increasing as they engage with Stile's lessons that show applications of science in the real world," said Smith.

Stile's top five features according to Balwyn High School

- Real-time student results.
- Feedback features.
- Ability to customise content or craft lessons from scratch.
- The incorporation of interactive elements and videos that provides for engaging, student-directed and self-paced learning.
- Easy integration with school's active directory (has meant Balwyn High School have avoided all of the usual headaches of lost usernames and passwords).