

For more information

Please call 0508 ASK IBM (275426) in New Zealand.



A new lease for Aotea College

With increasing IT demands and budgetary restraints, Aotea College finds the perfect solution

Overview

Key points

- Leasing lets schools keep their ICT systems up to date without taking three-yearly budget hits
 - IT system demands in secondary schools are increasingly complex
 - Building a relationship with a trusted supplier means staying informed of technology trends that can simplify system administration and save money
-

The frequently heard refrain in the education sector is the need to stretch funding as far as it will go, and then some. This constraint can make it hard to come up with money for capital spending on items like computers.

Porirua's Aotea College, a secondary school with a roll just under 1000, has found an answer.

Through supplier AISCORP, it leases the IBM servers at the heart of its information technology setup. "That means I don't have to go cap in hand every three to five years to the board of trustees asking for a large amount of money," says the school's IT manager, Rob Brown.

Instead, the former teacher says, "there's a budget line that says 'servers'".

With leases running for three years, Aotea College is assured of keeping up with hardware advances while Brown is spared having to compete with his colleagues for funding.

Brown knows that when equipment is beginning to fall behind the state of the art, the school can upgrade without taking a big financial hit. "We're able to keep up with technology by turning over the same or similar amounts," Brown says.

What the school isn't prepared to skimp on is the quality of equipment and support it gets for its money. "We need a reliable solution that the supplying company is willing and able to support. We have a tight budget but the pedigree of the equipment is important — we do not want cheap-and-nasty," Brown says.

About 18 months into its current lease, the school has three rack-mounted servers and a storage area network, or SAN, in what was once part of a corridor, conveniently converted into a server room. With the servers indicating they were getting too warm for comfort, the space is air-conditioned.



© Copyright IBM New Zealand Limited 2010

© Copyright IBM Corporation 2010.

All rights reserved.

IBM, the IBM logo, ibm.com are trademarks of International Business Machines Corporation, registered in many jurisdictions worldwide. A current list of IBM trademarks is available on the Web at "Copyright and trademark information" at ibm.com/legal/copytrade.shtml.

Warranty, service and support of non-IBM products are provided directly to you by the manufacturer, supplier and publisher of the product. Subject to any rights which may not be excluded or limited, IBM makes no representations or warranties regarding non-IBM products or services.

This customer story is based on information provided by Aotea College and illustrates how one organisation uses IBM products. Many factors have contributed to the results and benefits described; IBM does not guarantee comparable results elsewhere.

GL_11836





Air-conditioning might sound an extravagance for a school, but Brown says information system demands in secondary schools, in particular, are increasingly complex. Round-the-clock system availability, for instance, is a given, with staff — although not Aotea students — having remote access. “Staff want to be able to complete reports and access student information from home. If you have students doing their work on computer, you have to be able to access that work in an electronic form to mark it.”

“We need a reliable solution. We have a tight budget but the pedigree of the equipment is important - we do not want cheap-and-nasty.”

— Rob Brown, IT manager, Aotea College

Deployment of open-source learning management system Moodle is planned for 2010, which will mean students, too, have remote access to school resources.

“There’s a big push into learning management systems where student work and resources are presented in web form. It was a talking point during the swine flu epidemic so kids could be working from home if they had to.”

While 24/7 system uptime is demanding in itself, the sheer number of users wanting access to a limited resource makes schools a challenging IT environment. Brown laments the lack of money they have to play with.

“It’s hugely under-resourced and yet it’s probably one of the more complex IT environments you’re going to get.

“Our school isn’t very big, with a roll of only 970, but there are more than 1000 people in the IT environment. Each computer could have possibly six different users in a day. Their demands are different, the way they use them are different; some of those users are geeky males who in fact spend some of their time just trying to crack the system.

“Although you have policies in place, as an educationalist I don’t think it’s okay to say ‘if you mess up in our school you can’t use it again’, because IT in schools is so important.”

In four years of working with AISCORP, Brown says a “mutually supportive” relationship has developed.

“They continue to show what the future could look like, and we have taken that view and picked from it the stuff which we think is worthwhile, cost-effective, and will work in our environment.

“Over time we have developed a shared understanding and vision of what we need and where we are wanting to go.”

AISCORP has sometimes pushed the school to go faster than suits, and at other times its advice has saved the school thousands of dollars and moved its systems ahead more quickly than expected.

The school is already running virtual servers and the next advance, in 2011, will be to implement a BladeCenter, with the attendant benefits of economising on space and electricity consumption.

“Aotea has quite a way to go. We have about one computer to 4.5 kids and we really need to be about one computer to two kids,” Brown says.

“That’s probably three to four years away — it’s in the foreseeable future.”

Further Readings

Education for a Smarter Planet:

The Future of Learning:

Leaders from education and government aspire to improve their institutions’ value to society, while facing increasingly constrained resources. See how educational and governmental leaders can take action to transform their organisations.
ibm.com/gbs/future-of-learning

Building a Smarter Classroom

Improve the quality of learning, access to resources, and management costs by making smarter investments in education.
ibm.com/gbs/smarter-classroom

Smart Administration and Asset Management for education

Smart administration can unlock the value of information for better outcomes in education. Gather data and insights to give administrators and business officers more information about institutional performance, including asset management, financial trends and risk exposure.
ibm.com/gbs/smart-administration

Innovation in research

Innovative research breakthroughs help academic institutions compete for faculty and grant funding, and contribute to economic development. But these goals require systems that can support data and compute-intensive applications. See how high-performance computing solutions from IBM can help.
ibm.com/gbs/innovation-in-research

Additional Resources

For more information on IBM Blade servers visit:
ibm.com/systems/nz/bladecenter

To find out more about IBM Storage solutions visit:
ibm.com/storage/nz

To find out more about IBM Global Financing visit:
businessinsight.co.nz/globalfinancing

Business Partners:
For more information about AISCORP visit:
AISCORP.co.nz
