Exponential Times

The other night in the Jackman house when I was sitting in the lounge room watching the News on television, it struck me how fast the times are moving with technologies and, with this, the ways and means we communicate with each other. One of my sons was sitting at a computer playing Minecraft while talking to his friend on his iPod using Facetime. Another of my boys was having multiple conversations at the same time using text messaging on his mobile telephone and using the message service on Facebook on his iPad. The other son in the family was playing an interactive Playstation 3 game online and communicating with people on the other side of the world. I thought to myself, none of these technologies existed 10 years ago. Actually, many did not exist five years ago. It is hard to believe that the iPad has only been around for less than three years. For children of today all of this is normal. What ever happened to the telephone? I heard a senior lecturer in Information and Communications Technology (ICT) recently state that he believes that the telephone as it exists today will not be around in two more years. He said that communicating with someone without seeing them live on a screen will be a thing of the past. The speed at which things are progressing and developing in the technological world is not linear but exponential.

As for me, I was enjoying watching the News on my flat screen television but it seems that this is old technology too. Many people do not watch the News on the television anymore because they can view it when they want on their iPad. Children are growing up in a world where they expect that access to information is instant. If you do not know something then “Google” it. Such expectations have many implications for teaching and learning in schools. Already Interactive Whiteboards are becoming old technology and now active tables where children can manipulate a table that has the whole surface as a touch screen is becoming the popular teaching aide.

Recently the Junior School staff have been taking part in many collaborative discussions with their colleagues on the topic of what ICT will be required by the teacher in their classroom over the next few years. We certainly have to keep up with the current exponential development of technologies and understand that such equipment is necessary to engage the children of today. These technologies will never replace a teacher but they do provide the teacher with valuable and useful teaching tools. The teacher no longer has to be the font of all knowledge learnt in class but they do have to be able to instil in their students not only an understanding of how to access the information but, more importantly, how to critically analyse and evaluate the information. Students need to understand that just because the information is available does not necessarily mean that it is accurate, true and correct.

All of these innovations in technology excite me as an educator. I am pleased to be working with a team of teachers who are similarly excited and enthusiastic about making sure we provide the best possible learning environment for our students here in the Junior School.