St. Hilda's School: Setting the bar for K-12

St. Hilda's School, an all-girls day/boarding school located in Queensland, Australia, is setting the bar for K-12 schools worldwide. Using Blackboard Mobile Central, Blackboard Mobile Learn, and Blackboard Managed Hosting, they are dramatically increasing student engagement while simultaneously decreasing their carbon footprint.

Clipped to the hip, plugged in an ear, or clutched in hand, mobile devices are the one thing most of us won't do without. They impact the way we communicate, solve, schedule, learn and entertain. Smartphones and tablets are even the way kids prefer to consume information today. Recent studies show that kids rank smartphones higher than TVs for the way they want to access media[1]. And now, nearly 1 in 3 children between the ages of 8 and 10 have their own mobile phone[2]. The rise in popularity of smartphones has brought on a strong cultural shift in how children access and interact with information, and dramatically changed the student experience.

This shift has made it harder for schools to connect with students through traditional means. In reaction, top schools are trying to determine the role of mobile learning in bridging the gap between the way students live and the way they learn. They're discovering that smartphones can be a powerful educational tool for improving performance. St. Hilda's School, an all-girls day/boarding school in Queensland,

Australia is proving just how remarkable those results can be for K-12 students.

Laying the Groundwork

St. Hilda's implemented Blackboard Learn in 2007, seeing the potential for utilizing Blackboard Learn as an interactive learning resource. Locally hosting the LMS meant that as the Blackboard online curriculum grew in popularity, there were periods where the servers and bandwidth into the school were under a heavy load, leading to slow access

> *Blackboard got us up and running and then we just took off!*
>
> Geoff Powell
> *Director or Learning Technology,*
> *St. Hilda's School*

times. If the Blackboard server went down on the weekend, it was down until Monday, so students and staff missed out.

And when Swine Flu scare was at its peak, and with news of other schools potentially closing, the Head of School wanted a plan in case St. Hildas had to close. "Could we run the school with closed doors? Could 1000 users access our locally–hosted server simultaneously?" asked Head of School, Peter Crawley.

"The result was a complete review of our online learning policy. We knew we had to plan for growth," continued Crawley. The more they looked into Blackboard solutions, the more they realized no other investment could deliver this level of ROI. With Blackboard Managed Hosting, they had no more down time, no ongoing hardware costs, no need for server replacements or increased loads on IT staff, no hassles for upgrades, and no backup worries.

Going Mobile

Then St. Hilda's went mobile. The school mandated that all students from Year 5 onwards bring an iPad™ to the classroom in order to utilize Blackboard Mobile Learn, the mobile version of the learning management system. St. Hilda's chose to go mobile because they knew it was the way their students were expecting to access course information.

With Blackboard Mobile Learn, St. Hilda's can engage all of its stakeholders with a more personalized approach. Students are relating better, collaborating with one another and their instructors, and staying connected to their educational

SEEING RESULTS
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St. Hilda's School is seeing dramatic results since implementing Blackboard Mobile Learn, including:

- **550%** increase in page views / day
- **800%** increase in daily traffic by Year 10 English Students
- **1 million** fewer sheets of paper used in 2011

ABOUT ST. HILDA'S SCHOOL
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St. Hilda's School is an independent day and boarding school for girls, located in Queensland, Australia. Established in 1912, St. Hilda's serves 1,100 students from Pre-Preparatory to Year 12, including 170 full and weekly boarders from Years 6 to 12.

St. Hilda's uses:

- **Blackboard Learn**
- **Blackboard Managed Hosting**
- **Blackboard Mobile Learn**
- **Blackboard Mobile Central**

experience 24/7. Further, coursework and homework is available online for students who may have to miss class. With Blackboard on their iPads, they can access their coursework anytime, anywhere.

The second phase of their mobile strategy was taking school life mobile. In July 2011, St. Hilda's launched *iStHildas*, a mobile app for the iPhone® and iPod touch® that allows the St Hilda's School community to stay connected wherever they are. The app, built on the Blackboard Mobile Central platform, offers mobile access to campus maps, photo galleries, curriculum information, event calendars, the latest school news, sports schedules and more. It even has a directory that allows students to email their teachers and classmates.

"*iStHildas* will be a big part of my own experience at St. Hilda's," said Year 12 student Rochelle Esterman. "My campus experience – from classes to sporting events – is now with me wherever I go. Whether I need to contact a staff member, check on details of special events or email classmates, now there's an app for that."

iStHildas also integrates Blackboard Mobile Learn, creating a complete teaching and learning experience, all accessible from one app.

"We want to offer our students and other members of our community the best in technology and access, and that means making St Hilda's School's services and information available to mobile users," said Head of School Peter Crawley.

1. Sesame Workshop, Comscore, Joan Ganz Cooney Center.
2. Victoria J. Rideout, M.A., Ulla G. Foehr, Ph.D., and Donald F. Roberts, Ph.D. 2010. GENERATION M2 Media in the Lives of 8- to 18-Year-Olds. California: The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation.

Increasing Student Engagement & Reducing their Carbon Footprint

St. Hilda's data proves that Blackboard Mobile and Blackboard Managed Hosting have significantly increased student engagement. Daily page views in Blackboard Learn soared, going from approximately 3,000 page views per day to peak at 30,000 page views per day at the start of 2011 and averaging over 16,500 page views per day.

As a school that is focused on green initiatives, St. Hilda's has aimed to decrease printing by more than 1 million sheets of paper in 2011, thanks in no small part to all of the resources and materials now being accessed via the iPads and other mobile devices, and they are actually in front of that ambitious target. Added to all this is their iBook strategy, making textbooks available on the iPad and taking several kilograms out of the backpack—putting less weight on students' shoulders and more opportunities in their hands. And the launch of *iStHildas* is only expected to improve this trend.

"I feel fortunate because St. Hilda's leadership truly has a vision of using technology as a way to increase student engagement," says Geoff Powell, Director of Learning Technology at St. Hilda's. "We hope that our innovative approach will set the bar for K-12 institutions around the world."

The Mobile Future

While the older students use Blackboard Mobile Learn to access their coursework, even toddlers in pre-prep use it. Teachers post photos from their day, everyday, keeping parents apprised of what their 3 year olds are learning.

"Our goal is to give a Tertiary, or University, experience to all of our students, no matter what their age is. By preparing our students for the future, we are ensuring their continued success", says Powell. "By providing all students with a personalized, collaborative living and learning environment, St. Hilda's is connecting with its students the way that they are accustomed to, on the devices they love."

ST. HILDA'S MOBILE

St. Hilda's mobile app, *iStHildas*, includes 7 modules that bring teaching, learning and campus life to the smartphone.

Blackboard Mobile Learn: Check grades, post discussions, turn in homework, and browse online course content.

Maps: Find out exactly where you are and where you need to go.

News: Get the latest St. Hilda's headlines, and browse and search recent articles.

Images: Search, browse and download images from recent school events.

Directory: Connect with teachers and administrators with a tap.

Emergency: Provide immediate access to important phone numbers.

Videos: Stream videos from recent speakers and events right to your phone.

Blackboard