Education **Case Study**

communicate • collaborate
Connect •

Empowering Girls with FirstClass Conferencing
At Christchurch's Rangi Ruru Girls' School

• Then and now...

Rangi Ruru Girls' School in Christchurch, New Zealand is an educational institution with an illustrious history and a promising future. Since its establishment in 1889, the school has had a reputation for innovation and progressive ideas. It was the first school in the world to build an airplane and the first in New Zealand to make cycle helmets compulsory (before being legally required to do so), the first to operate a Nanny School, have a comprehensive Gifted and Talented Education programme – one of the first to go online.

Rangi Ruru is the only one of the many private girls' schools established in Christchurch in the 19th century to survive into the new millennium. The school provides a quality, independent educational environment for its 560 day and 120 boarding students "with excellence as the goal for every student." And that includes a solid technological education.

• FirstClass facilities

The school has state-of-the-art facilities and equipment, including computer suites (with iMACS, PCs, scanners and printers), video editing facilities, a graphics technology workshop and a library complex with a highly sophisticated technology centre. It also has an intranet environment run by FirstClass Collaborative Classroom Gold, an award-winning communication and collaboration software solution from Canadian-based global developer Centrinity Inc. FirstClass is a one-stop online environment for messaging and information sharing (multimedia-enriched email), time- and resource-management (calendaring) and synchronous and asynchronous forums (chat and conferencing).

> *"Managing FirstClass has been a breeze."* Barry Baughan, *Network Administrator, Rangi Ruru Girls' School*

• Innovative technology fosters new habits

Barry Baughan, the school's network administrator, has nothing but praise for "the way FirstClass has empowered the girls to use the technology. The number of logins (over 250,000 in the first year) is proof of that," he says. Rangi Ruru's students have excelled at exploiting the extensive capabilities of this world-renowned software. In fact, it has changed their studying habits, now that they are able to log in to the system even outside school hours, consult the school calendar, read the latest news, check out their homework assignments, take part in discussions and visit websites suggested by their teachers. Parents also have access to the system and can feel like welcome guests in their daughter's educational environment.

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• Distributed administration

Staff members have made FirstClass conferencing part of their working lives. Each area of the school intranet is managed by a different member of staff, with students also being involved. FirstClass' distributed administration and self-service environment means reduced administration costs and low total cost of ownership for the school.

Because FirstClass seamlessly integrates intranet and internet functionality, teachers are able to post URLs directly in email messages and conferences to enable students to visit specific sites for educational purposes. As information is added in the intranet, it can be effortlessly updated to the web, with no knowledge of HTML. So the school has no need for a dedicated webmaster, and all members of Rangi Ruru's educational community can feel like they're active participants in a dynamic online world.

WIDE SKY SHELTER

What is "Rangi Ruru"? The name translates from Maori as "Wide Sky Shelter". The name for the school was suggested by Paora Taki, a Maori chief of Rapaki Pa. It captures the school's spirit of hospitality, generosity and a sense of belonging for everyone at Rangi Ruru.

• Showcasing talent

The FirstClass Intranet, with its multimedia-enriched messaging, conferencing and file sharing features, can also serve as a showcase for student talent. For example, in 1999, a team of Year 10, 12 and 13 students began work on the production of an animated film. They have completed thousands of drawings and are about to assemble them. The final product will be posted on the school's FirstClass intranet for the whole school community – or the entire world! – to see.
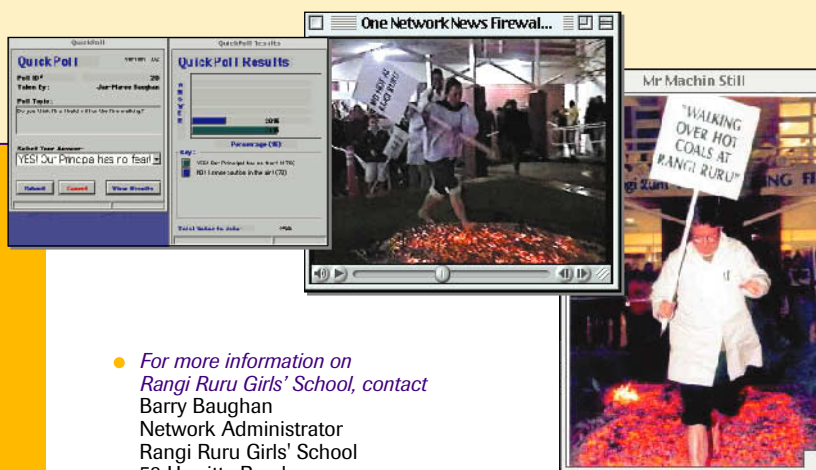
FIREWALKING, ANYONE?

Polling with FirstClass Rapid Application Developer (RAD)

QuickPoll is a FirstClass RAD that enables the creation of an online opinion poll, and makes it possible to view the results in graphic format. Rangi Ruru uses QuickPoll for both staff and student opinion polls. Many of the issues that used to be voted on in staff meetings are now raised through a poll.

Recently, students have been polled on everything from "Should there be a school bell between periods?" to "Will the principal do the firewalking?"

QuickPoll is a free application developed by Michael Middlemiss, Centrinity's Customer Support Engineer for Australasia.

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