Information for schools ready to implement a learning management system and keen to secure MOE funding assistance with Ultranet

What is the objective of this project?

The Ministry of Education has made a small amount of funding available to assist a limited number of schools to implement a system that gives their parents and students access to online information that supports teaching and learning.

Research indicates that the involvement of parents is a key factor in improving student engagement. Parents who are involved in their children's learning, encouraging their children to be the best they can be, make a real and positive difference to how their children learn. They are best able to help their children when they receive useful, focused, and timely information and support from schools.

Learning management systems and parent portals provide new ways for schools to communicate with parents and for families to follow students’ progress and engage with their learning.

Who is eligible?

To be eligible you must be a state or state-integrated school using eTAP, MUSAC, KAMAR, or PC School as your SMS. Additional information can be found at http://groups.google.com/group/mle-reference-group/web/eligible-for-funding-for-online-systemsfunding-for?hl=en-GB

How do we know if we are ready for a learning management system?

A learning management system (LMS) is a safe and secure online learning environment designed with the aim of enabling schools to readily integrate a wide range of tools and services to enrich learning and foster connected learning communities.

In this environment learners and teachers have ready access to online resources, can create and store work online, and are able to communicate and collaborate online. They can create e-portfolios, select items to publish, seek and receive feedback from others who can help them with their learning, and interact with their peers in a social learning network.

A learning management system makes it easy for all teachers to set up online classrooms populated with resources and learning activities which complement, enrich and extend the classroom programme. The tools within these virtual classrooms make it easy to create engaging, multimedia-rich learning experiences assisting teachers to provide differentiated learning programmes.
Parent logons give parents access to this secure environment enabling them to gain easy access to school information, to monitor their child’s attendance, to view assessment data and to readily message the school with questions or concerns or to update information. The real strength of an LMS is that the data made available to parents can be presented within the context of their child’s learning programme – with an understanding of the learning objectives, with insight into the classroom activities, with reference to exemplars and models of best practice and with the ability to interact with and support their child’s learning. Through this additional functionality an LMS enables parents to build a much richer view of their child’s learning progress than is possible through the display of data alone.

If this is the experience that you want for your learning community then you are ready to join the more than 600 New Zealand schools already working with a learning management system.

What are the benefits of choosing to implement a full LMS at this time?

a. International research has identified that in addition to assisting parents to support their child’s learning in and beyond school, an LMS offers a great deal to schools in the areas of:
   - Enhancing the accessibility, quality, relevance and range of learning resources
   - Increased opportunities for independent and personalised learning
   - Improved organisation of information and communication across the school
   - Extending opportunities for collaboration, interaction and communication.
   - Increasing parental involvement and supporting learning at home
   - Building school identity and community

b. Between October 2009 and December 2010, Edtech, in collaboration with the MOE, worked with 38 schools in a pilot programme building insight which has informed the current initiative. The focus of the pilot programme was to gain a better understanding of the key factors which enable or inhibit the successful implementation of a learning management system in NZ schools.

Milestone reports from schools participating in the pilot highlight three key areas where the implementation of Ultranet has led to immediate benefit:
   - Strengthening the links between home and school.
   - Heightening student motivation and involvement in learning.
   - Contributing to the smooth running of the school.

From the outset, for many of the schools, the LMS quickly became a vehicle for strengthening the links between home and school. These links were forged by the interest of parents in the drivers for implementation, and in the extended opportunities that the system will offer as it becomes bedded in. Building on this, several of the schools have hosted parent/community information evenings and/or maintained a high level of communication with their parents during the first phase of the project so as to bring them along on the journey.

The impact of Ultranet on learner motivation is clearly evident with the schools reporting that students are highly motivated to use the tools to document and share their own learning, are encouraged by feedback from ‘buddies’, and that the process of publishing and sharing facilitates reflection on learning.

Also evident are organisational benefits linked to the visibility that the LMS brings to many facets of school operations. These include enabling senior managers to more easily keep in touch with what is happening across the school; and making it easier for teachers to collaborate and to reflect, leading to greater consistency between pedagogical beliefs and practices.
A quarter of the schools identified the benefit of having a context and an environment to teach children about appropriate behaviour online.

What is the implementation timeline?

For most schools stage 1 of implementation of a learning management system will take place over a 9-12 month period. Full implementation will take at least two years with usage evolving in an ongoing way thereafter.

How does the programme operate?

The Ultranet implementation support program is delivered over a 12 month period during which the school has an ongoing involvement with their assigned implementation facilitator.

The programme is built around a phased approach to full implementation with a specific focus and achievement objectives for each term. The programme is ongoing with the facilitator directly involved at key points throughout the year:

**Familiarisation and exploration**
- Site set up and configuration
- Implementation project team meeting
- Administrator training
- Hands on workshops for lead teachers
- Guided online preparatory module for project team
- Regular remote interaction with facilitator
- Ongoing help desk support

**Planning, implementation and integration**
- Scoping and planning meeting to finalise the development plan
- Regular remote interaction with facilitator (links to research, readings and other resources which support LMS implementation, sharing learnings and initiatives from other schools)
- School visit with agenda customised to meet the school’s specific needs
- Ongoing help desk support

**Developing content and extending deployment**
- Developing resources
- Planning for the parent portal
- Remote interaction with and support from facilitator
- Ongoing help desk support

**Introducing the parent portal**
- SMS-LMS interoperability familiarisation and training
- Regular remote interaction with facilitator (monitoring performance of the data transfer and resolving any issues)
- School visit with agenda customised to meet the school’s specific needs
- Ongoing help desk support

**Extension and sustainability**
- Regular remote interaction with facilitator
- Ongoing help desk support
Does the programme allow for requirements specific to my school?

The Ultranet implementation support programme is adjusted to meet the needs of each school and can readily accommodate school specific requirements.

What milestones need to be achieved during the programme?

There are four milestones to meet during the course of the programme as follows:

**Week 12:** An implementation plan is in place and this is providing direction and clarifying areas of focus.

**Week 20:**
- 50% of teachers have populated their class space with content and resources to support a unit of work.
- At least 20% of students have received logons and log in at least once a week.

**Week 30:** Parents have received logons and are logging in at least once a term to see attendance and assessment information (Primary: 50% of parents; Secondary 25% of parents).

**Week 38:** Prepare a report which:
- Documents the school’s implementation journey to date.
- Identifies the benefits attained thus far.
- Identifies the challenges/barriers encountered during the implementation process and the strategies employed to overcome these.
- Details ‘Where to from here?’
- Describes the measures taken to ensure that development will be sustained beyond the period of the contract.

What does the funding cover?

The funding assistance provided by the Ministry covers the following costs associated with the implementation of a new system:

- Site set-up
- SMS-LMS connectivity
- Training for the system administrator
- Operating costs for 6 months (software licence and hosting fees)
- The 12-month implementation support programme. The goal of this programme is to assist schools to build the necessary capability and momentum to provide a foundation for sustainable ongoing development of their learning management system.

What costs (short term and ongoing) will be incurred that are not covered by the funding offer?

- The school is responsible for all teacher release costs associated with attending meetings and training sessions, preparing resources, providing support for staff etc.
- The implementation programme focuses on providing professional development and support for the school’s Implementation Project Team. Any additional workshops or training required for the wider staff will need to be factored in to the school’s professional development budget.
The school is responsible for the facilitator’s travel costs plus any accommodation costs associated with the components of the support programme that are delivered onsite. Wherever possible visits are grouped regionally so that costs can be shared between schools.

What will be the cost of continuing the service after the fee-free period?
Following the 6-month fee free period, the school is responsible for the ongoing operating costs (i.e. annual site licence and monthly hosting fee) for the balance of the two year term of the contract i.e. 18 months, and ongoing thereafter.

How many funded places are there?
Ultranet has received a quota of 40 funded places for full LMS implementation.

How long are the funded places likely to last?
Funding is extremely limited given the number of eligible schools ready to implement a learning management system. Many schools were disappointed to miss out last year so we anticipate that the new funding will be quickly exhausted. Once you have secured a place, you have the option of commencing implementation in either Term 3 or Term 4.

Our school has limited internet connectivity and would prefer to host the LMS in-house. May we use the funding for a locally installed LMS or parent portal?
No, the funding is available for hosted services only. The Ministry has only selected hosted providers, as they anticipate high speed connectivity reaching 95% of schools over the next few years.

Note that many schools report that a lot of the traffic to their LMS is outside school hours where it is the speed from home that is the limiting factor.

How do I confirm our wish to take up one of Ultranet’s funded places?
To let us know that you are keen to take advantage of this opportunity please fill out the attached form and return it to us at the address shown. A member of our team will contact you immediately with further information.

Alternatively you can email us directly to Ultranet@edtech.co.nz and we are certainly happy to answer any further questions you may have.
LMS Implementation Funding Assistance Project

Request to Participate

We are keen to proceed with LMS implementation with Ultranet and would like to confirm our wish to secure a place in the funding assisted implementation project.

☐ I/We understand the obligations and responsibilities associated with the funding assistance for full LMS implementation

☐ Our school uses one of the 4 student management systems approved for SMS-LMS interoperability.

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Name of Key Contact

Contact Email Address

Signed on behalf of the school by:

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Please return this form to Edtech by email to ultranet@edtech.co.nz or by fax to 09 913 9394