Location
Lismore Primary School is a rural school located in Lismore, 168km south-west of Melbourne. The school has proudly served its community since 1874 and is located on a large site within the township. With an enrolment of 27 pupils, the Principal and staff are committed to ensuring all students reach their full potential in a caring and professional environment.

Specialist classes are provided in The Arts, Japanese Language, PE and Library. The school has traditional links with neighbouring schools especially in the area of extra-curricular activities but is also establishing links with a Sister School in Japan Hokuzan Elementary and Junior High School 342-2 Nakabarù, Fuji Town, Saga City.

Lismore Primary School’s core purpose is to develop each individual student to become confident, capable and creative lifelong learners in a constantly changing global society. The school focuses on the individual needs and student centred learning approaches that embrace 21st Century learning.

The Innovation
Creating a digital classroom with Polycom HD video conferencing.

The Results
Connecting students to experts and peers globally.
The Innovation

In November 2013 the Victorian Minister of Education announced an initiative to provide video conferencing to facilitate a “digital classroom” in public schools. The Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) had provided more than 600 public schools with Polycom high definition video conferencing units with a further 540 schools set to follow suit.

In 2012 Lismore Primary received a Polycom high definition video conferencing unit and throughout 2013 the school learned how to use the equipment, building the capacity of staff and experimenting with using video conferencing to connect with schools around Australia and the world.

The Principal, Moira Turner says that the Polycom high definition video conferencing unit, “allows us to connect and collaborate with schools from Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland and professional presenters, with the possibilities being endless! This gives our students the opportunity to share their knowledge, gain knowledge and learn to work with students their own age from a variety of different schools and backgrounds that they otherwise would not encounter. This is an absolute bonus for a small school of 27 students. We would never have been able to participate in the various activities if we had not used the video conferencing unit. The tyranny of distance and the costs would have prohibited our students from completing many of these activities.”

The school registered for a range of virtual events provided on the www.education.elb.com.au video conferencing calendar, which was “the vehicle for us to participate in a variety of activities that met all our needs. The students from Prep-2 and Grades 3-6 worked as a whole class on a variety of activities. We completed the Nanberry Collaborative Learning Project, which enabled our students to comply with the Australian Curriculum outcomes for History, English and Mathematics. It made the learning authentic and gave the students an insight into First Contact not just in Sydney but across Australia.”

The Nanberry Collaborative Learning Project, based on Jackie French’s novel was designed to encourage students to draw on literature and local source material to explore life in Australia at First Contact. As a Collaborative Learning Project students from 10 schools were connected via video conference and first introduced to the novel by the author. Over the period of a term the students created their own digital stories to describe First Contact in their area for the other participating schools.

Participating teachers reflected on the significant outcomes of the project made possible through video conferencing.

“I had anticipated the value of sharing different perspectives on First Contact and that students might compare factors such as when and how First Contact occurred. They did this in their digital stories but the ‘full’ story came out through their direct enquiry of each other’s experiences researching for the presentations. I hadn’t anticipated that students would begin to build their historical picture using information from local contexts. Nor, that the students would use the opportunity to compare the past to the present. They also drew on topical issues asking questions about the Prime Minister’s apology and its impact on the local community. The students also compared their sources of information some citing the stories they had been told by local elders.”

The Results

Through Collaborative Learning Projects such as this and other virtual events the students were highly motivated to complete activities before and during video conferencing. It became a part of their routine in the classroom and activities were completed daily.

The Polycom video conferencing unit has enabled the school to bring experts into classrooms, engage with students from different countries; share learnings with peers from different schools and collaborate with schools to produce shared projects without leaving the building! Experts were able to model activities and teach specific techniques for particular activities like visual storytelling.

According to the Principal the “Polycom video conferencing unit has been fantastic and we have had no trouble connecting either to organised activities from the ELB...