

# NSW Department of Education

Liferay helping NSW Public Schools get online

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85% of NSW public schools using the School Website Service to showcase their school to the public.

The NSW Department of Education and Communities (DoE) identified a need to provide a cost effective and simple method for public schools in NSW to set-up and manage an online presence. It also wanted to provide a way for each school to tailor the site to suit their specific needs and foster connection and engagement with the parents and carers of its students, the result is the School Website Service.

The School Website Service is available to all primary and secondary public schools in NSW and to date 2044 schools have a website (85% of all public schools in NSW).

In 2011 DoE engaged with Permeance Technologies, a Liferay Platinum Partner, and selected the Liferay platform on which to develop the School Website Service. This followed successful earlier implementations of both Staff and Student Portals for DoE NSW by Permeance, also running on the Liferay platform.

Since the initial launch of the service the technology and original bespoke templates have evolved with the DoE School Website Service development team recently releasing a brand new responsive template for schools that use the service. For the schools using the new template it ensures they have a modern online presence by which to communicate relevant school activities to student's parents and their carers' while enjoying a seamless experience on any device.

Each School's site is a combination of DoE content such as curriculum and policies, and the School's own, including; newsletters, enrolment information, school news, photo and videos galleries and calendars. The sites can also integrate payments functionality, social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, and Blogs which have been developed in-house by the DoE School Website Service development team on the Liferay platform. Keeping pace with today's most popular method of consuming information, online, ensures that the parents and carers of students are able to engage in a way that best suits their personal preferences.

**Absolutely fantastic service,  
the best advocacy we have  
seen for public education in  
my working career.**

Lila Mularczyk  
Former Deputy President  
NSW Secondary Principals' Council

## Enabling public schools to shine online

The concept of the School Website Service was developed by DoE (formerly Department of Education and Communities, DEC) in 2011 in collaboration with the NSW Secondary Principals' Council and the NSW Primary Principals' Association and continues to receive widespread support and praise for the ease of use and professional appearance of each website.

After launching in 2011 Lila Mularczyk, then Deputy President NSW Secondary Principals' Council and Principal, Merrylands High School, was one of the first to offer congratulations, "Absolutely fantastic service, the best advocacy we have seen for public education in my working career," she said.

The ability to establish and manage a digital presence easily and quickly is seen as a way for all public schools in NSW to establish a professional online presence in an increasingly competitive environment. Parents and carers of children spend lots of time weighing up which is the best school to care for the education of their children. With an online presence the schools are well placed to convey their points of difference and values in a professional and relevant way.

"When choosing schools for their children parents do visit websites and if you've got a nice, colourful website that showcases all your different programs and achievements it's going to help," said Deputy Principal of Birrong Boys High, Angelo Stasos. "For schools to be able to so easily design and manage the website is a golden opportunity."

## User experience at the centre of responsive design

"A great user experience is so important when people engage online so we're really pleased that Liferay has been able to help New South Wales public schools deliver modern websites that look great on any device and provide important information to the community," said Adrian Johnson, General Manager, Liferay Australia.

The flexibility of the Liferay platform has enabled the School Website Service development team at DoE to quickly and easily customise themes and templates to suit the needs of the program. For the initial launch of the Schools Website Service an agile approach to development was undertaken and now the team follows a standard set of release dates and provides ongoing support to users.

"The School Website Service has evolved over the years based on the development team undertaking ongoing research and development with NSW schools and the broader community which has led to many improvements being incorporated as new technology has become available," said Oscar Cortez, Program Manager, School Website Service, NSW Department of Education.

Each school pays a nominal fee for a website which includes hosting and support. Using a "website builder wizard" schools can then construct a website which enables them to select colours, formats, plus and content menus and then tailor it to their specific needs and those of their school community.

