

Digital centre opens

Dan McKirdy

A collaboration between a cookie company and a former primary school principal has resulted in a brand new digital technology centre.

A branch of Cookie Time, The Cookie Muncher's Charitable Trust teamed up with former Elmwood School principal Faye Le Cren to create eTime.

eTime director Guy Pope-Mayell said the centre was about collaborative learning as opposed to classroom learning.

As well as the primary school programmes, there are after school and holiday programmes, with room for expansion into high school and adult learning after it is up and running.

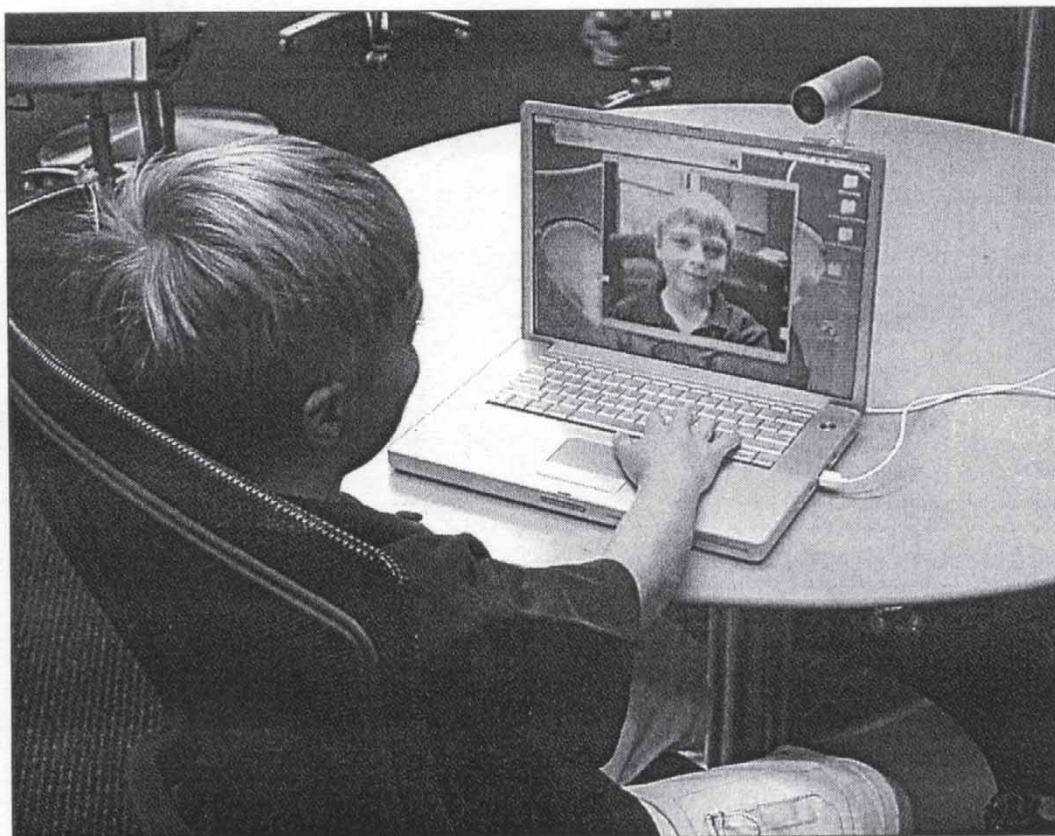
"It's got a flexible environment where groups of kids or adults come together to do a project or learn something together," he said.

"Virtually all the things we are doing have a digital component, movie making, digital photography, animation and numeracy and literacy using computers."

Pope-Mayell said schools know they have to embrace digital technology, but how they do it successfully was the difficult thing.

"You've got hundreds of thousands of teachers out there who are used to delivering the curriculum in a very successful way. We'd like to think we were part of that shift happening a bit faster, with less effort involved for the teachers," he said.

To get teachers into Information and communication Technology



(ICT), the Ministry of Education has funded 78 teachers to learn how to use and how to teach ICT at eTime.

To reduce the cost of going to the centre, schools are getting sponsorship from local businesses.

But the aim in the long run is to make the upmarket centre available to the whole community.

"If we want to make sure this business hums in the long term we have to make sure it works commercially.

"If it is all charitable it may fall away after a while but if it

is a business it will be here for the long term," Pope-Mayell said.

"This is another first for technology in Christchurch and this is very much the seed, once we find out how this business is going to work we can then take it and inject it back into other areas."

"This is not a centre when you get to the end you say I can make a movie, but the really important thing is that you have come and enjoyed working with digital technology," he said.

PHOTO: DAN MCKIRDY
Liam Collins, 7, does some learning at eTime last week.