**Now, two updates on the virtual world. (DB)**

aren't all students provided with digital schools and classrooms? Some of the answers relate to the competing demands for resources in schools and differences between schools being able to fund the considerable cost of 'becoming digital'. Even with the reduced costs of laptops being provided through the One Laptop Per Child project, which provides *'cheap laptops to governments in batches of 250,000 at a time'* (Age, 17/9/07:4), the Indian Ministry of Education didn't proceed, as it insisted that more classrooms and teachers were needed.

While this is understandable, this decision widens the differences in educational opportunities for students in India, when compared with, for example, a student at Methodist Ladies College, at Carey Baptist Grammar School, or in a Missouri eMint classroom.

The differences, though, are not restricted to differences in access. As Muriel Wells states, *'The issue is more complex than whether laptops are 'good or bad' or should be in all classes'* (Age, 17/9/07: 5). Wells cites the American research in Maine whereby students were given a laptop, and the research found that the program was effective in some schools and not others.

Clearly, says Wells, *'the critical issues were how they were used and how well principals supported teachers'* (Age, 17/9/07: 5). We are witnessing not only the rise of the digital classroom, but also the rise of digital differences.

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## The Rise of Digital Differences

**IN** the article, 'Rise of the digital classroom', Joshua Jennings reports that *'While some hesitant teachers score it a 'D', technology is fast making inroads at our smarter schools'* (Age, 17/9/07:4). iPods, interactive whiteboards, digital cameras, clickers (student response systems) and video games are cited as examples of ICT devices making appearances in schools.

Methodist Ladies College, since introducing *'the 'laptop' revolution in the 1990s'* (Age, 17/9/07: 5), has laptops as a requirement for students, while Carey Baptist Grammar School has laptops as compulsory for students in years 7 to 10 and optional in years 11 and 12.

Teaching Strategies) program has shown that students in eMints classrooms, which are equipped with teachers' laptops, interactive whiteboards, data projectors, teacher workstation computers, digital cameras, scanners and printers, are *'significantly more proficient and successful than non-eMints classrooms. It's no surprise then that 585 eMints classrooms have emerged throughout Missouri'* (Age, 17/9/07:4). If the ACER studies and eMints research provide credible evidence of learning gains, this raises the question - why