



CLOSING THE GAP

A CASE STUDY



INTRODUCTION

Closing the Gap Education is an educational support centre in Bryanston. For 7 years, CTG Education has successfully provided educational strategies for a variety of needs in the modern South African educational landscape.

Closing the Gap's philosophy is based on providing student centered solutions for every individual need with excellence. They have 5 growing centres which provide a range of services for students.

In 2006, owner and manager, LisaAnn Haynes, along with Adam Dobson (who joined her in 2009), founded Closing the Gap due to the need to support individual students based on their educational needs. This is how it began...

- In 1998, LisaAnn Haynes is appointed as a founding member of St Peters College
- In 1999, Adam joins St Peters college and is a critical in the development of the curriculum
- In 2004, LisaAnn is appointed as Deputy to Christian Academy (now Knights College) and it is here that she explores further into the concept of successfully meeting the academic and social needs of young people.
- LisaAnn then starts Closing the Gap to implement into mainstream schools, due to a personal experience with her son.
- In 2006, LisaAnn is approached by a desperate parent looking for a home-schooling solution. LisaAnn agrees to look at a way of supporting a homeschool curriculum and the model of CTG as an education centre is born
- By the end of 2006, 14 young people are enrolled and LisaAnn begins to realise the need for an efficient IT solution
- In 2007, the first 7 young people write matric as private candidates with Closing the Gap as a support centre
- In 2008 LisaAnn and Adams paths cross
- In 2009, Adam joins her
- In December 2014, after many hassles with IT service providers, Closing the Gap reaches out to Dial a Nerd to fix their IT system. Dial A Nerd found that the network was segmented, ADSL's were all over the place and content filtering was not working, amongst other issues.
- At the end of 2015, after building trust that was broken by many other IT support companies, Dial a Nerd managed to become their number one IT support partner. Closing the Gap now has a Service Level Agreement with Dial a Nerd

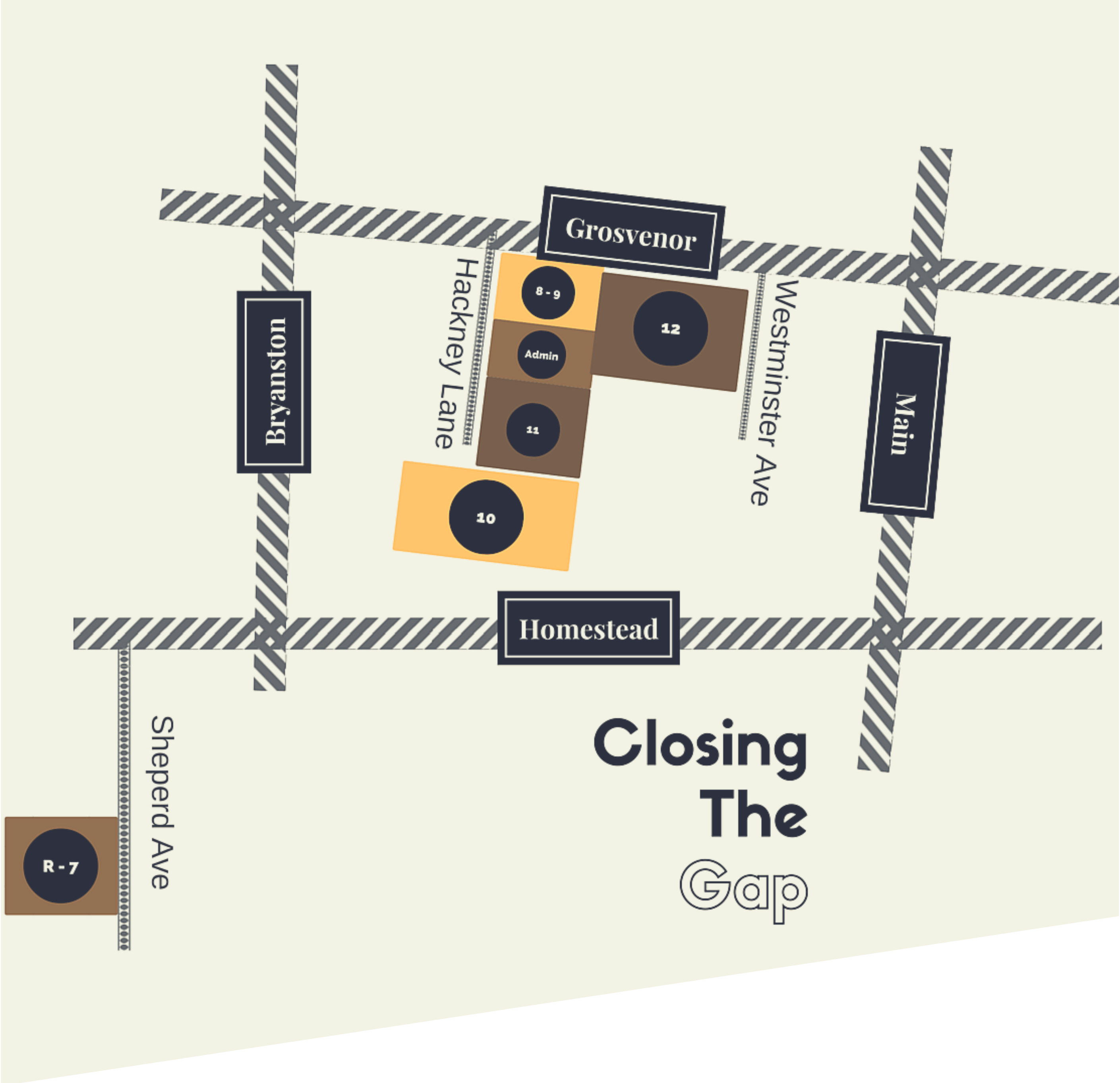


THE VISION

Closing the Gap’s vision for the future was to implement strategic and well managed modern technology throughout the grounds, allowing for an environment that would be favourable to learning anywhere, at any time, giving both young students and teachers constant connectivity with recent educational material for all stages available throughout the school.

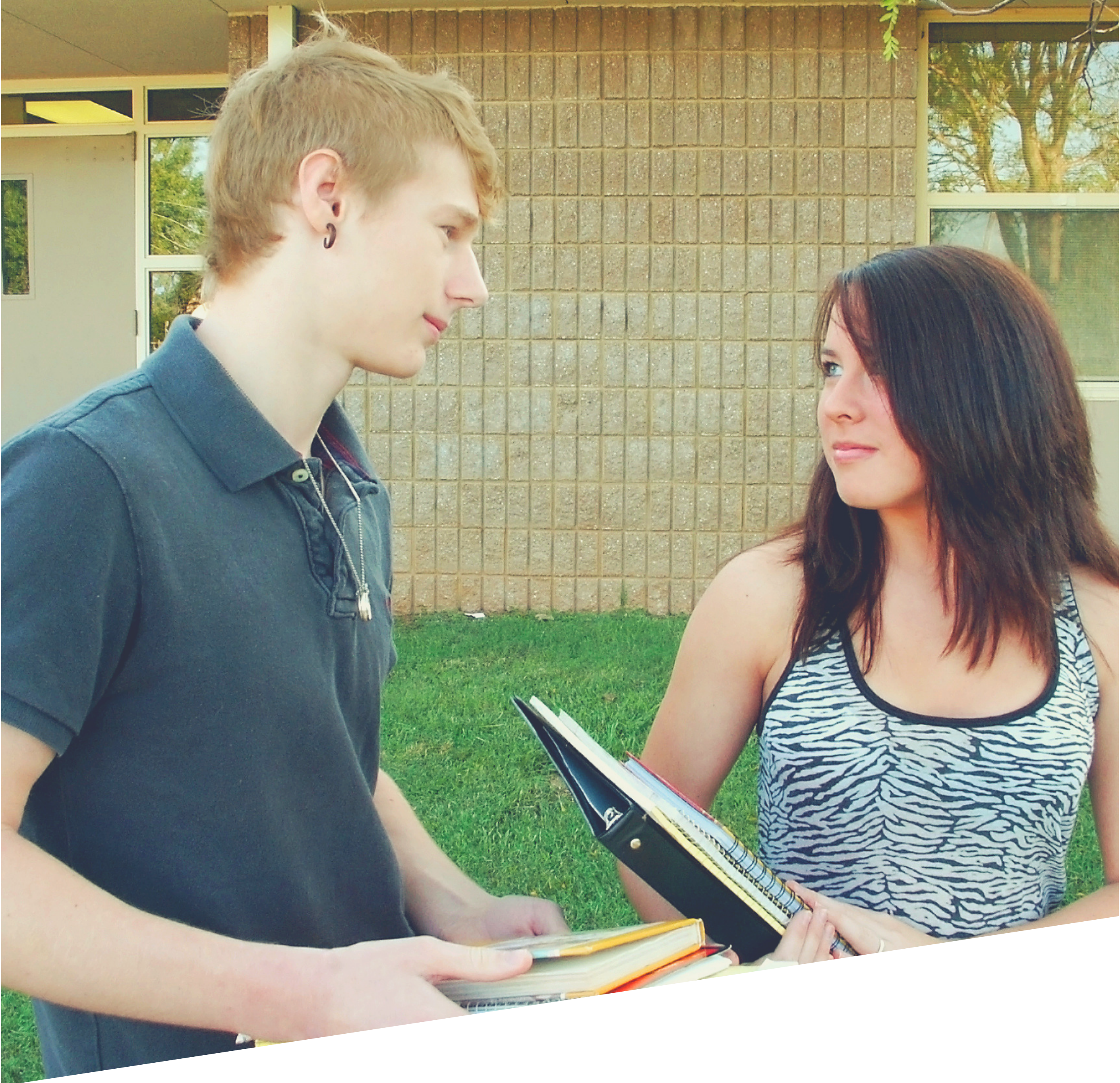
Due to Closing the Gap’s previous experience with IT service providers, they were a bit hasty to use Dial A Nerd. Closing the Gap needed a IT service provider that matched their innovation and dream for a holistic education solution.

Closing the Gap made it very clear to Dial a Nerd that they didn’t trust IT service providers and that they just needed Dial a Nerd to fix the system and go. However, Dial a Nerd knew the importance of IT support for Closing the Gap and proved to them that constant support was not only necessary but also imperative to meet their vision.



CHALLENGES

- Closing the Gap had different ADSL's all over the place, Dial A Nerd needed to bring this into one network
- The building was leased and had no cables, which meant when we eventually got to installing cables we would need to get approval and the like.
- Closing the Gap had contracts for their equipment (i.e. Point to point wireless), so they were in essence renting equipment instead of owning it. They couldn't get out of these contracts so we had to work with the equipment.
- Their IT system was not operating efficiently due to the lack of support from previous IT service providers that Closing the Gap had used. This caused Closing the Gap to be cautious when using their next IT service provider, being us. It was up to Dial a Nerd to restore Closing the Gap's faith in IT support and service their IT needs. Closing the Gap also had a few fears going forward. Namely:
 - Wasting money (this was due to past experiences)
 - Will it work to suit their needs?
 - Trusting Dial a Nerd



MAIN OBJECTIVES

The main objectives were:

Internet accessibility for all in the education facility, primarily the administration building.
A more controlled and monitored IT system with the appropriate content filters in place.
Cut down the amount of ADSLs in the building into one managed network. However, they needed different content filters for students and staff.
Finally, to work within budget and have a refreshed IT system that works.

For Dial a Nerd, we had the objective of restoring their trust in IT service providers, with the hope of Closing the Gap signing a Service Level Agreement with us as to consistently provide Closing the Gap with efficient and effective service.



HOW THE PROGRAM WAS IMPLEMENTED

Dial a Nerd needed to originally “clean up” the network. We rolled out with patching the network, however we had limited access due to the past IT service providers and everything being leased. The next step was to move 7 ADSLs into 1 network. For the vision to become reality, this Network needed to separate students and staff with each group having different content filters.

Dial a Nerd replaced Closing the Gap’s switches which worked within budget. A SonicWALL was then installed for content filtering and intrusion prevention. We disabled the application Firewall so that the network was safer and controlled. This also assisted with stopping torrent downloading and disabling access to unwanted websites and images.

Multiple visits needed to happen between Dial a Nerd and Closing the Gap, including discussing and brainstorming around our solutions timeline a few times. This helped Closing the Gap understand the process behind effective and working IT.

When Dial a Nerd initially began implementing the IT solution, we needed to connect the buildings and clean up the cables. We also installed 8 Dell Sonic Point managed wireless for better connectivity throughout the school.

Closing the Gap also had messy Linux Pastel Servers. The Servers fell down, Dial a Nerd had already done a backup, something that Closing the Gap had never done before. We implemented the back ups and reloaded the server they had. To work within the budget and also give them the service they hadn’t received, we reused a lot of their equipment.

Then Administrative office then move to 6 West Road, the 5 most demanding users. They were now isolated on a small brand new network, with the VOIP and data connections on their own separate networks. The pastel server was also relocated to the new Admin office.

We then setup a print server at the main site to run the printer tracking software from RICOH. This also runs a SMTP server for all the MFP printer’s scanners. We noticed the switches and WAP would freeze, and the site would regularly have problems with power outs. So we recommended and installed 5 x APC UPS's on all the cabinets.



WHAT WAS SUPPLIED AND INSTALLED

To fit within budget and deliver what Closing the Gap needed, 5 Dell X Switches were installed.

We originally installed a Dell SonicWALL NSA220, but it wasn't suitable for Closing the Gaps network. A Dell SonicWALL TZ400 was then installed in place of it.

8 Dell SonicPoints were installed to provide high speed wireless connectivity that is easy to set up and manage, perfect for an education environment and we configured the VLANs and created separate Staff and Student wireless networks.

Dial a Nerd identified a necessity for a Turrito MicroWave connection to be installed in order for Closing the Gap to have a stable and clean network.



THE REALIZATION OF THE DREAM

Andrew from Dial a Nerd goes in 3 times a week for maintenance. We moved from a messy 7 ADSL network to 1 Turrito microwave connection. This was installed within a week of Closing the Gap signing the paper.

The project as a whole took a few months to complete. **Within a year Dial a Nerd managed to completely change Closing the Gap's IT system, whilst saving them money by reusing a lot of their equipment.**

Technician, Andrew Levine, comments:

"I arrived at when the only solution to a printer or internet/wireless issues was to reboot the WAP or switch. The network was unable to manage all the simultaneous connections, due to no wireless management device being present on the network.

We then rolled out the 8 x Sonicpoints and 5 x Dell switches and configured the VLANS and created separate Staff and Student wireless networks. This resolved 95% of the onsite issues, which were internet not working, printer, scanner, mail, all due to the un-managed and overloaded network.

To conclude, the network was a nightmare and intermittent problems were then name of the game. Once the wireless and VLAN were put into place, the network stabilised and we could start supporting the staff and students with actual support requests.

Based on CTG's feedback to me personally, they are very happy with where their current IT infrastructure, and now trust us."



THANK YOU

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