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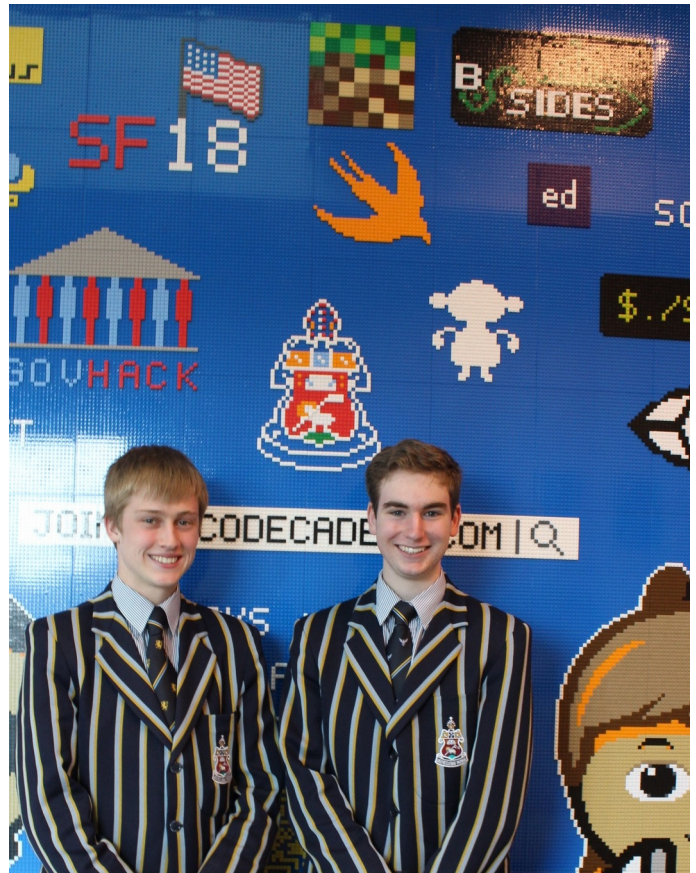
TEACHING STUDENTS ONLINE SECURITY

Identilab is a new online teaching tool giving students at the Canberra Grammar School (CGS) a chance to work with vital Internet authentication protocols.

In a world first, Identilab provides a sandbox, a virtual test bed, in which students can design and test their own authentication software, based upon the same protocols used by global sites such as Google or Facebook.

This kind of hands-on experience is an essential means of providing engaging, practical learning experiences in STEM fields and increasing students' awareness of online security.

Identilab is a product from Studentnet, which specialises in security, privacy, and innovative products for the education sector. Studentnet's identity management system, Cloudwork, simplifies the provisioning and administration of cost-effective and secure user accounts.



CGS students Sam Reading-Thompson and Damian Canilleri

Identilab's Professional Advantage



Canberra Grammar School students say Identilab has given them an excellent understanding of how authentication protocols actually operate. Year 12 student Damian Canilleri said, 'It's amazing to be working with systems that are widely available – right down to common, almost household names that people use every day – and then to see what we're doing here with an industry-standard technology.'

This new-found knowledge gave the students an advantage in a recent Canberra-wide Hackathon, when the school's three teams placed third, ninth and tenth out of a field of 180 industry professional groups. 'Knowing how these systems operated was really helpful,' Damian says. 'We understood how they're implemented and where flaws might exist.'

Identilab Improving School Systems

Students also used Identilab to design internal systems for the school, and after building and testing in the sandbox, configurations were then pushed into real-life production by Studentnet. Internal projects created by students for the school included a sign-on system for their after-hours programming group, a portal for students to access school photos, and a school-wide single-sign on system for all accounts.

Year 12 student Sam Reading-Thompson, says the learning curve was challenging. 'It was more knowing what goes where in our code. It was a bit of a jigsaw because this was the first time we'd done anything with this system.' But a major part of the Identilab service is the technical support offered by Studentnet. 'And they were very helpful and easy to contact,' Damian adds.

Matthew Purcell, the school's Head of Digital Innovation, explains that before these systems were implemented, in every lesson he'd have to do multiple password resets for forgetful students.

'It might seem a minor thing,' he says. 'But it creates a world of difference – when you have kids resetting passwords every single lesson, it just steals the time. Single sign-on makes life so much easier.'

Identilab Offers Convenience and Security

When discussing the school's motivation for using Studentnet and Identilab, Mr Purcell says, 'Convenience for one thing. In all our end-user systems we want to make the experience as seamless as possible.'

Previously the school used Lightweight Directory Access Protocol (LDAP) to address their needs, but students and staff say it was a much clunkier experience. Damian says, 'In order to implement LDAP to the fullest extent we had to figure out ways of opening up holes in the security layer without compromising it.'

That meant people would have to call ICT administrators to ask for new websites to be white-listed, to let them through the school's firewalls. 'But now,' says Damian, 'Identilab means we've got single sign-on as a properly configured package which is truly fit-for-purpose.'

Without Identilab and Studentnet's support, the school would have had to create their own solution. 'Doing anything by ourselves in-house, on a small scale with very little experience, means we'd have been facing potential security vulnerabilities of our own,' says Damian.

'And it would have been unpleasant for the users,' Sam adds, 'They'd need to log in multiple times, whereas now they just log in once and can access any of our systems.'

Contact Us



The pilot program at Canberra Grammar School is the first in Australia. For more information or to discuss Identilab, contact Studentnet by phone on +61 2 9281 1626 or email info@studentnet.id.

