To Whom It May Concern

Warrington School added this goal to it's school charter this year:

"Warrington School to totally run on a GNU/Linux operating system with "free software"* applications by 2010. *free as in free speech not free beer"

This has now been approved by the Ministry of Education, and will set a course for the school that will generate some media interest.

The following are reasons we believe there will be media interest:

- By 2010 Warrington School will no longer be able to comply with some of the mandatory requests by the Ministry of Education to run a school management system or use the revised enroll programme for roll returns as our current system (Musac) will only run on Microsoft operating systems.
- Warrington School will be requesting a portion of the money that is paid by the MOE to Microsoft for licenses that Warrington will not require as it will be running free software.
- Warrington School will be requesting that all software, support materials and ICT Help desk be GNU/Linux - friendly.

Rationale behind this decision includes:

- The GNU/Linux operating system and free software has proven over the last 2+ years at Warrington School to be reliable, easy to use, setup and install. Staff and pupils have had the opportunity to install a GNU/Linux operating system with very little knowledge or training.
- Our preferred operating system Ubuntu for teachers and Edubuntu for children's computers comes pre-installed with all the drivers and application software necessary to run either a stand alone machine or a teacher's laptop. It is cost-effective as the software is free and if a computer breaks down then it can be easily repaired by doing a fast and easy install (not that we have needed to yet). Ubuntu or Edubuntu will also run securely and stably on Pentium III computers at speeds close to newer counterparts.
- We as a school and community should be allowed to choose computer operating systems and software to suit our needs and purposes. All we do on our school computers can be done successfully using Ubuntu or Edubuntu. Internet, email, manipulate data and images, save to and from our server, create presentations, run DVDs and play games designed for school children. We even have an Edubuntu terminal server set up by a non computer specialist that runs seven other computers from it.
- By choosing to use free software/operating systems we should be able to receive payment from the Ministry of Education that would otherwise be used for our licenses to Microsoft. We can then use this money to employ local people to assist us with our computing needs if so desired.

- To empower our community of teachers, parents and children to install and run free OS and software on computers as part of the move that gives the user the freedom to share, study and modify it. To use free software is to make a political and ethical choice asserting the right to learn, and share what we learn with others. Free software has become the foundation of a learning

society where we share our knowledge in a way that others can build upon and enjoy.

- Allows the school and its community to alter the software for its own purpose and to share this with others. The school uses the open source Koha Library Management software that was installed into our school in 2005. This replaced software that was costing us upwards of $500 a year in upgrades and licenses.
- As an Enviro school we are conscious of the electricity we use and the demands made on us by businesses to constantly upgrade to newer versions of technology and discard the old. This is a non sustainable practice and therefore should not be promoted in our schools. Our seven computers running from the terminal server require less power to run than stand alone computers as they have no hard drive. We are able to keep older computers out of New Zealand's landfills longer by using computers that would not be supported by other operating systems as they are too old or without specifications high enough. We also install the Ubuntu operating system into older computers and donating them to families in the community that are presently without a computer.

With all of the above reasons and the high degree of satisfaction from running Linux/GNU operating systems on our computers we feel it is about time the Ministry of Education and ultimately the New Zealand government wake up to this freely available alternative that should be given an equal status to that of its proprietary counterparts.

The NZ government should also be encouraged to use the ISO/IEC 26300:2006 Open Document Format for Office Applications format in all its communications with the public. This is a free and open file and it is supported by just about all computer architectures, operating systems and office suites and is the only ISO accredited file format.

Our desire is to promote an alternative that respects the freedom of choice and is available for all people.

To the observer we are seen as a "low tech" school. We have computers that range in age from less than a year to some being about ten years old. Our staff are not highly trained computer experts. We have no flashy website or highly developed systems but we have the desire to work together in a collaborative manner to overcome hurdles and learn the boundaries of being field leaders in using an under-utilised and non government supported system.

Yours

Nathan Parker
Principal

http://www.gnu.org/philosophy/schools.html
http://www.ubuntu.com/community/ubuntustory/philosophy
http://www.edubuntu.org/
http://education.zdnet.com/?p=1615