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Digital copiers pose a little-known data security threat.



ED taps 'crowdsourcing' for ideas

New portal brings public and private sectors together, encouraging users to solve school challenges creatively

Meris Stansbury
Associate Editor

Ed-tech advocates hope a new national online community will inspire entrepreneurs and educators to team up in developing and funding innovative solutions to some of education's most persistent challenges.

The Open Innovation Portal, launched by the U.S. Education Department (ED) with help from IBM's cloud-computing solutions and Spencer Trask Collaborative Innovations (STCI), aims to address educational challenges ranging from high school dropout rates to low reading, math, and science scores.

The initiative is part of a new White House effort to encourage innovative collaboration across all industry sectors. To do this, federal officials are turning to a process known as "crowdsourcing," in which officials tap the collective wisdom of a large group of people through the power of the internet, to inspire new practices and creative solutions to systemic problems.

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Teacher of the Year backs 'learner-centered' instruction



ASSOCIATED PRESS

President Barack Obama introduced Sarah Brown Wessling as the national Teacher of the Year on April 29. Wessling, who teaches high school English in Iowa, uses technologies such as Facebook and podcasts to engage her students. **Story, page 12.**

Teacher colleges lag in ed tech

Survey also reveals gaps in how educators view various tools

Dennis Pierce
Editor

While a large majority of aspiring teachers (82 percent) say collaborative tools such as blogs, wikis, and social-networking web sites are important instructional tools, only one in four are learning how to use these technologies in their courses on teaching methods, according to a national survey. Instead, the primary technologies being taught in these classes are productivity tools such as word processing, spreadsheet, and database software.

The information comes from the nonprofit group Project Tomorrow, which released the results from its annual Speak Up survey of teachers and administrators May 5. (The group released the results from its survey of

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School groups rally support for EETT

Meris Stansbury
Associate Editor

Alarmed at what they see as a potential setback in federal support for education technology, several dozen state and national education groups and high-tech companies have sent letters to House and Senate lawmakers, urging them to continue funding the Enhancing Education Through Technology (EETT) block-grant program in fiscal 2011.

The letters expressed concerns about President Obama's budget proposal, which would fold EETT—the largest single source

EETT, page 34

eBook restrictions vex users

Digital rights management is curbing more widespread use

Meris Stansbury
Associate Editor

As more and more eReading devices flood the market, users are beginning to feel the restrictions imposed by copyright and digital rights management (DRM)—restrictions that some fear could hold back the use of eBooks in education.

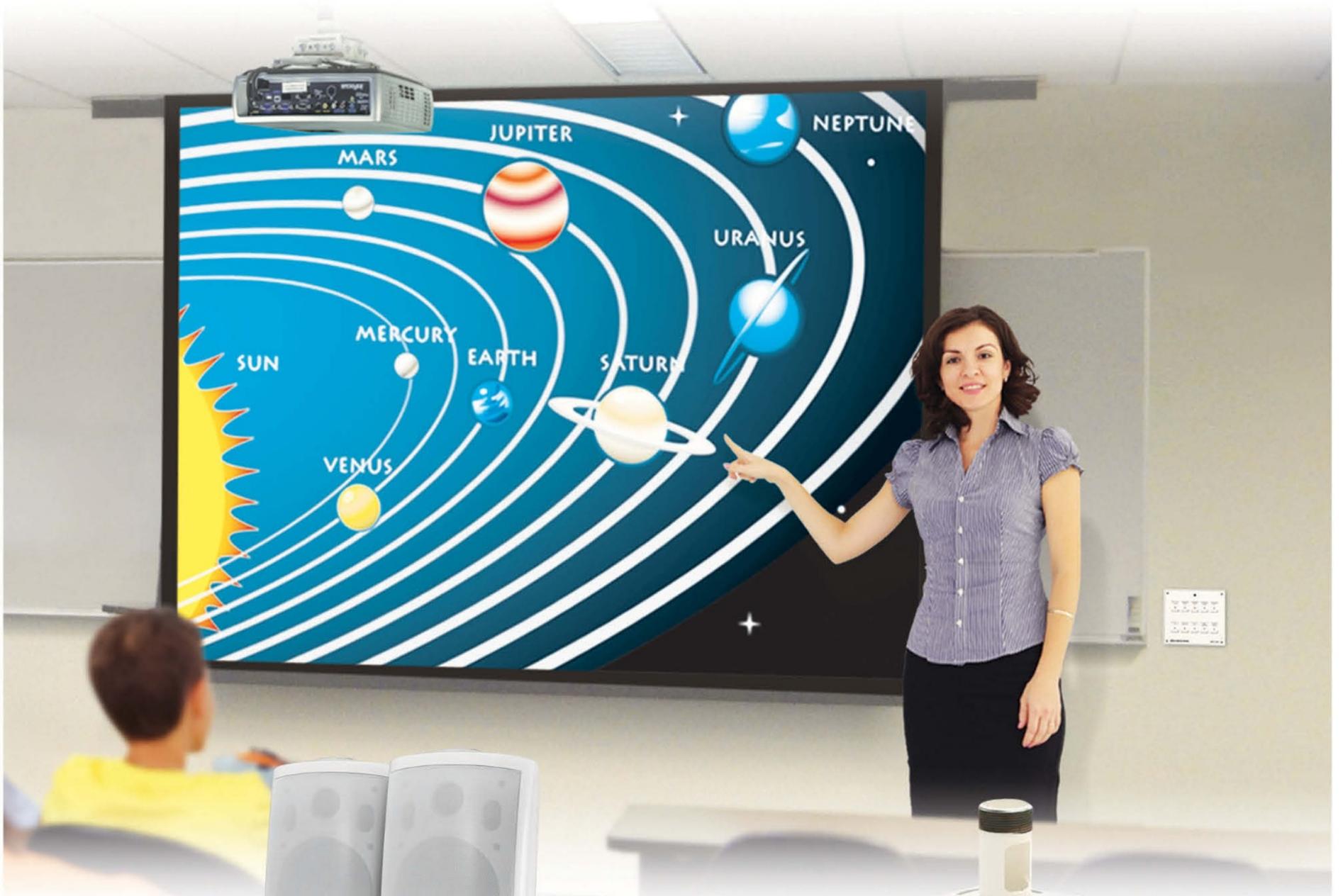
Imagine this: You're in the market for an eReader device and decide to buy a Kindle. Books for your Kindle must be purchased through Amazon's eBook store. You can download the books you buy to your computer and/or your Kindle device.

Now, imagine that you'd like a Barnes &

Noble Nook instead: Can you upload your Amazon eBooks to your Nook? Can you lend the books you've downloaded on your computer to friends? The answer to these questions is no, leading some to question whether purchasing an eBook for an eReader device

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All you need to take control of your classroom



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Audio Amplifier



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(Media Presentation Controller™)



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Educator Resource Centers

The editors of *eSchool News* have assembled a variety of resource centers on the hottest topics in education technology. The resource centers listed here are just the latest collections of news and resources aimed at helping you sort out the complex challenges you face every day. Visit www.eSchoolNews.com/Resources to access these invaluable collections and start solving your most difficult problems today!



Measuring 21st-century skills

How can educators teach 21st-century skills to students in the context of the core curriculum? And, how can you measure students' attainment of these skills? Find the answers in this resource center.

<http://www.eschoolnews.com/2009/08/14/measuring-21st-century-skills-2/>

Re-imagining Education

When teachers can leverage multiple technologies in a resource-rich classroom—supported by top-notch professional development—students forget they're in school and instead become excited about real-world applications of the lessons they are learning. Learn how by going to:

<http://www.eschoolnews.com/2010/04/09/re-imagining-education/>



Expert Blog: Security Insights

Top-notch physical and network security in schools is essential to student and staff well-being. A vigilant and proactive approach to security concerns, problems, and breaches is necessary for maintaining clean IT networks and incident-free schools. Follow Patrick Fiel, public safety adviser for ADT Security Services and a former executive director of school security for the Washington, D.C., Public School System, as he reports on the latest school security issues:

<http://www.eschoolnews.com/2010/04/29/expert-blog-security-insights-bottom/>

Online Learning: One Pathway to Success

A growing number of K-12 school systems are discovering the power of online learning to transform education as we know it, opening up nearly limitless possibilities for their students. But despite these proven benefits, there are several barriers to implementing a successful online-learning program. Find out more in this resource center:

<http://www.eschoolnews.com/2010/04/09/online-learning-one-pathway-to-success/>

Report highlights ed-tech lessons from abroad

Laura Devaney
Managing Editor

Scotland and the Netherlands both invest significantly more federal money per student in information and communications technologies (ICT) than the United States, and they both view ICT as essential to education, a delegation of ed-tech advocates discovered during a recent visit to the two countries.

The results of that visit, led by the Consortium for School Networking (CoSN), appear in a report issued May 12, called "Real Investment, Real Innovation."

"Scotland and the Netherlands approach ICT in the classroom as an absolute necessity—not as a luxury—for improving learning and teaching, as well as developing workforce skills," the report noted. "We found this attitude inspirational, particularly in view of the continuing debate in the U.S. about the unproven and uncertain value of technology."

The delegation aimed to gauge how well prepared students in Scotland and the Netherlands are for success in a global economy, explore innovative uses of ed tech, discover some common challenges in using ICT in education, and identify unique policies and practices that might be replicated in the United States.

"Across the globe, technology is being leveraged to enhance learning and boost administrative efficiency in schools," said Keith Krueger, CoSN's CEO. "U.S. educators and policy makers need to look at best practices from around the world if they hope to use technology to transform learning and enable the enterprise of education."

According to the report, the most recent budget for BECTA—the U.K. government agency advocating for effective ed-tech use—was \$161 million in U.S. dollars for a student population of 8 million. In the Netherlands, the Ministry of Education spent \$27.7 million last year to operate Kennisnet, the organization that focuses on supporting ICT implementation in K-12 schools for 2.5 million students.

Excluding stimulus funding and looking at the most recent annual ed-tech appropriations of \$272 million, the U.S. has spent \$5.44 in U.S. dollars per student on ICT at the federal level, compared with \$10.80 in the Netherlands and \$20.10 in the U.K.

"Replicating the policies and approaches that exist in Scotland and the Netherlands will be difficult, given that the system of local control is a powerful cornerstone of American public education," the report acknowledged.

Still, it said the U.S. could learn from the existence of a strong policy framework, a clear vision, and strategic investments in ICT within the two European countries.

"At the federal level, leadership at the U.S. Department of Education and the White House can play a critical role in ... creating the sense of urgency that will inspire local leaders to interpret and adapt ICT," the report said.

It added: "This kind of vision and commitment of resources to ICT has been largely absent at the national level in the U.S. given the structure of American education, with most technology planning and acquisition decisions driven by state agen-

cies and local district administrators. We are hopeful that the [recently issued] National Education Technology Plan may provide some of the missing vision for U.S. educators and policy makers."

Scotland's ICT investment takes shape in Glow, which is often termed "the world's first national intranet for education." The safe, free online environment gives students, teachers, and parents space to create and share resources.

Glow Groups allow classes to complete class work and homework online, work with other classes in different schools, and even work with pupils across the world on collaborative online projects. All school systems in Scotland have signed on to participate in Glow, which is funded and managed by the Scottish government and delivered by RM, a private company.

In the Netherlands, Kennisnet offers schools independent advice and services for safe and effective technology use.

Three examples stood out when the delegation visited the Netherlands, and all three involved collaboratively produced, teacher-created digital repositories.

The DigilessenVO.nl project uses a cooperative group of schools that pay for the chance to contribute to and share in a learning object repository. Teachers produce classroom lessons and make those lessons available to other teachers within the group, and each school must produce at least 10 lessons or learning objects annually. Schools pay 2,300 Euros per year (roughly \$3,000 U.S. dollars) to participate.

The delegation noted that the U.S. has similar initiatives, such as OER Commons and Curriki—but the DigilessenVO.nl is unique in its mix of school collaboration, a cooperative business model, and a minimal threshold for participation, it said.

Digischool, which started 10 years ago, is an online teacher network with more than 200,000 teachers throughout the Netherlands. The network is organized according to subject area and grade level. "Community organizers" spur the activity in this network, and they receive a small stipend for their efforts.

The Learning Resource Exchange (LRE), launched by European Schoolnet, lets schools find educational content from different countries and providers. LRE currently offers more than 130,000 learning resources and assets.

"Throughout our discussions with leaders at Kennisnet, they reminded us that we cannot ignore Web 2.0 trends and student usage of Web 2.0 tools, but must embrace and shape them for learning," the delegation reported. "Contrast this with the typical situation in the U.S., where we block and ban access to social networking sites rather than promote and adapt [them] for learning." 

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JUNE 2010

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EDUCATION IN FOCUS



30 AV systems in the spotlight

New projectors offer images sharp enough for medical use; others eliminate the need for mercury lamps.

– Dennis Carter

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Media illiteracy

Dennis Pierce, Editor
dpierce@eschoolnews.com

President Obama caused quite a stir among the technorati with his commencement address at Hampton University last month.

You might have heard about it: Supposedly, one of the most technologically savvy presidents in our nation's history—and someone who largely owes his Election Day victory to the power of social media in connecting and engaging today's youth—decried the tools of the iGeneration as instruments of evil. Or something like that.

"You're coming of age in a 24-7 media environment that bombards us with all kinds of content and exposes us to all kinds of arguments, some of which don't always rank that high on the truth meter," Obama told the graduating class of this historically black Virginia university.

"And with iPods and iPads, and Xboxes and PlayStations—none of which I know how to work—information becomes a distraction, a diversion, a form of entertainment, rather than a tool of empowerment."

With this latter statement, the president set off a firestorm of media criticism—ironically proving the point he made in the preceding one.

"BlackBerry-loving President Barack Obama declared war on technology," proclaimed FOX News on May 10, suggesting something at once both sinister and hypocritical about the president's remarks. "Obama mystified by iPad," read the headline in *InformationWeek*, which apparently can't tell the difference between a self-deprecating joke intended for cheap laughs and a startling admission of incompetence.

Even our friends across the pond got into the act. "U.S. president Barack Obama has launched an extraordinary attack on iPods and other high-tech gadgets by claiming they are bad for democracy," read the lead in the *Daily Mail* of London. The publication was alluding to the next line in Obama's speech, where he said: "All of

this is not only putting pressure on you; it's putting new pressure on our country and on our democracy."

Now hold on a minute. Is that really what Obama was saying—that "high-tech gadgets ... are bad for democracy?"

Far be it from me to speak for the leader of the free world, but I think the "pressure" the president spoke of referred to the *potential* for distraction that new technologies bring, as well as the torrent of information—some true, some not so true—that technology can deliver in today's 24-7 connected world. And really, what's so controversial about that? (Ask any educator who's tried to keep students on task when using technology in her lessons, and I'm sure she would agree.)

Technology is merely a tool. It's not inherently good or bad in itself; these value judgments depend on the uses to which it is put. I'm pretty sure a former University of Chicago law professor and avowed BlackBerry user understands this, too.

Anyone who's been paying attention these last few years should know that Obama also recognizes technology's potential as a tool for learning, or "empowerment," as he said in his speech. Earlier this year, for instance, his administration released a new National Education Technology Plan that calls for "always-on" internet connectivity, delivered via mobile devices and available to students and teachers both inside and outside of school.

Ed-tech advocates might have some legitimate concerns about how the president has chosen to support school technology in his 2011 budget proposal (see Associate Editor Meris Stansbury's story "School groups rally support for EETT," page 1), but no one should question his support for technology itself as an instrument for learning.

If the media who were so quick to pounce on Obama's comment about iPods and Xboxes had listened to the rest of the president's speech, they might have noticed he offered a solution to the challenges he described.

"Class of 2010, this is a period of breathtaking change,



President Obama speaks to Hampton University graduates.

like few others in our history," Obama said. "We can't stop these changes, but we can channel them, we can shape them, we can adapt to them. And education is what can allow us to do so. It can fortify you, as it did earlier generations, to meet the tests of your own time."

In other words, education is what will help today's graduates effectively navigate the flood of digital media now at their fingertips.

Obama's speech holds an important lesson for schools: Investing in new technologies won't make a (mega)bit of difference unless students learn how to harness these tools for a deeper understanding of their world.

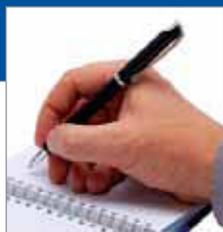
Savvy educators, like Teacher of the Year Sarah Brown Wessling, already know this. Wessling uses technology to make her lessons engaging—but she also teaches students to be "life-long learners and genuine thinkers." (See our story on page 12.)

That means teaching students how to think critically about what they are reading and hearing, so they become smart consumers of information.

Judging by the media firestorm that resulted from the president's address, it's a lesson many members of the Fourth Estate could use as well.

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Your Turn

Many of the stories appearing in the pages of *eSchool News* first ran on our web site in some form or another, prompting various responses by our readers. Here, we've published the best of these responses in print, so you can see what your colleagues have to say about these issues. To keep the conversation going, go to www.eschoolnews.com, search for the story in question, and add your own thoughts in the comments section. —The Editors

Ed-tech perception gaps

When our page 1 story "Teacher colleges lag in ed tech" appeared online ("Survey reveals gaps in school technology perceptions," May 5), at least one reader agreed with the Speak Up survey's conclusion that the ed-tech training many pre-service teachers are getting too often focuses on the wrong kinds of skills.

"Though digital technologies are by no means the 'holy grail' of solving the problems in our education system, they are a very important tool. Unfortunately, all too often I see courses in digital literacy concentrating on teaching how to use Office and maybe send an eMail and surf the web," wrote dudervision. "There might be a little exposure to digital photography or even making a movie with [Windows] Movie Maker, but really learning how to communicate digitally is less a focus than learning how to use the software."

Dudervision concluded: "Until the emphasis in such classes is on what to do and why, and not just how to do it, their value in preparing new teachers will be mixed at best."

Another reader, mikuska1, responded to the observation that teachers and administrators expressed different opinions about the value of certain technologies.

"Too often 'gatekeepers' make decisions about what technology will be used in a school," mikuska1 wrote. "Most of the time these individuals are not educators,

but IT specialists whose job it is to install printers or solve networking problems, not make decisions about technology that an English teacher should or should not use. Most of the time choices are made based on the convenience of the IT specialist, not on the effectiveness in a science class. Schools need to allow professionals with teaching credentials and teaching experience in collaboration with the IT person to discover what is best for students."

Judging Obama's Supreme Court nomination

Readers also had a few things to say in response to our page 14 story, "Supreme Court pick could bode well for education," when it appeared online May 10.

Elena Kagan's decision while dean of Harvard Law School to block military recruiting on campus because of "don't ask, don't tell" is "disturbing," wrote crschmiesing. "It was really a form of censorship that is usually avoided in institutions of higher education. If a state mandates that contraceptives be included in sex education in all school districts, and a school decides against it because they deem it to be morally wrong, will she side with the state or the school? If a state mandates that all government classes must watch the inauguration of a president ..., but some school districts do not, will she side with the states or the schools?"

Another reader, rlbrewer, wrote: "My problem with this column is that Supreme Court justices are not supposed to be advocates of any group or cause. They are supposed to judge fairly and impartially, based upon the law and the Constitution. Lawyers and politicians can be advocates; judges should not be, and if there is any indication she will be an advocate for any group or cause on the bench, she would be unqualified to sit on the Supreme Court and should be rejected."

Not a fan of 'crowdsourcing'

One reader had a strong response to our page 1 story "ED taps 'crowdsourcing' for ideas" when it ran online May 10.

Responding to a comment from STCI's Mike Turillo, who is quoted in the story as saying, "The national, state, and local governments are basically at a point where old ways of fixing problems are not working," ctdahle wrote:

"I wish this meant a recognition that the old way of (1) cutting budgets, (2) eliminating programs, and (3) increasing class sizes and course loads was about to go by the boards. But what it really means is that we are going to invite a bunch of corporate gadflies to propose ways to put expensive, unsupported technology in front of teachers who already don't even have time to pee during the school day."

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FCC plan could revive 'net neutrality'

Agency chairman says he's found a compromise on key broadband rules, though it's likely to be challenged in court

From staff and wire reports

The head of the Federal Communications Commission thinks he has come up with a way to salvage his ambitious national broadband plans and his hope for "net neutrality," a principle favored by many school technology advocates, without running into legal obstacles that have threatened to derail him.

FCC Chairman Julius Genachowski said May 6 that his agency has crafted a compromise in how it regulates high-speed internet access: It will apply only narrow rules to broadband companies. The FCC

chairman, a Democrat, said this delicate dance will ensure the agency has adequate authority to govern broadband providers without being too "heavy-handed."

But his plan likely will hit legal challenges from the big phone and cable companies, and it already faces significant opposition from Republicans at the FCC and in Congress.

The FCC has been scrambling to come up with new regulatory framework after a federal appeals court in April cast doubt on its jurisdiction over broadband under existing rules.

The FCC needs that legal authority for the sweeping national broadband plan that it released in March. Among other things, the plan aims to give more Americans access to affordable high-speed internet connections by revamping the federal program that subsidizes telephone service and using it to pay for broadband.

Genachowski also needs this authority to move ahead with his proposal to adopt net-neutrality rules prohibiting phone and cable companies from prioritizing or discriminating against certain types of internet traffic traveling over their lines.

Internet companies such as Google Inc. and Skype Ltd. say these rules are needed to prevent broadband providers from becoming online gatekeepers and blocking internet phone calls, streaming video, and other services that compete with their core businesses.

Many supporters of education technology also favor net neutrality. Failure to pass such regulations would mean the country's largest universities could pay telecommunications companies for preferential treatment, while small colleges with more limited resources would be at a distinct disadvantage, they say.

Genachowski said his new regulatory framework will allow the FCC to move ahead with its plans and "support policies that advance our global competitiveness and preserve the internet as a powerful platform for innovation."

The FCC currently treats broadband as a lightly regulated "information service." It has maintained that this framework gave it ample authority to proceed with its broadband plan and to impose net-neutrality rules. But the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia rejected this argument.

So now Genachowski is seeking to redefine broadband as a telecommunications service subject to "common carrier" obligations to treat all traffic equally. Similar rules apply to other networks that serve the public, including roads and highways, electrical grids, and telephone lines. But Genachowski said he will refrain from imposing more burdensome mandates that also apply to traditional telecom companies. For instance, he would avoid imposing obligations for the broadband companies to share their networks with competitors.

The proposal is intended to strike a balance that can satisfy both internet service providers that oppose new regulations and public-interest groups that are demanding greater consumer protections. FCC officials stressed that they intend to regulate only internet connections, not the online services flowing through them.

The FCC soon will seek public comment on Genachowski's proposal. It would have to be approved by three or more of the FCC's five commissioners, and Genachowski is expected to have the support of his two fellow Democrats.

Several public-interest groups and at least one key Democrat who sits on the House committee that oversees the FCC, Rep. Edward Markey of Massachusetts, praised the proposal. "With this decision, the FCC will ensure that the agency remains the 'cop on the beat,' protecting consumers and competition on the World Wide Web," Markey said.



FCC Chairman Julius Genachowski

But the GOP lined up against the plan.

The two Republican FCC commissioners, Robert McDowell and Meredith Baker, said the proposal would "shatter the boundaries" of the agency's authority and discourage broadband providers from investing in their networks by imposing "burdensome rules excavated from the early Ma Bell monopoly era onto 21st-century networks."

House Republican Leader John Boehner of Ohio called the plan "a government takeover of the internet."

The battle is likely to play out in court if the big phone and cable companies decide to challenge the new framework. The companies already oppose Genachowski's net-neutrality proposal, warning that restrictions on what they can do with their networks will discourage them from investing in their lines.

Tom Tauke, Verizon's top Washington official, said Genachowski's new approach to regulation is "legally unsupported" and "could ultimately harm consumers and inhibit the innovation and investment he wants to encourage."

Comcast said it was disappointed with the FCC proposal but was prepared to work with the agency. Comcast might be more open to compromise than other companies, however, because it needs FCC approval to take a controlling stake in NBC Universal.

It was Comcast that helped set in motion the events leading to the April court ruling. The case centered on the company's behavior in 2007 when it interfered with subscribers using the online file-sharing service BitTorrent, which lets people swap movies and other big files. Comcast said the service was clogging its network, but public-interest groups believed the company saw the swapping of video files as a threat to its cable business.

The FCC, then led by Republican Kevin Martin, ordered Comcast to stop blocking subscribers from using BitTorrent and based its decision on net-neutrality principles it had adopted in 2005.

Comcast challenged the order in court, arguing that the FCC was seeking to enforce principles and not regulations or laws. That's one reason Genachowski is now pushing the FCC to adopt formal net-neutrality rules. 



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Oregon schools adopt Google Apps for Education

Dennis Carter
Assistant Editor

Oregon's 540,000 public school students will be able to get teacher feedback on classroom projects in real time, create web sites, and stream online videos easily, after the state school system announced April 28 that it will be the first to use Google Apps for Education statewide.

Moving to the free Google Apps for Education—a host of school-friendly applications the internet giant has pushed in recent months—will save the state \$1.5 million in IT costs because the service is hosted entirely on the web, with no hardware, software, or technology upkeep involved,

Oregon Schools Superintendent Susan Castillo said.

Oregon's districts will have use of Google's services for up to five years in this landmark ed-tech deal. The Oregon Department of Education will review an "additional multiyear extension" during the fourth year of the agreement, according to the deal. Participating school districts will have to distribute new parental consent forms for any student who wants to use the Google applications.

Having worked almost a year to comply with state laws and regulations, Oregon school officials might have created a template that other public school districts can

use if decision makers want to bring Google Apps to their students, said Aviva Gilbert, a Google spokeswoman.

Oregon's work means "other states don't have to start from square one," Gilbert said, adding that Oregon has made its Google Apps agreement available on the internet for other school systems to examine. "No one's starting from scratch if they don't want to, and that is a huge plus."

While Oregon's initiative is not mandatory, school districts that adopt the technology will be able to use student Gmail accounts complete with specialized filtering and security features, Google Groups private online discussion

sites, streaming Google video, Google Calendar, and Google Contacts, which can be shared with other students and teachers who use Google Apps.

Google's suite of educational tools has proven attractive to school systems and colleges that have converted to Gmail in recent years, and as operating budgets stagnate in a slumping economy, Gilbert said no-cost technology services have education officials evaluating alternatives to their traditional software and hardware options.

"I think it makes a lot of sense ... since budgets are hurting, especially in the public sector," she said. "[Schools] don't want to cut down on the technology they offer, and they don't want to be less innovative."

Google's cloud-computing capabilities—meaning users access the applications from the company's servers, instead of a local hard drive—could change the way students write research papers, Google officials said. Instead of handing in the project and having a teacher grade the entire paper at once, students can share their work with teachers via Google Docs. That would allow educators to make suggestions in real time.

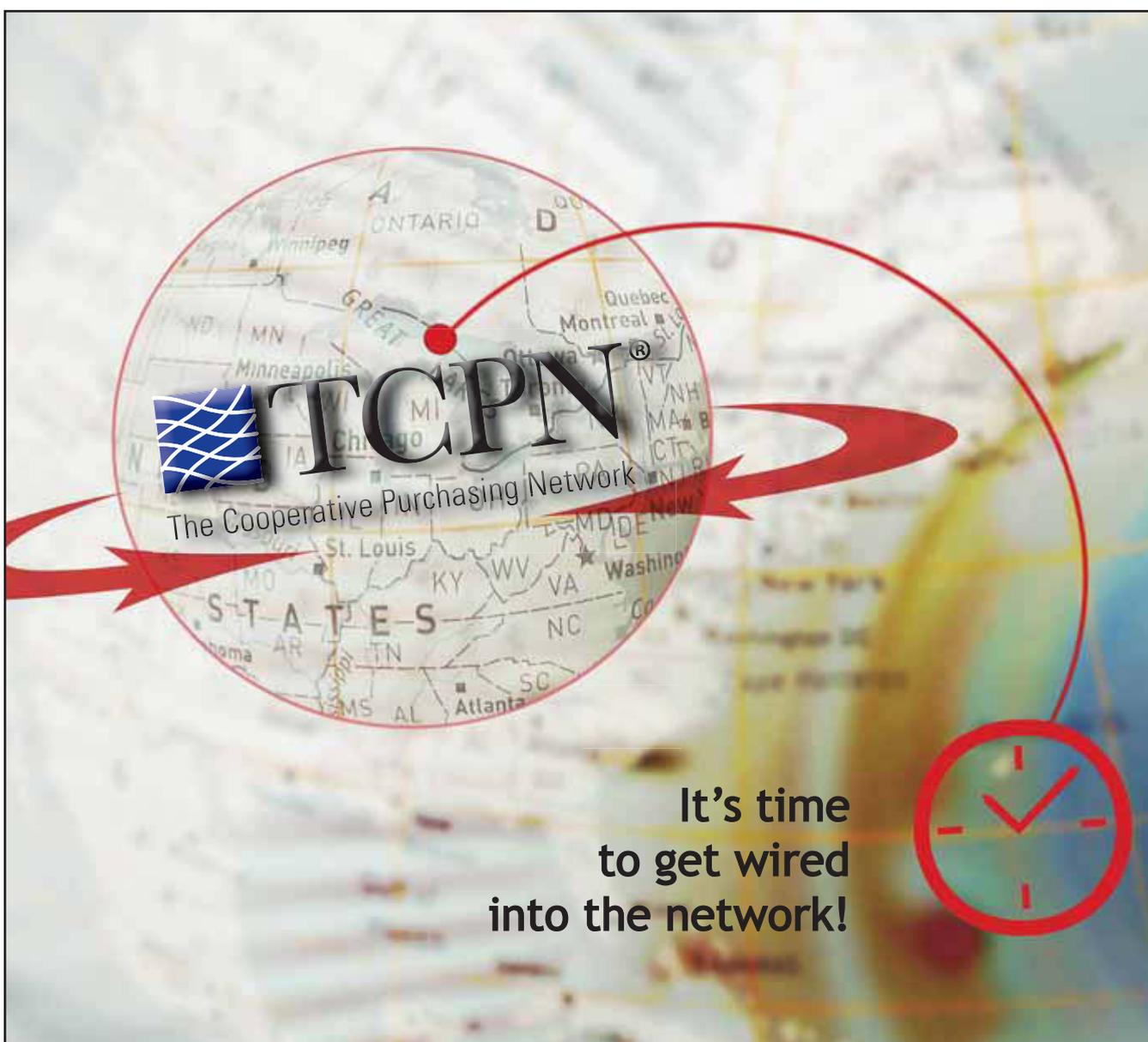
"It's critical that students learn how to use the kind of productivity technology they'll need throughout their lives, and Oregon is helping students across the state do just that," Jaime Casap, Google Apps education manager, wrote on the company's official blog.

Bringing Google Apps to Oregon schools is the company's latest inroad into education. Google has 121 student ambassadors on 69 higher-education campuses nationwide after sifting through thousands of applications and awarding the company's first ambassadorships to students last year.

The Google student representatives are not paid, but they are rewarded with free water bottles and T-shirts, said Miriam Schneider, a product marketing manager for Google. Google delivers online tutorials to its ambassadors, showing what features they should pitch to students in on-campus meetings.

The company also has launched a Twitter page, a blog, a Facebook page, and a YouTube channel all dedicated to communicating with students. The company uses the blog to push applications that can be useful in the lecture hall and during late-night library study sessions.

Google's deal with Oregon came about a week after Microsoft announced a partnership with ePals, which is used by some 600,000 educators in 200 countries (see page 16). Under that deal, ePals this fall will add Microsoft's Live@edu eMail and calendaring software to its safe platform for teachers and students to communicate and collaborate online, and next year ePals users will have access to web-based versions of popular Microsoft Office tools as well. Google and Microsoft are chief rivals in offering free, web-based productivity tools to schools. 



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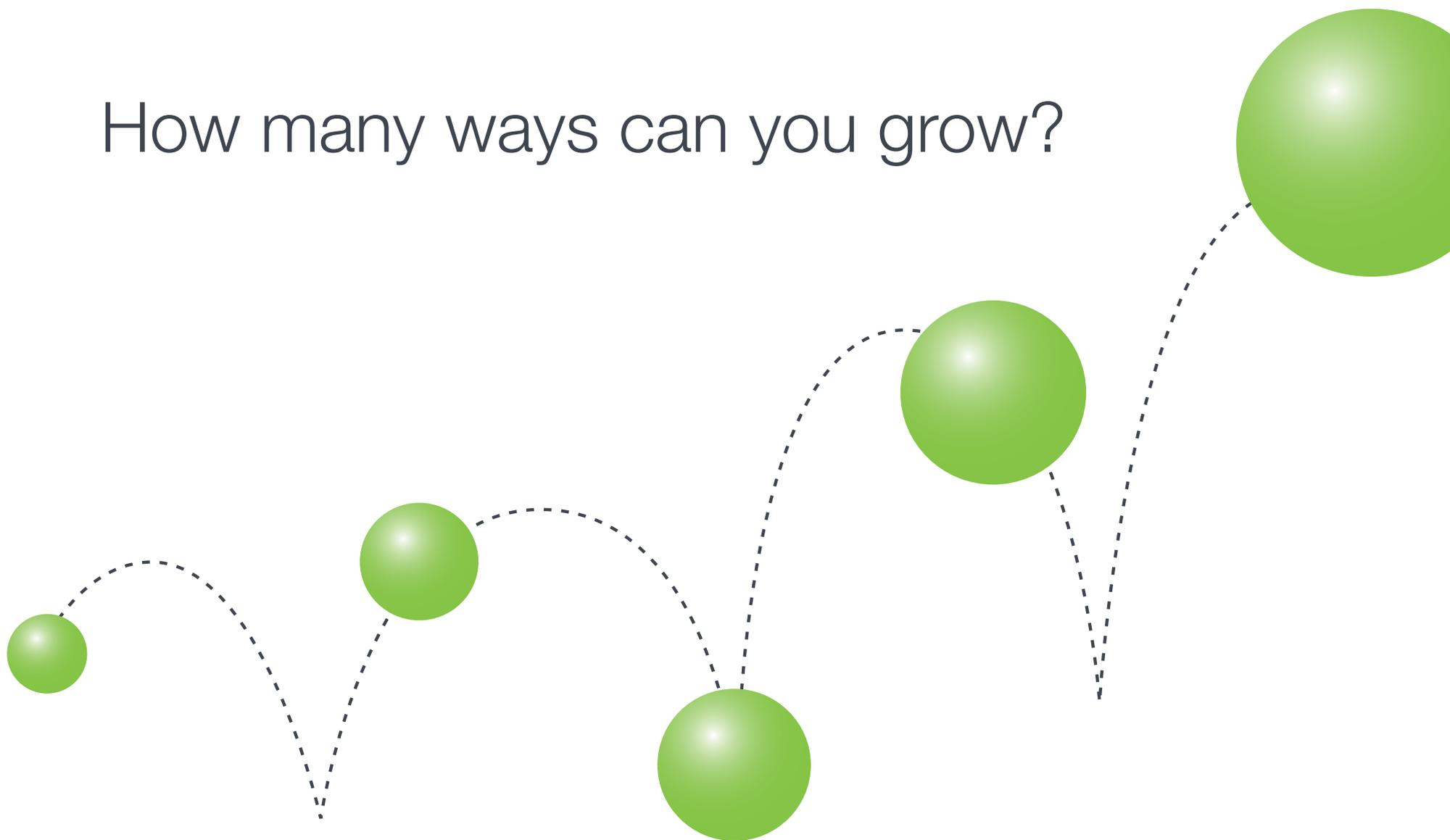
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Teacher of Year: Education 'must be learner-centered'

Iowa's Sarah Brown Wessling uses ed tech to engage students, teach 21st-century skills

From staff and wire reports

Facebook and digital video are among the many technology-based tools that Sarah Brown Wessling uses to engage her students—but even more than that, it was her passion for helping every child succeed and her belief that instruction should be “learner-centered” that led to her selection as the 2010 National Teacher of the Year.

Wessling, a high school English teacher from Iowa, was recognized by President Barack Obama as the nation's

top teacher in an April 29 ceremony in the White House Rose Garden.

“Whether teaching basic writing to at-risk freshmen, or literary theory to Advanced Placement seniors, Sarah writes: ‘I see a story in every learner, unique and yearning to be read.’ That’s why she creates individualized podcasts for each student with extensive feedback on their papers, prompting one parent to report that his own writing had improved just by listening to Sarah’s comments to his daughter,” the president said.

“Her students don’t just write five-para-

graph essays, but they write songs, public service announcements, film story boards, even grant proposals for their own not-for-profit organizations,” he said, adding that one of Wessling’s students reported that learning in her classroom was never boring.

“I’m not sure I could have said that when I was in school,” said Obama.

Wessling teaches 10th- through 12th-graders at Johnston High School in Johnston, Iowa, where she’s worked for a decade.

The Council of Chief State School Officers selects the recipient of the annual

honor and cited Wessling’s passion and innovative approaches, such as incorporating education technology in her classes.

“She is ... passionate about learning in the 21st century, believing that teachers must ‘recognize the importance of teaching that marries content to skill,’ that problem solving and critical thinking are useless without the facts, but the reverse is also true,” the council said.

“She says, ‘Students construct knowledge when it is relevant to them, when they have a real authentic purpose, when they have an audience that gives them context.’ For her students and her fellow teachers, she never loses sight of her goal to create life-long learners and genuine thinkers accustomed to intellectual risk.”

In a blog entry posted on the White House web site, Wessling described her approach to teaching.

“If you were to come into my classroom, the first thing you would notice is that my desk is in the back corner, despite the building design to make it otherwise. This placement is but an outward sign of an implicit philosophy, that teaching must be learner-centered,” she wrote.

“The ‘desk in the back of the room’ displaces hierarchies, creates an environment where a teacher becomes a lead learner, and evolves into a web of interdependence where the classroom walls become boundless. When we embrace this open model of learning, the consumers of our curriculum will become designers of their own learning.”

Later in her blog entry, she wrote: “We need 21st-century teachers, not just adults teaching in the 21st century.”

Obama used the ceremony to speak about the importance of education to a strong democracy, and he also called on parents to do their part to support students at home.

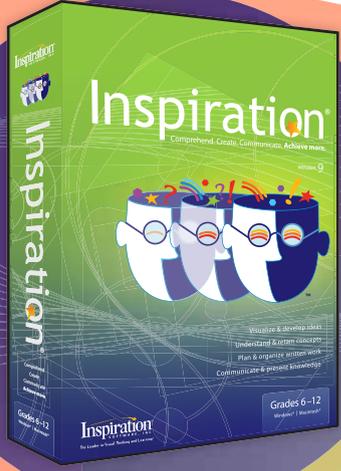
He told Wessling and the teachers representing other states that at a time of state budget shortfalls, “I’m committed to doing every single thing that I can do to support your work.”

“You’re the key to our success in the global economy—preparing our kids to compete at a time when a nation’s most valuable currency is the knowledge and skills of its people,” Obama said to the gathered educators.

Wessling, who accepted a trophy in the form of a glass apple from the president, said later that she and her family had met with Obama in the Oval Office. She said her son was about ready to lose his first tooth and Obama wiggled it.

“Our dream for our students is the same dream we have for our own children—to be recognized for their strengths, to learn from their weaknesses, and to be seen as a person of infinite potential,” she wrote in her blog entry. 

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Supreme Court pick could bode well for education

From staff and wire reports

Elena Kagan, President Barack Obama's pick to fill Justice John Paul Stevens' seat on the Supreme Court, could become a voice for education rights, thanks to her background as an esteemed professor who comes from a family of educators.

Kagan was born in New York City in 1960. Her father was a lawyer and former chairman of a community board on Manhattan's Upper West Side, while her mother taught for many years at Hunter College Elementary School. Her two brothers are also teachers.

"My mother was a proud public school teacher, as are my two brothers—the kind of teachers whom students remember for the rest of their lives," said Kagan during her May 10 nomination.

Said Obama in announcing his selection: "...they instilled in Elena not just the value of a good education, but the importance of using it to serve others."

After receiving a Bachelor of Arts degree from Princeton University, she attended Worcester College, Oxford, until 1983. After Oxford, Kagan attended Harvard Law School and graduated in 1986.

From 1986 to 1987, Kagan clerked for Judge Abner Mikva of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Washington, D.C., Circuit Court. The next year, she clerked for U.S. Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall. She worked as an associate in the Washington, D.C., law firm of Williams & Connolly from 1989 to 1991.

Kagan began her academic career at the University of Chicago Law School, where she became an assistant professor in 1991 and a tenured professor of law in 1995. It was there that she met Obama, who was teaching as an adjunct professor.

From 1995 to 1999, Kagan served in the White House, first as associate counsel to the president and then as a domestic policy aide. She worked on the White House response to the settlement of tobacco lawsuits reached by state attorney generals.

Kagan came to Harvard as a visiting professor and became a law professor in 2001. While on the faculty, she taught administrative law, constitutional law, civil procedure, and seminars on issues involving the separation of powers. She was appointed dean of

the law school in 2003—the first woman to be named to this position. As dean, she revamped the grading system, the curriculum, and made major capital improvements.

Kagan also hired new employees at the law school, including both conservative and liberal scholars.



President Obama introduces Elena Kagan as his Supreme Court nominee.

"...Elena is respected and admired not just for her intellect and record of achievement, but also for her temperament, her openness to a broad array of viewpoints, ... her fair-mindedness and skill as a consensus-builder," said Obama. "And she encouraged students from all backgrounds to respectfully exchange ideas and seek common ground. Because she believes, as I do, that exposure to a broad array of perspectives is the foundation not just for a sound legal education, but of a successful life in the law."

Not much is known about Kagan's judicial philosophy, but as dean of Harvard Law she was instrumental in beefing up the school's Berkman Center for Internet & Society by recruiting Lawrence Lessig and others who take a strong position on "fair use" in copyright disputes.

According to John Palfrey, faculty co-director of the Berkman Center, during

Kagan's six years as dean, she supported, and was deeply involved in, the center's mission and goals.

"She helped recruit faculty and students, was influential in its development, and helped to raise tens of millions of dollars for the center. She was deeply invested in

the government before the Supreme Court.

Though Kagan has never served as a judge, ruled on a case, or written an opinion, supporters say she is more than qualified.

"If there was any concern about her not having been a judge, to some extent that will be undercut by her having been solicitor general, which is often talked about as the '10th justice,'" said Robert Bennett, law professor at Northwestern University. "She's not only an advocate before the Supreme Court, but she's also a confidante of the Supreme Court."

Also, Kagan wouldn't be the first non-judge appointed to the Supreme Court—both the late Chief Justice William Rehnquist and Justice Lewis Powell Jr. were confirmed to the court in 1972 without a judicial background.

"The fact that she has so much practical experience, on a court where it is missing, should be considered an asset," said Sen. Charles Schumer, D-N.Y., Judiciary Committee member. "She has a long record as a consensus builder and is the kind of person who can bridge the 5-4 splits that have become so routine on this court."

While many senators agree with Schumer, some senators are more hesitant about the nomination.

"She has been nominated for a lifetime appointment on the nation's highest court, and we will carefully review her brief litigation experience, as well as her judgment and her career in academia, both as a professor and as an administrator," said Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky.

If confirmed for the seat, Kagan will be the fourth woman ever confirmed to the Supreme Court and the third woman among the current justices. **eSN**

helping promote our research, which focuses on the study of intellectual property and cyber law. She was well-versed on these issues," Palfrey said.

That could help as the High Court grapples with an increasing number of thorny issues in the digital age, such as a case heard earlier this spring that could determine whether public employees have a right to privacy in communications sent and received via a work-issued cell phone (see below).

As Harvard Law School dean, Kagan, with the support of other school deans, said the military's "don't ask, don't tell" rule on gay members of the military violated the schools' antidiscrimination policies. However, the Supreme Court rejected the argument unanimously, upholding a federal law denying federal funds to schools that blocked the military recruiters.

Last year Kagan returned to Washington as solicitor general, the lawyer who repre-

High Court hears text-messaging privacy case

From staff and wire reports

In a case with implications for public schools and colleges, the U.S. Supreme Court appears likely to rule against public employees who claimed a local government violated their right to privacy by reading racy text messages they sent through their employers' account.

Several justices said April 19 that the employer, the Ontario, Calif., police department, acted reasonably in monitoring the text messages in view of its written policy warning employees they have no guarantee of privacy in the use of office computer and electronics equipment.

Justice Stephen Breyer said he didn't see "anything, quite honestly, unreasonable about that."

While the case involves government workers, the decision could have broad-

er privacy implications as courts continue to sort out privacy issues in the digital age. Many employers tell workers there is no guarantee of privacy in any communications sent over their company- or government-provided computers, cell phones, or pagers.

The case arose when the Ontario police department decided to audit text-message usage to see whether its SWAT team officers were using their accounts too often for personal reasons. Three police officers and another employee complained that the department improperly snooped on their electronic exchanges, including many that were said to be sexually explicit.

An Ontario police official earlier had informally told officers that no one would look further if officers personally paid for charges above a monthly allowance.

The 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in San Francisco said the informal policy was enough to give the officers a "reasonable expectation of privacy" in their text messages and establish that their constitutional rights had been violated.

The Obama administration is backing the city, arguing that the written policy, not any informal warning, is what matters. More broadly, Justice Department lawyer Neal Katyal said, the appeals court ruling calls into question policies put in place by governments across the country. "Thousands of employers rely on these policies, and millions of employees," he said.

Justice Sonia Sotomayor wondered whether the reason for looking at the messages mattered. "Let's assume ... one of the chiefs, out of salacious interest, decides: I'm going to just go in and

get those texts, those messages, because I just have a prurient interest," she said.

It wouldn't matter, said Kent Richland, the city's lawyer, and Justice Antonin Scalia agreed.

Chief Justice John Roberts was alone in asking questions that suggested he might side with the officers. Roberts said the department might have allowed officers to black out any messages they were willing to pay for, providing an accurate picture of text-message usage without compromising privacy.

The case also displayed the limits on the justices' mastery of modern communications devices, as Roberts tried to figure out the role of the text-messaging service in enabling an exchange between two people.

The case is *City of Ontario v. Quon*, 08-1332. A decision is expected later this year.

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Microsoft, ePals team up on collaborative tools

Dennis Pierce
Editor

In a move that could spur more widespread use of online tools for communicating and collaborating within K-12 education, software giant Microsoft Corp. has announced a strategic partnership with ePals, which provides a safe online platform for teachers and students to share information and work together on projects.

Under the terms of the alliance, ePals this fall will add Microsoft's Live@edu eMail and calendaring software to the services it already provides for some 600,000 educators in 200 countries through its ePals Learning Space platform.

Sometime early next year, ePals users also will have access to the web-based versions of Microsoft Office programs such as Word, Excel, and PowerPoint within the ePals Learning Space, the companies say.

The deal seems to make sense for both companies, and it could benefit schools as well.

ePals customers will be able to take advantage of popular productivity software and can access their Word documents and other files—all from within a single, shared, and secure learning environment.

"Students and teachers have wanted their documents to reside seamlessly alongside them," said ePals co-founder Tim DiScipio.

He added that his company's partnership with Microsoft is "a real solution to eliminate ... web sprawl," which occurs when internet users' documents are hosted across multiple platforms and systems.

For Microsoft, the deal helps it address several key concerns—such as security—that have kept some educators from using "cloud-based" software, which is hosted on a company's servers and delivered to users via the internet.

"ePals will help take us to the next level [in making] the cloud come alive in a learning scenario," said Anthony Salcito, vice president of worldwide education for Microsoft.

The idea behind the partnership, Salcito said, is that "schools aren't risking their safety and security, or compromising on the kind of software they're using, when they're using the cloud."

Integrating Microsoft software into the ePals Learning Space will involve adding the kinds of policy-management tools to these applications that have made ePals so popular among educators, the two companies said. These tools let educators define features such as document workflow and permissions, giving them more control over the educational environment.

For instance, a teacher using the online version of Microsoft Word within the ePals Learning Space could set up a policy rule specifying that when a document is created, it should be routed automatically to another student for his or her peer review, then passed along to the teacher for grading. Or, the teacher could specify that he or she must review any documents before they can be eMailed or shared with another class across the globe.

Adding these kinds of policy-management capabilities to Microsoft's ubiquitous productivity software could facilitate communication and collaboration in K-12 classrooms dramatically, DiScipio said.

He estimated that fewer than 10 percent of schools in the United States have given their students tools for communicating and collaborating online—but that could change if educators and students are able to store and share online resources more securely and efficiently.

And that, in turn, could help foster the kinds of 21st-century skills that today's employers say they're looking for when hiring. It also could help increase the amount of writing that students do in class.

DiScipio said he has heard from several ePals customers who say their students are writing much more often now that they're using collaborative tools in their classes. "This is one of the truly amazing bi-products" of implementing a digital collaborative environment in education, he said.

The ePals Learning Space provides safe virtual workspaces for schools that include eMail, blogs, wikis, shared portfolios, media galleries, and language translation in 35 languages.

Live@edu is a free suite of online tools, based on the familiar Office applications many people use today, that give users access to information anytime, anywhere, from any desktop, laptop, major web browser, or mobile device. Live@edu is Microsoft's answer to Google Apps for Education, and its partnership with ePals could give Microsoft a boost in its competition with Google for school users of web applications.

Integrating Live@edu into its platform will bring additional capabilities to ePals' SchoolMail and other services, ePals says—such as a familiar Outlook interface on both mobile phones and computers. **eSN**



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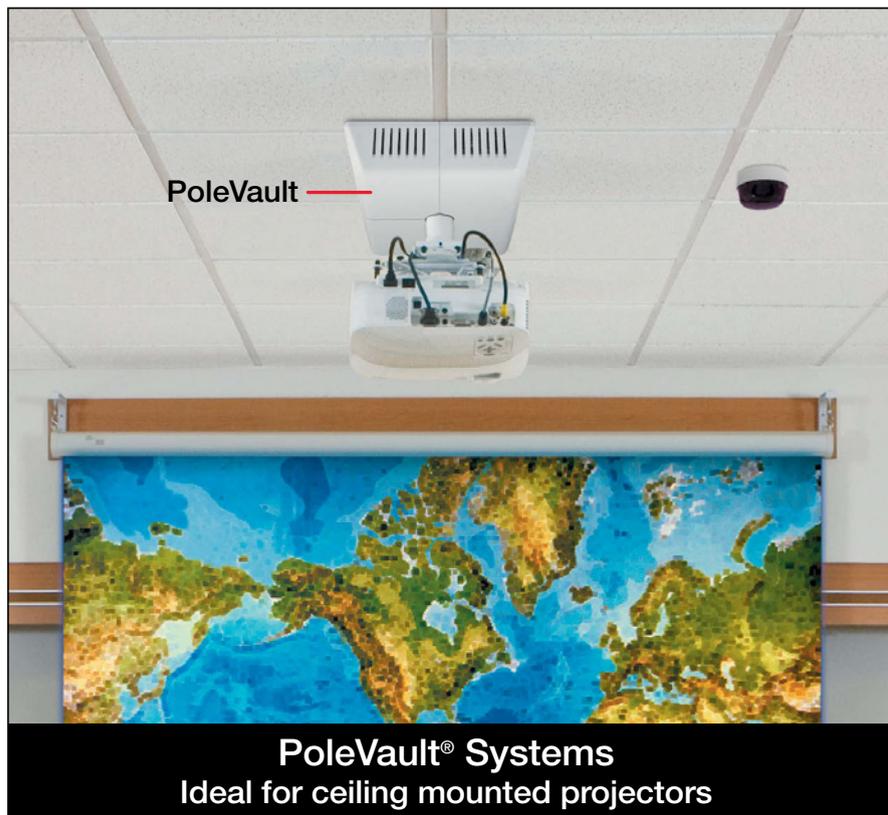
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Report: Lax policies, but no ill intent in webcam spying

From staff and wire reports

Despite its questionable policies and its lack of regard for students' privacy, there is no evidence a suburban Pennsylvania school district used school-issued laptops to spy on students, according to a report issued May 3.

The report was produced by attorneys hired by the district, and it was unclear as of press time what effect it might have on the outcome of the lawsuit.

Concerns about an online chat captured in a screen shot of a school-issued computer led to public disclosure of the Lower Merion School District's laptop

tracking program, according to the report by the Philadelphia law firm Ballard Spahr. The firm recommended a ban on remote activations of webcams and remote capturing of screen shots from computers issued to students.

Harrilton High School student Blake Robbins and his family alleged privacy violations over webcam images taken at home without their knowledge and sued the district, which said it secretly activated the webcams only to find missing laptops but admitted lax policies led it to capture 58,000 images.

The report says Robbins turned in his laptop with a broken screen and was issued

a loaner on Oct. 20, but school officials quickly moved to retrieve it because of outstanding insurance fees. The tracking program was activated on the borrowed computer from Oct. 20 to Nov. 4 and captured 210 webcam photographs and 218 screen shots, the report said.

Although a technician confirmed on the first day of tracking that the laptop was "now currently online at home," another official in the same department instructed him to keep the tracking on and later told investigators he thought he needed authorization to terminate it, the report said.

On Oct. 30, the report said, a technician saw a computer screen shot that "in-

cluded an online chat that concerned him." After consulting with a superior, he allowed school officials to look at the images.

Although the school principal said none of the images should be discussed with Robbins or his parents because they involved off-campus activities, Vice Principal Lindy Matsko decided about a week later it was "appropriate to discuss certain seemingly troubling images" with them, the report said.

In the civil lawsuit, Robbins said Matsko approached him and warned that school officials, based on webcam photos, suspected him of selling drugs. Robbins, 15, denies the drug allegation and said Matsko mistook candies for illicit pills.

Robbins family attorney Mark Haltzman told reporters he and his clients were "thankful that we've been vindicated ... about all the misuse going on," but added he was concerned that the full story had not yet been revealed.

The report says the LANrev TheftTrack system was activated 177 times during the 2008-09 and 2009-10 school years, but 101 activations involved only the IP address tracking feature and resulted in no captured images.

As of Feb. 23, when the program was shut down, there were 30,564 webcam photographs and 27,428 screen shots in the systems of the district's Information Services department. About 87 percent of the images recovered, however, resulted from failure to deactivate the features on a dozen laptops after they were found or recovered, the report said.

The collection of images stemmed not from an effort to spy on students but from "the district's failure to implement policies, procedures, and record-keeping requirements and the overzealous and questionable use of technology by IS personnel without any apparent regard for privacy considerations or sufficient consultation with administrators," the report said.

It criticized district leaders and several members of the IS department as "not forthcoming with the board, administrators, and students about what TheftTrack could do and how they used it," citing incidents demonstrating "an unwillingness ... to let anyone outside of the IS department know about TheftTrack's capabilities."

Many of the photos show students in school, and others show walls or empty rooms. Others, however, show students and family members or other people in their homes and elsewhere, but none contained nudity.

The report said the tracking system was intended to help recover stolen computers and the district used it successfully for that purpose. But it said the district also used the system for missing computers and for unknown purposes and left it activated for long periods in cases "in which there was no longer any possible legitimate reason" for capturing images. eSN

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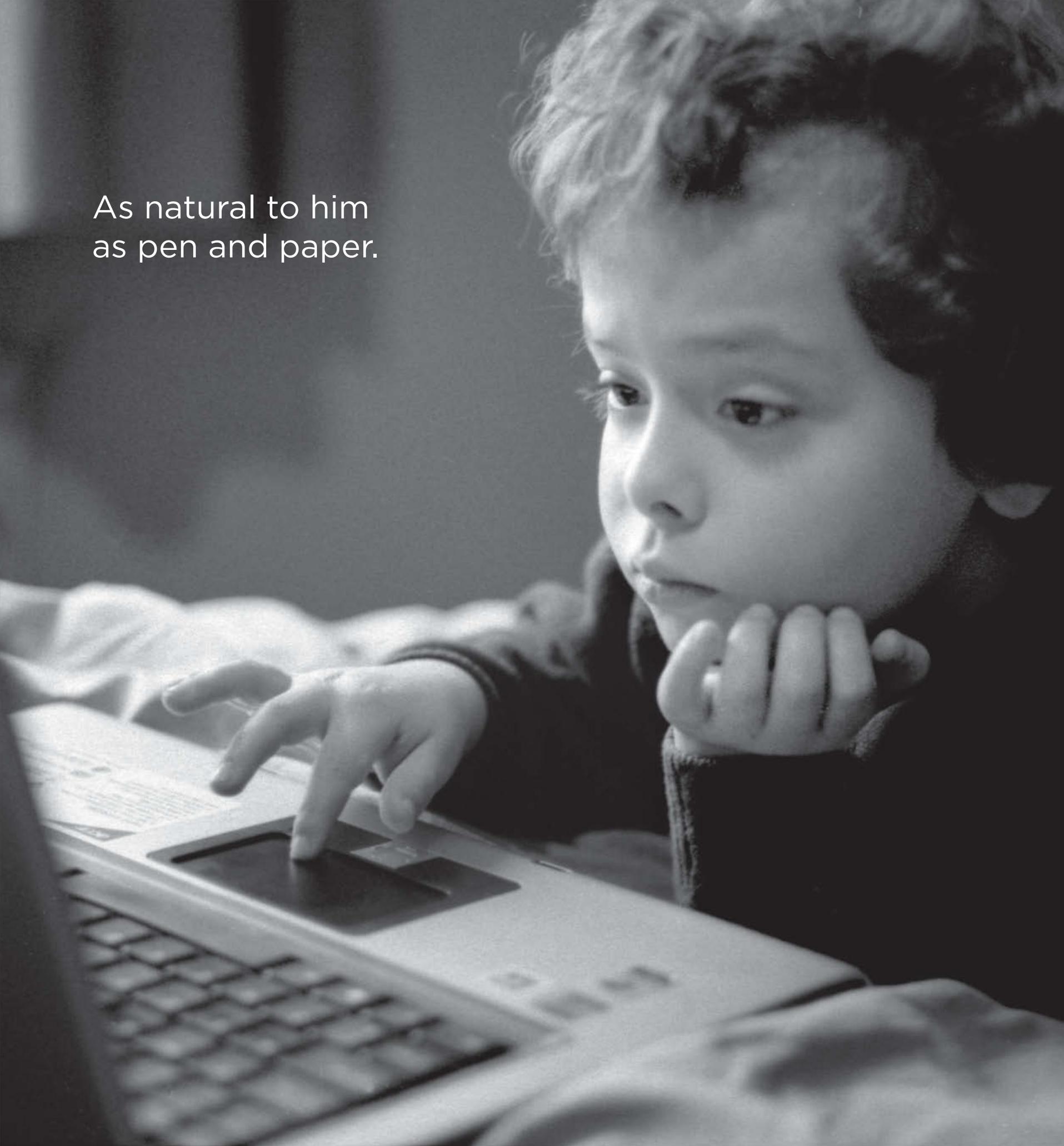
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Augmented reality takes hold in K-12 classrooms

Laura Devaney
Managing Editor

A small but growing number of schools across the nation are turning classroom lessons into engaging experiences with augmented reality (AR), a technology that overlays digital information on top of real-world surroundings as viewed through a smart phone or other handheld, GPS-enabled device.

AR differs from virtual reality in that while virtual reality aims to replace a person's perception of the world with an artificial world, augmented reality enhances a person's perception of his or her surroundings. The Augmented Reality Development

Lab (ARDL), from virtual reality developer Digital Tech Frontier, lets users display relevant information at the appropriate time and location during an AR experience, which results in virtual 3D objects appearing in the real world.

Students and teachers look through a viewing device or at a monitor to see virtual objects such as planets, volcanoes, the human heart, or dinosaurs embedded within their real-world environment—and they can interact with and manipulate those objects to receive associated information.

Debra Sloan, an educator with Forest Heights Middle School's Eagle Environmental and Spatial Technology

(EAST) program in Little Rock, Ark., uses the ARDL in the school's project-based service learning class.

"AR raises the level of interaction for the students," Sloan said. Students in the EAST program have created a virtual tour of the Clinton Library and are working to integrate AR technology into the tour. Also in the works are a map of the school for new students and a local hospital tour.

The ARDL interface has pre-built education modules for science, math, art, and social studies, as well as a module builder for building new software. The system lets students and teachers build programs, examples, and curricula using augmented re-

ality. Students and teachers also can network and share the modules they've created with other students and schools.

"ARDL is such a nice direction to go ... in incorporating technology in the classroom," Sloan said, adding that students "love more than just sitting and watching things happen."

Ed-tech advocates say AR can help students with spatial and temporal concepts, can facilitate interaction, and appeals to kinesthetic learners.

"The nice thing about augmented reality is that it can bring anything to life," said Scott Jochim, creative director at Digital Tech Frontier. "All you need is a simple Google SketchUp model, or a more complex 3ds Max model if you so desire. Attach simple attributes, and presto—you and your students are engaged in an augmented reality educational experience." (3ds Max is three-dimensional modeling and rendering software from Autodesk; SketchUp is a free 3D modeling program from Google.)

Jochim said the ARDL was created in part to respond to the challenge that lecture-based learning does not affect students in the same way that technology-infused learning experiences can.

Using Google SketchUp or Google's 3D Warehouse—a collection of free 3D models that users are adding to daily—educators can create or find 3D images of any item for classroom use and manipulation.

The ARDL retails for \$2,100, which includes a 20-seat license. Jochim said additional fee-based curriculum tools will be available soon as well, but purchasing those will not be necessary to operate the ARDL.

In April, Qualcomm's Wireless Reach Initiative, together with San Diego's School in the Park program and the San Diego Museum of Art, launched a project that gives San Diego elementary school students the opportunity to learn about art with AR.

"In its simplest form, augmented reality is an effort to merge the physical and virtual worlds," said Patrick O'Shea, director of the Handheld Augmented Reality Project (HARP) at Harvard University. O'Shea collaborated on the School in the Park program with San Diego officials.

The program lets students explore Asian art and folktales using AR experiences to enhance learning.

Students use the Samsung Moment, a Google Android smart phone, along with Layar, an AR browser that overlays data using the smart phone as a viewfinder. As a student approaches a sculpture or another work of art, information might pop up on the student's smart phone that explains the history behind that piece, for example.

"Of course, there's a learning curve that goes along with any new technology, but the thing that's really promising about this type of experience is how engaging it is for students," O'Shea said. "Anything that engages students is a net benefit in the long run." 

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Free online curriculum expanding to middle grades

SAS Curriculum Pathways soon will be available for students as young as sixth grade

From staff and wire reports

An online instructional resource for students in grades 8-12 that has been available to schools free of charge since December 2008 soon will include content for sixth and seventh graders as well.

SAS Curriculum Pathways, from North Carolina-based SAS Institute, a leading maker of business analytics software, provides web-based lessons and activities in the core subjects of English, math, social studies, science, and Spanish.

Lessons take an inquiry-based approach

that is intended to develop students' higher-order thinking skills. The educational software has won a CODiE Award from the Software and Information Industry Association for best K-12 instructional solution overall in 2008 and best instructional solution for English in 2009, and it's a CODiE Award finalist this year in math.

SAS has invested roughly \$75 million in the development of Curriculum Pathways over the last 11 years, said company spokesman Trent Smith. But "we decided even a minimal charge was a barrier to adoption—so we removed it," he said.

"Shrinking budgets and pricing structures should not stand in the way of America's students receiving education technology that will engage them and better prepare them for today's work force," said CEO Jim Goodnight in announcing the software giveaway a year and a half ago.

Bruce Friend, director of SAS Curriculum Pathways, said the online resource would include content reaching down



SAS Curriculum Pathways

to the sixth-grade level—aligned with educational standards—by the end of the year. The company also will focus on ramping up lessons in the STEM fields, he said.

Curriculum Pathways' professionally developed lesson plans, simulations, and interactive activities utilize a "blended" learning model, Friend said, adding: "We're not an online course, but we can help teachers [supplement] their lesson plans."

Jo Anne Hudson, a middle school math teacher in California's Poway Unified School District, has used Curriculum Pathways at her school for the past three years and said the program offers effective learning tools.

"The lesson plans they provide are very well thought out and planned. They're exactly like the plans I would make if I had the time to create them myself," she said.

Hudson said she has seen some increase in her students' test scores after using the lessons, but much of their improvement is seen in things that can't be quantified.

"I've noticed that when students use the [interactive activities] in certain subjects, their unit scores and their state scores are better in those areas. Plus, it gives them more confidence going into any testing situation," she said.

Hudson noted that she has altered the Curriculum Pathways materials that are designed for use in high schools to meet the needs of her middle-school students.

"I'm a middle school teacher [who has] been using curriculum that's mainly written for high schoolers, but they are piloting a middle school package that would fit what we do even better," she said.

Centennial Campus Magnet Middle School is one of the schools that piloted the middle school curriculum, although the school has used Curriculum Pathways since it began its one-to-one laptop program with eighth graders in 2007.

"It fits the curriculum. We're still able to teach the standard course of study, [but Curriculum Pathways] has engaging lessons," said George Ward, lead teacher at Centennial.

SAS Curriculum Pathways is now used by 8,100 schools and more than 41,000 educators, Friend said. 



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Free tool lets students participate during class

Microsoft offers what it calls a no-cost alternative to student response system software

From staff reports

Joining in the effort to keep students engaged in the classroom, Microsoft on April 30 announced a new addition to its PowerPoint software that allows up to 25 students at a time to participate in classroom presentations. The best news: It's available free of charge.

The new tool, called Mouse Mischief, allows teachers using a Windows-based computer to add multiple choice, yes/no, and drawing questions to their presentations. Students then use any computer mice

or input devices to answer these questions. The tool also allows for whole-class or individual student responses.

"We've observed classrooms around the world, and it's a no-brainer that technology has the power to engage students—but not every classroom has the budget to afford new technology," said Nasha Fitter, senior product manager for Microsoft, in an interview with eSchool News.

"We've also observed that many teachers use and feel comfortable with PowerPoint. By making Mouse Mischief free and easy to use through any mouse, we're cutting

down costs while helping to make learning engaging for today's students."

After Mouse Mischief is installed (teachers can download the application at <http://www.microsoft.com/multipoint/mouse-mischief>), the Mouse Mischief toolbar will appear as part of the PowerPoint ribbon when a new or old PowerPoint presentation is opened. The toolbar lets teachers add interactive elements, such as multiple-choice question slides, with a single click.

Once the students have selected their answers, the teacher can display the correct

answer. The tool also calculates the percentage of students who answered the question correctly; if a teacher sees that, say, only 20 percent of students got the correct answer, perhaps the students need more time or a different way to learn the concept.

"Since no one can tell whose cursor is whose up on the presentation, this tool can really help shy students, too," said Fitter.

Because Mouse Mischief allows for the whole class to participate in answering questions, teachers might find it difficult to ask an individual student to answer a question with multiple cursors on the screen.

However, according to Microsoft, one teacher already has figured out how to isolate individual student answers on screen.

"It's called a parking lot," explained Fitter. "What this means is that as part of the PowerPoint slide, a square that resembles a parking lot is added in. The teacher then asks all the students to place their cursors inside of the parking lot. When a specific student is called [on] to answer a question, [that student] can take [his or her] cursor out of the parking lot."

Special teacher controls also allow instructors to disable students' mouse cursors, navigate between slides, set timers, and more.

The idea of the parking lot, advice on how to use the application, and many other resources will be available to teachers using Mouse Mischief. Microsoft enlisted the help of an expert from Teach for America to create 25 PowerPoint question templates, which can be viewed and used by the teaching community during classes.

"We really wanted this to be a community of sharing," said Fitter.

One eSchool News reader had this to say in reaction to Microsoft's announcement: "Microsoft bills this as a replacement for student response systems, but there is one huge problem with that. With SRS, no one knows [how] anyone else answers. ... With this, people will soon figure out the 'smart kid's' cursor image and will click the same answer she [or] he clicks every time. That's not a formative assessment of [whether] they're getting it, that's a formative assessment of how fast they can figure out which cursor belongs to whom."

Responding to this concern, Microsoft said: "It's a valid concern, but when you get a chance to use Mouse Mischief, you'll quickly see that the teacher can initiate a new session each time, making it quite impossible for kids to know who the 'smart kids' are. Each session [generates] new mouse icons."

As of press time, there have been 1,200 downloads of the beta Mouse Mischief software by teachers. Some 200 schools participated in Mouse Mischief's beta research phase before the launch to help make the tool as efficient and easy to use as possible, Microsoft said. 

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Solar power making a comeback among schools

'Green' movements and rising energy costs have districts considering renewable energy sources

Laura Devaney
Managing Editor

Web surfers requesting a Google Earth view of the Athenian School in Danville, Calif., are greeted with an image of what school officials call the "solar A"—a mass of 1,300 solar panels on a hillside near the school, and a testament to the nation's renewed interest in sustainable energy resources and solar power to cut school energy bills.

Solar energy proponents say an increased focus on "green" lifestyles and practices has helped place the technology once again near the forefront of school energy practices.

While solar power is not a new idea, it gained momentum during the energy crisis of the 1970s, which led to tax incentives for solar power. Once fuel prices stabilized, however, tax incentives disappeared. But now, with an uncertain economy, rising fuel prices, and deep cuts to education, solar power once again holds attractive benefits for school districts.

The Athenian School's system—1,300 panels sit above the school's baseball field—supplies 50 percent of the school's power needs, said Bob Oxenburgh, Athenian's director of facilities.

The California Solar Initiative covered one-third of the installation cost, Oxenburgh said, and the school partnered with a solar installation company to construct the system. California-based Tioga Energy owns the installation, which sits on the Athenian School's property, and Tioga Energy recoups its investment by selling power directly to the school in what is known as a power pur-

chase agreement (PPA).

The Athenian School signed an agreement to initiate the solar energy program with Tioga Energy and REC Solar in August 2008, and on Dec. 10, 2008, the system generated its first power.

State incentives and tax credits help immensely in a solar power installation, Oxenburgh said, because the actual systems are very expensive. Oxenburgh said surrounding schools and districts with plans for solar installation have toured the school for more information about the installation process.

And while the Athenian School has no plans to build additional buildings for quite some time, Oxenburgh said solar power will be a part of any future construction.

"We would not construct anything without most of [the power] being supplied by renewable energy; that's the only thing that makes sense," he said. "We want to get off the grid as much as we can."

Five New Jersey school districts in the state's Morris County—Boonton, Mountain Lakes, Parsippany-Troy Hills, West Morris Regional, and Morris Hills Regional—have entered into a program with Tioga Energy and SunDurance Energy, a New Jersey solar development team.

Fourteen schools will have solar panels installed on their roofs, and Morris County official William Chegwiddden said the participating districts will pay 35 percent less for power from the solar systems in the first year of the program than they would pay for utility-provided power.

Boonton School Superintendent Christine Johnson predicted a \$16,000 savings and a 36-percent reduction in energy consumption in the first year of the program. Johnson said savings could reach \$25,000 per year as the program progresses.

Tioga Energy and SunDurance Energy will oversee the design, installation, operation, and maintenance of the solar equipment, which will reside on the schools' roofs. Morris County will purchase its solar-produced electricity at a fixed price through a 15-year PPA with Tioga Energy.

"Through this program, our participating schools will be able to significantly cut their energy bills without incurring any direct out-of-pocket expenses," Chegwiddden said.

Roughly 17 percent of the schools' electricity requirements will come from the solar energy systems.

The program has been dubbed the "Morris Model," and county officials said other school districts in the state have expressed interest in replicating the solar power installation.

Burton Valley Elementary School and Stanley Middle School in California's Lafayette School District each installed 131-kilowatt solar power systems, which supply enough clean energy to reduce the schools' energy bills by up to 60 percent.

In December, California's Lafayette School District unveiled new solar systems at four schools under projects developed through two separate PPAs with Tioga Energy and Solar Monkey.

The systems at Burton Valley Elementary School and Stanley Middle School are provided through PPAs from Tioga Energy and Solar Monkey. Lafayette Middle School's 76-kilowatt system and Springhill Elementary's 100-kilowatt system are provided through PPAs directly from Solar Monkey.

All four rooftop installations combined will reduce the amount of electricity the district must purchase from its utility company by an estimated 40 to 60 percent.

Fred Brill, the district's superintendent, said that schools are well-suited for solar power both in design and in the educational opportunities that solar power presents for students.

"Schools are an excellent place for solar," he said. "Our electric rates, consumption patterns, and facilities are ideally suited to maximize the potential benefits solar can deliver. And by showing solar in action, schools educate the community and students about the benefits of this clean and renewable energy source."

And schools are quick to realize the financial benefits of solar power, despite an often daunting initial cost.

"It's the high upfront costs that have historically stood in the way of making solar a reality for schools," Brill noted. But PPAs, in which power companies finance the construction of solar panels and sell the energy back to the participating schools, can help solve this problem.

California's Irvine Unified School District (IUSD) will partner with SPG Solar and SunEdison to install solar energy systems on 21 of its facilities, including schools and administrative buildings.

The solar program, which will be implemented throughout 2010, is expected to generate 6.6 million kilowatt-hours of clean renewable energy per year and save the district



The Athenian School's 1,300 solar panels form an 'A.'

more than \$17 million over 20 years.

When the project is completed, more than 44 percent of electricity for the 21 sites should be generated by solar power. This is expected to reduce IUSD's total energy costs by approximately 10 percent each year. Environmental Protection Agency estimates note that IUSD's solar systems will prevent nearly 127 million pounds of carbon dioxide from being released into the atmosphere over the next 20 years—equivalent to removing 12,000 cars from California roads per year.

Legal support for solar initiatives

On April 1, U.S. Rep. Gabrielle Giffords, D-Ariz., introduced the Solar Schools Act, a bill that would make it more affordable for schools nationwide to install solar power systems.

Currently, government institutions—including school districts—can develop solar energy in one of two ways: through an agreement with a solar installer who maintains ownership of the panels and who can claim an investment tax credit, or by financing the purchase of the solar system through tax-exempt bonds.

If school districts were able to combine both approaches, financing a solar installation through tax-exempt bonds and claiming the investment tax credit, it would make clean renewable energy much more affordable, Giffords says.

The Solar Schools Act would allow schools to use proceeds from tax-exempt bonds to enter into pre-paid contracts for renewable energy. Publicly owned utilities already are granted just such an exemption to enter into similar contracting agreements. The act would extend that exemption to local government entities.

Giffords announced the new bill at La Cima Middle School in Arizona, where a solar power system was installed in February 2008. The 54 panels in the system generate approximately 15,000 kilowatt hours per year—enough energy to power 1.5 average-size homes. The system reportedly saves the release of 10 tons of carbon dioxide emissions per year. **ESN**

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New site is like Facebook, but for learning

Grockit combines social networking and studying in what could be the future of education

Laura Devaney
Managing Editor

Aiming to engage students who are multitasking with different forms of technology, a new company called Grockit has created a collaborative learning space online where students can help one another solve homework problems and study—all while building 21st-century skills.

Grockit currently offers test-prep services and is expanding its focus to include math and English for students in grades 8-12, with history and science soon to follow. Grockit also has opened enrollment for a free Summer Enrichment Academy, designed to keep students from falling behind during summer vacation as they participate in collaborative group study forums online.

Grockit's appeal lies not only in the fact that academic support from peers is free, but also in that students are motivated to learn through the company's social-networking and gaming platform, said Grockit CEO Farb Nivi. As online social networking becomes a ubiquitous aspect of youth culture, sites such as Grockit could represent the future of education technology.

"We have a social responsibility to create technology and tools that can help kids leverage other students," Nivi said. "Other than the initial investment you make in technology or a tool, you don't really have to spend any more to get more learning. Having teachers around costs money. But students can help each other just as much, or more—and they can do it for free."

With Grockit, students can practice with, learn from, and compete with millions of their peers in the subjects of their choice using live chat services. Students also can earn points and recognition for their achievements, including how helpful they are to their peers; their status is shown to the Grockit community, which can motivate students to excel even further.

Florida Virtual School (FLVS) completed an initial pilot of Grockit's platform with FLVS's own content for Algebra I students and eight teachers, and the online school now will expand the pilot to incorporate some of Grockit's content.

"The social gaming dynamic is really what interested me," said Jeramy Gatz, an FLVS innovation manager on the curriculum research and discovery team. Gatz's team identifies new and emerging technologies and explores those technologies to see whether they might benefit FLVS students.

"Because of that social factor, the power in it isn't just answering a question—it's that positive peer influence on learning," Gatz said.

Gatz said he and his team noticed that students who used the Grockit study spaces had a higher tendency to come back and collaborate further with peers.

Logging onto Grockit just a few hours a week during the summer can help stu-

dents bridge the gap between school years, so that come September they are ready to build upon last school year's lessons with little review, Nivi said.

Nivi said estimates point to a 25-percent learning loss during summer vacation. And Grockit's social networking structure ensures that students will always find peers to collaborate and learn with online.

"If you look at our SAT networks, there is live group collaboration occurring almost 24 hours a day," Nivi said.

Collaborative learning and group study on the site is free, and parents can pay \$79

for additional information and data specific to their child. The program uses the same IRT algorithms as actual standardized tests to adapt instruction to each individual student's strengths and weaknesses.

"There's so much power in platforms [that are similar to] Facebook," Gatz said. "Facebook [is] really the space where the students are, and engaging in those areas is definitely the right place to go, because they bring the students in and make learning more powerful."

The gaming aspect attracts students as well, he said.

"Being able to know that a student can participate in this fun, competitive environment with very low risk" is appealing, Gatz said.

"I feel that gaming in general has a positive impact, as long as it's applied in the right way. Social games have a lot more power, because they allow people to connect to one another and solve things collaboratively."

He added: "At the core, they've made studying for tests a fun social activity. It's not about getting a right answer—it's about being able to help each other." **eSN**



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HP buys Palm in \$1.2 billion deal

Palm Inc., a pioneer in the smart-phone business that couldn't quite make the comeback it needed, has agreed to be bought out by Hewlett-Packard Co. for about \$1.2 billion in cash.

Palm was founded in 1992 and helped originate the handheld computing market with its Palm Pilot "personal digital assistants" in the 1990s. But in recent years, as handheld computers morphed into "smart phones," Palm struggled to keep up as consumers flocked to such devices as Apple's

iPhone and Research In Motion's BlackBerry. In the past year, phones that use Google's Android operating software have added new competition.

Palm got itself into position for a turnaround last June, when it released a sleek touch-screen smart phone called the Pre and fresh operating software for it that won good reviews. But consumers were slow to embrace the Pre and its newer, smaller sibling, the Pixi. In the most recent quarter, Palm sold just 408,000 phones; in its last quarter, Apple sold 8.75 million iPhones.

HP hopes Palm's webOS operating system, which runs the Pre and the Pixi, will

help it participate more aggressively in the fast-growing market for internet-connected mobile devices. Known for its printers and PCs, HP also has a line of phones called the iPAQ. But it had one-tenth of 1 percent of the worldwide cell-phone market last year, according to IDC—shipping just 100,000 units.

During a conference call with analysts to discuss the acquisition, Todd Bradley, executive vice president for HP's personal systems group, said that HP plans to invest "heavily" in developing Palm-based products. He pledged to build the business to reach "more customers in more countries

on more products than Palm could do on its own."

Bradley also said that HP is interested in using Palm's technology for mobile devices besides smart phones, such as tablet computers. That could give HP's tablets a better chance of competing with Apple's new iPad. It also could give HP a leg up as other computer makers, such as Dell, enter the smart-phone arena.

McAfee antivirus program freezes school PCs

Computers in schools, companies, and hospitals around the world got stuck repeatedly rebooting themselves recently after an antivirus program identified a normal Windows file as a virus.

McAfee Inc. confirmed that a software update it posted at 9 a.m. Eastern time on April 21 caused its antivirus program for enterprise customers to misidentify a harmless file. It has posted a replacement update for download.

McAfee could not say how many computers were affected, but judging by online postings, the number was at least in the thousands and possibly in the hundreds of thousands. McAfee said it was investigating how the error happened "and will take measures" to prevent it from recurring.

Peter Juvinall, systems administrator at Illinois State University in Normal, said that when the first computer started rebooting, it quickly became evident that it was a major problem, affecting dozens of computers at the College of Business alone.

"I originally thought it was a virus," he said. When the university's tech-support staff concluded McAfee's update was to blame, they stopped further downloads of the faulty software update and started shuttling from computer to computer to get the machines working again.

It's not uncommon for antivirus programs to misidentify legitimate files as viruses. However, the scale of this outage was unusual, said Mike Rothman, president of computer security firm Securosis. He added: "It looks to be a train wreck."

McAfee on April 26 said it would reimburse "reasonable expenses" that were incurred as a result of the problem. The company also said those whose computers were rendered inoperable or severely impaired would be eligible for a free, two-year extension of their existing McAfee subscription.

Facebook's expansion triggers political backlash

Facebook needs to make it easier for its 400 million users to protect their privacy as the site opens more avenues for users to share their interests and other personal information, four U.S. senators said in a letter April 27.

Having built one of the web's most popular hangouts, Facebook is now trying to extend its reach through new tools called "social plug-ins." These enable Facebook's users to share their interests in such products as clothes, movies, and music on other web sites.

Facebook says this will help personalize the web for people. It stresses that no

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personal information is being given to the dozens of web sites using the new plug-ins. Still, it means that information that hadn't been previously communicated could get broadcast to users' friends and family on Facebook.

Facebook users who don't want to be part of the company's expansion have to go through their privacy settings and change their preferences. Sen. Charles Schumer, D-N.Y., thinks the onus instead should be on Facebook to get users' explicit consent, a process known as "opting in."

Facebook has "assumed all ... users want their information to be given far and wide, which is a false assumption," Schumer said in an interview with the Associated Press. He sent a letter calling for simpler privacy controls to Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg. The letter was co-signed by Sens. Michael Bennet, D-Colo; Mark Begich, D-Alaska; and Al Franken, D-Minn.

The political pressure could undermine Facebook's ambition to create a more social, open web that could make it easier to aim online advertising at consumers based on their presumed interests.

If Facebook's plans pan out, it could change the way people think of social networking. Instead of communicating on a closed web site, Facebook's users could interact with one another over the entire web. More sharing could spawn more customized web sites that look different to each person visiting, depending on their friends and preferences.

While Zuckerberg has likened his vision to an online nirvana, critics see another hole in the crumbling walls of online privacy.

Facebook is moving from being a social network about sharing with friends "to a service that is about collecting and sharing information about you with advertisers so they can more closely tailor ads to you," said Ginger McCall, staff counsel at the Washington-based Electronic Privacy Information Center.

Google tunes up internet search results

Google Inc. is fine-tuning the way it presents its internet search results to make it easier for people to find information and images they want.

The most noticeable changes will occur to the left of Google's search results. That area will offer more tools for reshuffling search results into specific categories, such as news, images, blogs, and video. The new alternatives also will open more doors to other possible topics of interest.

The changes are part of the incessant tinkering that Google does to maintain its commanding lead in the internet's lucrative search market. The company says it made about 550 revisions to its search engine last year alone, mostly tweaks to its closely guarded formulas for deciding which results and ads to display after processing a search request.

The latest changes are designed to encourage people to whittle Google's results more frequently.

Here's an example of how the new system might work: A search request about a scientific theory might cause the left side of Google's results page to provide links suggesting an exclusive focus on images or information pulled from books or videos.

The categories appearing on the left side of the page would be different for a search request about a sports event. Those might point to blogs and news instead.

Yahoo Inc. and Microsoft Corp., the owners of the second- and third-most popular search engines, already offered control panels that can carve search results into servings that suit individual tastes.

Microsoft unveiled its Bing search engine a year ago in its latest attempt to pose a tougher challenge to Google. Bing's share of the U.S. search market has climbed from 8 percent to nearly 12 percent since its debut, but those gains have

mostly been at Yahoo's expense. Google's share has been hovering at about 65 percent for the past year, according to comScore Inc.

Wisconsin schools get \$80 million in tech reimbursements

Wisconsin education officials have sent out nearly \$80 million in technology reimbursements from Microsoft Corp. to more than 800 public schools.

The reimbursements stem from a 2006

settlement the state reached with Microsoft over antitrust allegations. The state's lawsuit mirrored antitrust cases across the country that claimed Microsoft customers paid artificially high prices as a result of the company's alleged anti-competitive conduct and dominant share of the software market.

Schools with at least 33 percent of students from income households were eligible. State Department of Public Instruction spokeswoman Patrick Gasper said about 810 schools will get reimbursements.

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New AV systems offer sharp images, 'green' projection

Dennis Carter
Assistant Editor

New design techniques that can heighten a projector's contrast without sacrificing brightness, and eco-friendly projectors that eliminate the need for costly mercury lamps, are among the many recent developments in audio-visual (AV) technologies with implications for schools and colleges.

In this special feature, we focus in on these and other new trends in the AV market for education.

Educators trust projectors for medical imaging

Officials at the University of North Carolina School of Medicine's Department of Radiation Oncology make critical treatment decisions based partly on images showing where cancer cells are, so having a crystal-clear projector image is critical for accurate diagnoses.

Julian Rosenman, a professor at the university's Department of Radiation Oncology, said black-and-white CT scans with shades of gray dispersed throughout could dictate a patient's treatment. That's why the department bought two of Canon's REALiS SX80 Mark II D Multimedia LCOS projectors, which are mounted on the ceiling for stability and offer dual projection images so students and doctors can compare and contrast scans side by side.

The Canon projectors also let Rosenman and his colleagues teleconference with medical professionals and students worldwide, because the projectors' images can be shared with doctors at other campuses or hospitals.

"We do a lot of tumor boards and telemedicine meetings, in which doctors view medical images to make treatment decisions," Rosenman said. "This is why the color accuracy of projected images is so important."

The Canon REALiS SX80 Mark II D projectors feature 3,000 lumens of brightness and a pixel resolution of 1,400 x 1,050. They use a projection technology that Canon developed, called Liquid Crystal on Silicon (LCOS), to achieve ultra-sharp, high-contrast, lattice-free images without the "screen door" effect that can mute the color and detail of some LCD images.

Early LCOS projectors sacrificed compactness and brightness to achieve this degree of clarity, Canon says. But the company has developed a new optical system, called aspectual illumination system (AISYS), that solves this problem. AISYS splits beams of light into vertical and horizontal components, then uses each component to enhance brightness or contrast. The result is a system that combines the kind of sharp contrast and high degree of brightness needed to distinguish between many shades of gray.

The REALiS SX80 Mark II D features a mode that complies with Digital Imaging and Communications in Medicine (DICOM) devices, because it offers 21 levels of grayscale gradation for more accurate diagnoses. Having a DICOM feature built into the device, medical school officials say, means universi-

ties won't have to buy costly additional equipment designed to supplement the image projectors.

UNC officials said the Canon projectors also have helped the medical school avoid image disturbances caused by other electronic devices in the area—a common problem among some projectors.

"Image stability is also very important when you are comparing medical data. I don't know how Canon does it, but the [projectors] reject the jitter ... caused by the other electrical equipment we've got going," Roseman said. "With these REALiS projectors, you don't see rolling bars or visible beat frequencies."

He added: "These are the smallest, quietest, and most stable projectors we've ever had. They also don't throw off a lot of heat, which is important when you've got 20 people in the room."

New 'green' projectors do away with mercury lamps

While the University of North Carolina relies on Canon's accurate images, other schools and colleges are using Casio's new lineup of Green Slim Projectors, eco-friendly projectors that eliminate the need for mercury lamps that typically must be replaced after 2,000 hours of use. Mercury can cause environmental damage if not disposed of properly.

The Green Slim DLP projectors use a patented hybrid "solid state" light source, which combines laser and LED technology to achieve high brightness, instead of a mercury lamp.

The green projectors—designed to last 20,000 hours, or about 18 school years—will save schools and colleges money while operating budgets stagnate during the current economic downturn. A typical projector lamp replacement costs \$400, meaning schools could spend thousands of dollars in new lamps over the life of a projector. Traditional projector lamps are also known to dull over time.

Not all lamps burn out after a few thousand hours, however. Sony in April unveiled two new project models, the VPL-FX500L and the VPL-FX30, that exceed industry standards. The VPL-FX500L model, according to Sony's web site, has a lamp life of 8,000 hours if the dual lamps are used equally.

Casio's Green Slim Projectors, complete with 2X zoom lens and a USB outlet for users to plug their laptops in to give class presentations, are only 1.7 inches thick, making them among the market's most portable projectors. They range in price from \$800 for an XGA (1,024 x 768) projector with 2,000 lumens but no wireless connectivity to \$1,100 for a WXGA (1,280 x 800) projector with 2,500 lumens and wireless capability.

Web site identifies most popular education projectors

A recently survey conducted by ProjectorCentral.com, a web site that monitors projector trends, revealed the 10 most popular projectors among educators this year. Epson's PowerLite S7 topped the list,



Casio's Green Slim Projectors eliminate the need for mercury lamps.

while Hitachi's CP-X2510 projector ranked second and Epson's PowerLite 410W ranked third. Epson had four projectors in the survey's top 10 results.

More than 1,100 ProjectorCentral.com visitors were included in the survey, with 407 voting for projectors that made the top 10 list, said David Dicklish, the web site's publisher. Fifteen other projectors received votes, he said.

A common characteristic among the top finishers is that they seem to have hit the "sweet spot" in combining image quality and affordability.

The Epson PowerLite S7, for instance, features 2,300 lumens, a 2,000-to-1 contrast ratio, SVGA (800 x 600) resolution, built-in closed captioning, USB plug-and-play, and an energy-efficient lamp (for extended life up to 4,000 hours) for around \$500. The Hitachi CP-X2510 costs around \$700, features XGA resolution, and uses a 6,000-hour eco-mode lamp and a filter design that only requires maintenance every 5,000 hours.

"The CP-X2510 lacks a digital input and network capability and has a relatively large case size," wrote ProjectorCentral in its review of the device. "But it nicely balances performance and value and is well worth consideration for office, classroom, or any presentation use where light weight or extreme portability are not of greatest concern."

Dicklish said high-end projectors have become preferable to LED displays, which can cost several times the cost of a projector.

"You can assume that anybody who has content that they needed to see bigger and in more detail has gone to that kind of technology," he said of projectors like the Canon REALiS model. "It has a lot of application."

Elizabeth Dourely, an expert on projectors for education and a contributor to ProjectorCentral.com, said the Epson BrightLink 450Wi is "one of the most buzzworthy projectors" in education today. The 2,500-lumen device includes built-in software that eliminates the need for a separate interactive whiteboard. It can project images onto any whiteboard, wall, or smooth surface, and it comes with two digital infrared pens that let teachers and professors mark images and highlight specific areas.

In its Classroom Projector Resource Center, ProjectorCentral also features "Problem-Solving Projectors Under \$1,000." These include the Sanyo PLC-XW300, which features XGA resolution

and a Blackboard Mode ("Who needs a screen?" writes the web site); the NEC NP510W, a networkable projector with WXGA (wide XGA) resolution that is ideal for classrooms with one-to-one laptop programs, allowing any student to project an image from his or her own machine; and the BenQ W1000, a quiet projector with 2,000-plus lumens running under 30 decibels.

Sound systems incorporate iPods, amplify presentations

Projector companies are also addressing sound system issues in the classroom and lecture hall with devices that attach to projectors. Epson's AP-60 Sound Enhancement System, for example, can be installed on ceiling-mounted projectors. The device amplifies sounds coming from the projector with four interconnected speakers and directs the sound toward the audience.

The AP-60 also comes with an infrared pendant microphone for educators and students speaking to a large classroom or lecture hall. The Epson device can connect to almost all projectors' standard mounting equipment, making the enhancement system ideal for school officials looking for retrofit their classroom technology without spending a fortune on brand-new equipment.

As iPods have become ubiquitous among teenagers and young adults, an Illinois-based company called AmpliVox Sound Systems has found a way to incorporate the popular MP3 players into classroom use.

AmpliVox's IPOD PA System, which is compatible with the iPhone as well, has a docking station for the Apple devices and recharges them while amplifying their sound. The 30-watt device is used at about 3,000 schools and college campuses nationwide and is made for audiences of up to 500 people, making it usable for even the largest college lecture halls and rooms of up to 2,500 square feet. 

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"The national, state, and local governments are basically at a point where old ways of fixing problems are not working," explained Mike Turillo, chief operating officer and vice chairman for STCI, an organization that helps bridge the private sector with local communities. "They're saying, 'I give up,' and are now willing to embrace change and innovation, because that's all that's left. They're embracing a paradigm shift to innovation and collaboration, because without collaboration across all sectors, nothing will get solved—and everyone's starting to realize this."

Gerry Mooney, general manager for global government and education at IBM, said the Open Innovation Portal was inspired by a transportation and traffic issue. Mooney, who is on the board of the Intelligent Transportation Society of America, said a recent group project involved solving transportation congestion. IBM and STCI set up a collaborative environment to enable the public sharing of ideas, and more than 500 people joined.

Encouraged by that project, officials from IBM and STCI approached Aneesh Chopra, chief technology officer for the White House, about ways to apply that collaborative model to Obama's innovation challenge.

Turillo said that when all government departments were asked to participate in the portal idea, U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan and Jim Shelton, ED's assistant deputy secretary for innovation and improvement, were the first to jump on the opportunity.

The portal's goal, explained Turillo, is to change how innovation occurs and to inspire a new model for education funding.

"Usually, federal money comes through grants," he said. "What used to happen with grants is that teacher X from the second grade, who had an innovative idea, could-

n't find the funding mechanism, because it was either too intimidating or too time-consuming to accomplish. So then third-party grant writers write the grants. With the creation of the I3 program, the government is saying, 'If you write a grant, make sure you include a specific teacher or source [of] innovation.' Basically, find teacher X from the second grade. This portal is yet another way to break down those grant barriers by giving educators a chance to voice their ideas and find funding in an easy, transparent way."

IBM's cloud-computing services host the portal, which Mooney says is an easy, inexpensive way to have a sustainable area many people can visit at once.

If users sign up on the portal's web site, they can create a profile and post any innovative ideas relating to education issues.

Users also can see others' ideas and can review and rate those ideas based on need, impact, evidence, innovation, and scalability.

"You can post ideas, suggest improvements, and vote on ideas that resonate the strongest. The private sector will then take a look at these top ideas and discuss funding. The public sector can look into how to fund these innovations through grants as well," said Turillo.

Organizations and businesses also can post "challenges." For example, IBM is providing \$500,000 in technical service grants through the Open Innovation Portal to support educational innovations that can bring measurable and sustainable improvements in K-12 student and school performance and teacher effectiveness. During 2010, IBM will offer five separate challenges on the portal to identify the best ideas for integrating advanced IBM education technologies with-



ED's Open Innovation Portal

in local education agencies (LEAs) to drive higher student achievement.

These five challenges are:

1. **Reading Companion**, a web-based literacy program that uses innovative speech-recognition technology to help children and adults learn how to read.

2. **Reinventing Education Change Toolkit**, which provides diagnostic and assessment tools, practical strategies, and other resources developed in collaboration with Rosabeth Moss Kanter, Arbuckle Professor at the Harvard Business School, to help LEAs make school reform efforts more efficient and successful.

3. **KidSmart Early Learning Program**, an early learning initiative that integrates new interactive teaching and learning activities using the latest technology into the pre-kindergarten curricula.

4. **¡Tradúcelo Ahora!**, a program that provides automatic translations from English to Spanish, as well as bidirectional eMail translations (English-Spanish), to enhance communications between teachers and Spanish-speaking parents.

5. **TryScience**, an online global science and technology center, featuring interactive exhibits, multimedia adventures, live "field trips," and hands-on science projects.

Lag...

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students and parents earlier this year.) The data include responses from online surveys administered in more than 5,700 schools and 71 schools of education last fall.

The results suggest that K-12 schools are making progress on integrating technology into the curriculum—but they also reveals key disparities in how students, educators, administrators, and aspiring teachers view various technology tools.

For instance, a majority of students, principals, administrators, and future teachers agreed that technologies for communicating and collaborating online are important tools for 21st-century teaching and learning. But not as many current teachers shared this view.

Most students and aspiring teachers, and 42 percent of current educators, recognized the value of online games and simulations in enhancing students' understanding of key topics—but far fewer principals or district administrators (25 percent) agreed.

"Administrators and teachers are starting to buy in to the student vision [for technology in education]—either prompted by their own personal use of the same technologies or because of financial pressures and national priorities that are making them rethink current practices," said Julie Evans, CEO of Project Tomorrow. "We ... have a long way to go, but [the survey] is encouraging."

Still, the latest Speak Up survey reveals significant gaps in how education technology is perceived among various groups of users. One of the most surprising disparities was how respondents view the importance of online tools for communicating and collaborating in the classroom.

When asked to describe their vision for the ultimate "school of the future," 67 percent of district administrators and 51 percent of principals said it should include the use of collaborative tools. But only 27 percent of teachers agreed—and teachers are much more likely to communicate online with their peers or with parents (90 percent) than with students themselves (34 percent).

Evans said there are a few factors that might explain this difference. For one thing, many teachers "are not familiar with how to incorporate these collaboration tools into [their] instruction, and thus ... they don't have the personal familiarity that you need before adoption can take place," she said.

"Second, we continue to hear from students that their teachers are very concerned about the potential dangers of internet use in the classroom—the student safety and personal liability issues. So ... the 'fear factor' may be holding back their interest."

She continued: "Teachers also are still not fully buying into the concept that social networking sites can have educational value for students. They see the social components, but not necessarily how to leverage the tools for academic reasons."

But there's a reason to think that could change soon, Evans said. In 2008, only 15 percent of teachers said they regularly update a personal social-networking web site. In the most recent survey, that figure jumped to 48 percent.

"I was stunned to see the increase in teachers using social networking from 2008 to 2009," she said, noting that teachers' personal use of technology typically precedes their use of these tools for instruction.

The survey also revealed a gap in how teachers and administrators view mobile devices such as laptops, smart phones, and iPods as educational tools.

Two-thirds of district administrators and 58 percent of principals included a mobile device for every student as part of their vision for the ideal school of the future—yet 76 percent of teachers said they were worried that such mobile devices would be a distraction in their classrooms.

Two-thirds of teachers said they use technology as a teaching aid, the survey revealed, and nearly half (46 percent) said they use software to help students develop skills in reading, writing, or math. But far fewer teachers—less than 25 percent—are using game-based learning environments, podcasts, video, or real-time data (such as Google Earth) to help students develop higher-order thinking skills.

For the first time, the 2009 Speak Up survey polled pre-service teachers enrolled in colleges of education—and the results

The Open Innovation Portal community will rate the ideas submitted for each challenge, and winners will be selected from among the best ideas. The first IBM challenges—Reading Companion and Reinventing Education Change Toolkit—are underway now and will be offered until June 2010. IBM will award up to three \$50,000 technical service grants for each challenge.

ED also is offering multiple challenges; for example, "Developing and Evaluating Teachers and Leaders" asks the portal community to think of practices, strategies, or programs that increase the percentages of highly effective teachers or principals, or reduce the percentages of ineffective teacher or principals—especially for high-need students—by identifying, recruiting, developing, placing, rewarding, and retaining highly effective teachers or principals (or removing them).

"Our goal is to spur conversation beyond just talking, to action," said Mooney. "By listing challenges, hosting job or project opportunities, and then bringing people in who can support change either through simple connections or by funding, talk will move to action. Also, by identifying specific challenges, you're able to create definitive solutions—we just need an environment to do this. It's more than a suggestion box; it's a mechanism for change."

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suggested that these schools have some work to do in preparing future teachers for 21st-century instruction.

Pre-service teachers who responded to the survey said they were primarily being trained to use productivity software (53 percent), create multimedia presentations (44 percent), and find digital resources to include in a lesson (40 percent). Far fewer are learning to create electronic portfolios of student work (31 percent), create videos, podcasts, or web sites to teach a topic (28 percent), or use animations, simulations, and games within their instruction (19 percent).

Still, aspiring teachers are more likely than their future colleagues to use digital resources in their classrooms. Across the board, these future teachers expressed more interest in using digital media tools (79 percent vs. 66 percent), Flip video cameras (38 percent vs. 17 percent), virtual simulations (28 percent vs. 5 percent), and video conferences or webinars (19 percent vs. 8 percent) to enhance their instruction.

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Restrictions...

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is really buying the book at all.

“Having books on one eReader and not having access to [them] later [owing] to a want [or] need to switch [devices] can be a problem—one that is a major issue for the market at this time,” said Jay Diskey, executive director of the school division for the Association of American Publishers (AAP).

Researching exactly what you can and can't do with certain eReader devices can be daunting, but really the rules are simple: If you buy an eReader other than Apple's iPad, you're locked in ... at least for now.

Kindle users are required to purchase their eBooks through Amazon's eBook web site. Barnes & Noble Nook users are required to purchase eBooks through Barnes & Noble. Sony Reader users are required to purchase eBooks through the Sony Reader store. In all cases, once you've bought an eBook through these sources, you can't read the text on a competitor's eReading device.

iPad users, however, can access Kindle books by downloading an application that Amazon developed for reading its texts on iPhones and iPod touches. According to a recent blog post by Paul Hochman, manager of content and social media at Barnes & Noble, the company soon will be adding a Nook eReader app for the iPad as well.

Yet, books purchased through Apple's iBooks store will not be compatible with the Kindle, Nook, or Sony Reader.

“DRM is a significant issue in the eBook market; there is no way to consider providing this kind of content without grappling with issues of DRM,” said Anne-Marie Deitering, Franklin McEdward Professor for Undergraduate Learning Initiatives at Oregon State University (OSU) and a leader in OSU's library Kindle pilot.

The pilot project at OSU began last summer, when the university bought six Kindles so students could check them out. Because of the Kindle's popularity at the time, and students' desire to “try them out,” OSU decided Kindles were the devices best suited for the pilot, said Deitering.

After purchasing the six Kindles, the library immediately had 60 requests to use them. It now has 12 Kindles for lending out, which contain 121 downloaded eBooks. Both the eBooks and Kindles were purchased using library gift funds.

Titles are bought from Amazon upon the request of patrons, and students also can purchase books with their own Amazon account and read them on the library's Kindles.

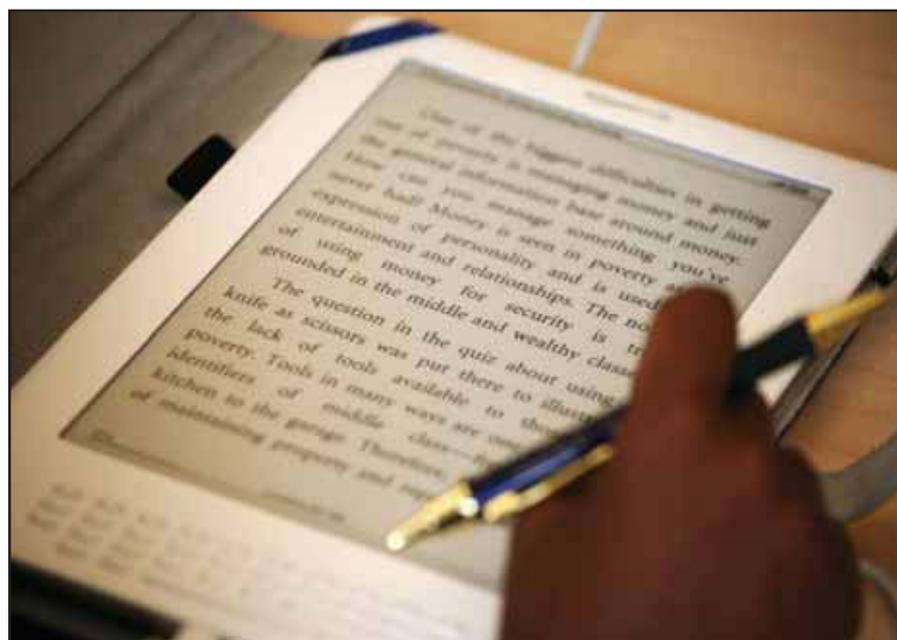
A key challenge to using eReaders in education is that some publishers are hesitant to make their textbooks available on a digital platform because of DRM, Deitering said.

“One reason for the pilot project was to figure out ways to manage this content, given the significant limitations Amazon's DRM policies pose,” she said, adding that OSU does not plan to adopt only a single eReading device, Kindle or otherwise. Still, to accommodate other eReading devices that students might own, or that it might purchase in the future, the library would have to buy content in multiple electronic formats—which could prove costly.

“As our user community increasingly comes to us with their own devices, we believe that our focus will need to shift to how we can provide the content our users want in the format they want, instead of focusing on the devices,” she said. “Not that the devices are irrelevant—we need to have the devices available for our users to access our content—but we expect that we will be considering this in the context of providing content, not providing devices.”

Who's to blame?

For David Pogue, technology columnist for the New York Times, the DRM issue with eBooks largely mirrors the copy-protection controversy the music industry went through. Until the major recording



Books purchased for a Kindle can't be read on most competitors' devices.

studios agreed to let consumers download digital music files without DRM technology, users were prohibited from playing songs they'd bought from iTunes on an MP3 player other than Apple's iPod, for example—and they were limited in terms of how they could use or share these songs.

“The issues involved with copy protection haven't changed ... namely, publishers are terrified of piracy. ... As an author myself, I, too, am terrified by the thought of piracy. I can't stand seeing my books, which are the primary source of my income, posted on all these piracy web sites, available to download free,” said Pogue in a recent post.

But according to the AAP, it's not the publishers' fault.

“Publishers are really the middlemen between copyright holders and users,” said Diskey. “For example, say you're a publisher and have a collection of ninth-grade literature that includes books from hundreds of authors, many with their own copyright ownership and terms. Just because this book goes digital or on an eReader doesn't mean that copyright holders are going to relinquish these copyrights.”

As publisher McGraw-Hill suggests, the restrictions on sharing, lending, and transferring eBooks to different devices are not a result of publishers' and authors' preferences, but rather the device makers' policies: They have a financial stake in keeping consumers from using rival eReader products.

“We are developing our eBooks to work on a range of devices and platforms.

However, [the Kindle, Nook, and iPad], as well as others, have different, proprietary eBook platforms and formats. They are not compatible with each other as of now,” said the company in a statement.

Manufacturers of eReader devices did not respond to requests for comment before press time.

“McGraw-Hill, and other major educational publishers, are now beginning to offer one solution for this eBook issue,” said the company. “Through CourseSmart, an online marketplace for eBooks, a student who buys an eBook and downloads it to one brand of computer and switches to another brand can get a replacement copy of their eBook on the new computer at no extra charge.”

Corynne McSherry, senior staff attorney

for the Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF), said DRM puts “the power in the hands of the technology companies that control the DRM standards, rather than authors and publishers, by locking customers and businesses into a proprietary platform.”

She said EFF encourages readers to think twice before buying an eBook laden with DRM restrictions. “After all, don't we want digital books to be as good, or better, than physical books at protecting you and your rights as a reader?” she asked.

“The emergence of tablet devices and really outstanding smart phones makes cloud-based storage of whatever you might be reading very attractive. A giant selection ranging from the self-published to the mainstream to the esoteric ... will make sense for consumers and verticals like education. And publishers, authors, and resellers would be foolish not to jump on the bandwagon, given Google's generous profit-sharing models.”

“Google's timing here is impeccable,” said Christopher Dawson, technology director for the Athol-Royalston School District in northern Massachusetts and a blogger for ZDNet, in a recent post.

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“If Barnes & Noble does begin to allow sharing, I wouldn't be surprised if it gives them a competitive advantage over less-open options,” said Andrew McDiarmid, a policy analyst at the Center for Democracy and Technology.

In another encouraging development, Google this summer plans to open an eBook store called Editions, which will begin selling electronic books that users can read on any internet-connected device—meaning they no longer will be restricted to a specific type of eReading platform or device.

Editions, which Google expects to launch by the end of July, will make available in-print works with the permission of publishers who own their copyrights.

“This eBook service will be device agnostic,” Google spokesman Gabriel Stricker told the news service AFP.

Books bought from Google and its partners will be available to any device that has a web browser, Google said. They also will be Kindle-compatible and will support the “epub” open standard backed by the International Digital Publishing Forum, which many publishers now use.

eBooks that users buy from Google Editions would exist in a user's “library,” a cloud-based collection of searchable texts that are hosted by Google, rather than as files downloaded to an eReader device or computer.

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Will Skype eclipse fee-based video conferencing?

Free service attractive to educators; video conferencing vendors say you get what you pay for

Maya T. Prabhu
Assistant Editor

With school budgets continuing to shrink, many educators are turning to free or inexpensive software such as Skype, along with the web cameras that now come standard on many computers, to connect with other classes or colleagues online—forgoing traditional (and more expensive) video conferencing solutions.

Numerous educators said they've used Skype in one form or another for lesson planning or instruction, with most citing its cost (or lack thereof) and ease of use as the main reason for going with the software.

Skype offers a range of free services, including the ability to make voice or video calls and send instant messages to other Skype users. Users also can pay for services such as making calls from a PC to a landline or cell phone.

Brianna Sylver, president of Sylver Consulting and adjunct professor at the Illinois Institute of Technology's Institute of Design in Chicago, said her Cross Cultural Research class recently collaborated with a class in Sao Paulo, Brazil, through video conferencing.

After using Skype to collaborate with a teacher in Sao Paulo, the graduate-level class examined the differences between home security companies in the United States and in Brazil using both the slideshow and video capabilities Skype offers.

Sylver said the video function was helpful when her class of 20 students broke into small groups to interact with small groups of students in Sao Paulo.

"We used the webcam capabilities to create more intimate relationships between

the students," she said. "The students would also use [Skype] for collaboration outside of class, using the chat or webcam feature."

Teachers at New Milford High School in New Jersey also use Skype to enhance their students' learning experiences, said New Milford principal Eric Sheninger.

"Our Holocaust class has Skyped with a historian in Israel, where he has given historical insight into the creation and use of the term 'genocide' and the history behind labeling the genocide that took place during World War II," Sheninger said. "He also shared scholarly information on the use of these terms from his years of experience in education at Yad Vashem, Israel's Holocaust memorial."

While many educators use Skype as part of their instruction, some colleges and universities use the software as a way to connect with and answer the questions of potential students and their parents.

Bob Garcia, director of admissions at Alma College in Michigan, said he sees Skype being used more and more frequently in student recruitment.

"The main advantage to our use of Skype in communications with prospective students, especially those who are abroad, is that both parties are familiar and comfortable with the technology. It provides us with video, voice, and text options in a free and easy-to-use interface that we are all used to," he said. "The combination of the economy and a shrinking high school cohort has produced a perfect storm for the need for more cost-effective ways to recruit out-of-state and abroad. Skype meets those needs."

Not everyone agrees that Skype is a suitable alternative to more traditional video

conferencing solutions.

Andre Kostousov, associate director of admissions and international counselor for Northeastern University in Massachusetts, said he has used professional video conferencing software in a previous position. Although Skype is convenient in that it can be installed on almost any computer, it has its drawbacks, Kostousov said.

"Professional video conferencing software produces a much higher quality feed and is much more stable. It allows you to have a clearer and larger picture," he said.

That argument is echoed by makers of traditional video conferencing solutions, who say users get what they pay for.

Skype's sometimes poor picture quality is something that Avistar Communications aims to counter with its video conferencing software, said Avistar's chief marketing officer, Stephen Epstein.

"Because of the architecture, the quality of Skype's video chats can be poor. The video often pixilates, and the audio is often unsynced. This significantly undermines the success of a video call," he said. "Avistar's software ensures that the quality of service is the best that it can be, given every user's available technology resources, and dynamically adjusts accordingly—instead of degrading the user experience."

Sheninger said Skype is lacking in its video multi-conferencing ability. Another drawback is the need for users' wireless networks at both sites to function properly.

But even with the potential drawbacks to using Skype in the classroom, many educators said they plan to continue using the software.



Skype is affecting the video market.

Kathy Cassidy, who uses Skype in her first-grade class in Saskatchewan, Canada, said her use of the software has been completely successful: "I had not done other video conferencing in my classroom before, and have not tried any other tools that are available. Skype has worked well for me, so I have had no reason to try other tools."

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EETT...

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of federal funding for school technology equipment, support, and professional development—into a new competitive grant program that aims to promote effective teaching and learning.

According to federal officials, this new initiative would "include a focus on integrating technology into instruction and using technology to drive improvements in teaching and learning" throughout all subject areas.

But ed-tech advocates say that's not enough—and Congress should continue funding education technology through its own dedicated funding stream, they say.

Nearly 70 companies and organizations signed onto the latest letter, which was sent April 30 to members of the House appropriations subcommittee that deals with education. The letter urged lawmakers to preserve EETT with a funding level of at least \$500 million in FY11. The program received only \$100 million in FY10, but it did get another \$650 million in stimulus funding during the 2009 and 2010 fiscal years.

In a separate letter to Senate appropriations committee members, 21 U.S. senators also urged their colleagues to preserve EETT at a funding level of at least \$500 million.

"Because state and local education budgets are especially strained in the current economic climate, eliminating EETT would dramatically reduce the availability

of education technology in many American public schools," the senators' letter said.

Administration officials say the proposed budget wouldn't do away with ed-tech funding altogether. Instead, they say, technology would become a critical component of all federally funded education programs under Obama's approach, instead of a separate line item.

"We're not eliminating EETT, and we want to make that clear," said Karen Cator, director of education technology for the U.S. Department of Education (ED). "We're just consolidating it, and a lot of other different programs, in order to provide for broader and more flexible programs that incorporate technology into learning, not isolate it."

Ed-tech advocates say this approach has several flaws.

EETT funds are distributed to states in the form of block grants. States keep a small portion of these funds for state leadership efforts and distribute the bulk of the money to local districts, half competitively and half by formula.

Folding EETT into a competitive grant program that supports effective teaching and learning doesn't guarantee that school districts will receive, or use, the money to bolster their ed-tech initiatives, critics argue. They fear many districts that have relied on formula-based grants for school technology will be left behind under the new approach.

Also, although administration officials insist that technology will be an important part of the new grant initiative, what will

happen if the leadership in Washington changes, critics say? Will there still be a commitment to education technology as a critical component of school reform?

Like EETT, the new Effective Teaching and Learning program that Obama has proposed will set aside money for state and national leadership efforts that focus on education technology, Cator said. She said ED will continue to support the use of technology to transform teaching and learning through its Investing in Innovation (I3) grant program as well.

When asked if the shift toward a fully competitive model of funding will put some districts at a disadvantage, Cator said the department is working on strategies to improve competitiveness.

"Since these ... different funding structures are new to us as well, we can study how these grants work over time, which schools are receiving the grants and what works best, and how we can fine-tune the model to best serve schools," she said.

She continued, "Ed tech will never lose its voice in Congress, because technology is the standard now and we know that. This initiative is giving us the opportunity to learn how to best integrate technology across all programs, and this will—if anything—give ed-tech a stronger voice than just being an add-in."

Several education organizations remain skeptical.

Infusing ed tech throughout other programs, and maintaining a separate funding stream dedicated to promoting the effective use of technology in education, should

not be an "either/or" proposition, said Lucy Gettman, director of federal programs, advocacy, and issues management, and Ann Flynn, director of education technology, in a joint statement from the National School Boards Association (NSBA).

"There needs to be a targeted program and funding, as well as an infusion throughout the education continuum of teacher preparation and professional development, instruction, assessment, college and career readiness, etc.," the statement said.

Many stakeholders are concerned that the shift to a competitive funding model will create funding disparities, because many schools do not have the resources to apply for competitive grants.

"This emphasis on competitiveness could mean that rural districts and children in the poorest parts of the country will be left behind," said NSBA Executive Director Anne Bryant in a statement. "Those districts do not have the capacity to compete for grants—unless you want to shift money from teachers to grant writers."

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Grants & Funding

How to know if it's worth applying for a grant

By Deborah Ward

If you work in a busy grants office or do a significant amount of grants research, you might be looking for ways to streamline the process. Requests for proposals (RFPs) and grant guidelines often can be lengthy documents—but here are a few tips for how you can scan them quickly to determine if it's worth the time and effort to read all of the information (which, of course, you must do if it looks like a viable opportunity).

- **Look at the Eligibility section.**

This will tell you what kinds of entities are allowed to submit proposals.

If you don't see schools or local education agencies (school districts) listed, then look to see if a collaborative partnership that includes school districts is allowed. You might not qualify to be the lead applicant for the project; however, you might be able to be a partner in a project if you meet the eligibility requirements for partners. This assumes, though, that you have a relationship with the type of entity that is eligible to be the lead applicant.

If you don't have an existing relationship, it might prove difficult to convince an

organization to let you participate in a project when it has no history with you. This is why I'd recommend that you develop relationships with potential partners in your community, such as the public library, a museum, a public health department, a college or university, et cetera—and maintain these relationships even if there isn't a grant opportunity on the horizon.

- **Look at the number of awards that will be distributed.**

The smaller the number of awards to be made, the less chance you have of receiving a grant—unless you have a close relationship with the funder and know that your chances of getting funded are fairly good.

When a grant program announces that fewer than three awards will be distributed, this usually means the funder already knows who the awards are going to. (I have seen grant announcements on Grants.gov that specify who the only eligible applicants are for the grant.) In all probability, the awardees will be entities that have received prior grant awards, have worked with the funder on other pro-

jects, and have been quite successful in carrying out these projects.

- **Look at the dollar range of the awards to be made.**

For large-scale projects, you'll probably want to apply for grants that will provide either the entire amount of the project costs or a substantial portion (at least 50 percent) of the total amount that you'll

The smaller the number of awards to be made, the less chance you have of receiving a grant—unless you have a close relationship with the funder.

need. Federal grants typically tend to be larger—often in the hundreds of thousands to millions of dollars in funding for multiple years of grant support.

If you have a small project with a to-

tal project cost that runs in the thousands of dollars, you probably will not be looking at federal grants. However, this level of funding is appropriate for many foundation requests, so that is the best kind of funder to research.

Keep in mind that many foundations don't want to be the sole source of funding for a project, so if you can identify and apply to several foundations to support your project, this is a good thing!

If, after reading these three areas of an RFP, you decide that this might be a viable option to pursue, make sure you read all of the rest of the information in the grant guidance—and as you do so, you should continue to make sure that it's a proposal worth working on.

Carefully check to make sure there isn't any information “buried” somewhere in the RFP that would disqualify you from applying, or would make your project a poor match to the program's intentions—and good luck if you submit a proposal! 

Deborah Ward, CFRE, is an independent grant writing consultant. She welcomes questions at Debor21727@aol.com.

Grant Deadlines

June

\$40,000 to create health-related games and software

Let's Move, first lady Michelle Obama's campaign to end child obesity, is offering \$40,000 in prizes to create innovative, fun, and engaging software tools and games that encourage children—and especially “tweens” ages 9-12—to make more nutritious food choices and be more physically active. The Apps for Healthy Kids competition is open to software developers, game designers, students, educators, and other innovators. Eight awards will be made, ranging in value from \$1,000 to \$10,000.

Deadline: June 30

<http://www.appsforhealthykids.com>

NASA invites students to take part in high school science program

NASA is now accepting applications from high school students for its Interdisciplinary National Science Program Incorporating Research Experience (INSPIRE) initiative. Participants will become members in an online learning community where they can interact with their peers and NASA engineers and scientists. The program also provides appropriate grade-level educational activities, discussion boards, and chat rooms for participants and their families to gain exposure to the many career opportunities at NASA. Students chosen for the online learning community will have the chance to compete for experiences at NASA facilities and participating universities throughout the nation next summer. The INSPIRE project is designed to encourage ninth through 12th grade students to pursue careers in science, technology, engineering, and math.

Deadline: June 30

<http://www.nasa.gov/education/inspire>

Up to 90 percent off the cost of educational video content

Because educational video content is not eligible for support under the federal e-Rate program, New Dimension Media is offering a discount program called the CCC!-Rate. The program provides the CCC! Core Curriculum Content package at a discount that is equal to a school's or district's e-Rate discount. That means schools can purchase CCC!'s library of educational video programming as if it were eligible under the e-Rate program—for between 20 percent and 90 percent off the regular cost.

Deadline: June 30

<http://www.cccvod.com/rate-information.php>

Michigan schools eligible for free screen capture and recording software from TechSmith

TechSmith Corp. is donating up to \$2 million worth of its screen capture and recording software to K-12 schools in Michigan, where the company is based. The grant program ends June 30 or when the \$2 million grant pool is exhausted, whichever comes first. Any K-12 school, district, teacher, or department in Michigan is eligible to apply.

Deadline: June 30

<http://www.techsmith.com/michigangrant>

Ongoing

Up to \$5,000 per award for innovative math and science projects

The Toshiba America Foundation is a nonprofit grant-making organization dedicated to supporting science and math education in the United States. The foundation contributes to the quality of science and math education by investing in innovative projects designed by classroom teachers to improve instruction for students in grades 6-12. The foundation awards grants of \$5,000 on a rolling basis. For grants of more than \$5,000, applications are due Aug. 2.

<http://www.toshiba.com/tafpub/jsp/home/default.jsp>

Grants to help schools implement Netop Vision software

Netop has launched the Netop Get A Grant for Education (NGAGE) program to help educators struggling with shrinking budgets. Available until funds run out, the program provides financial support for schools to purchase an individual or site license for the Netop Vision6 Class Kit, classroom-management software that has been proven to improve student achievement. Netop has \$500,000 in funding for its NGAGE grants, which are available on a first-come, first-served basis. Grants of \$200 to \$450 are available for classroom labs, and grants of \$1,500 to \$1,600 are available for a site or district license. The Vision6 Class Kit is priced at \$999, but with an NGAGE grant of \$450, an educator would pay only \$549 per classroom or lab.

<http://www.netop.com/ngage.htm>



Stakeholder & Community Relations

Viral video offers lessons in internet advocacy

By Nora Carr, APR, Fellow PRSA

A video produced by parents at a California elementary school to protest state budget cuts has become an online sensation.

Called "Hot for Teachers," the four-minute video uses humor and star power to send a serious message about the impact teacher cuts are having on class size and academic opportunities.

Produced by parents at Wonderland Avenue Elementary School, the video stars actor Brian Austin Green of television's *Beverly Hills 90210* and actress Megan Fox, best known for her recurring role in the *Transformers* movie blockbusters.

In the video, students lament losing their teacher, teacher's assistant, school nurse, and custodial staff. "No wonder so many of us end up in prison," muses one fifth grader.

Wonderland parents—a dream team that includes a public-relations expert with ties to the entertainment industry—wrote the script and produced the video.

After showing students stuffed in the school library as a result of budget cuts, the video urges viewers to "call, write, and annoy the governor until he cries for his mommy." Viewers are also encouraged to contact their state legislators and sign a petition at the Wonderland PTA's "Say No to Cuts" web site.

"It's very creative and well done," says Robert L. Alaniz, director of communications and media relations for the Los Angeles Unified School District, noting that the media started calling for interviews with the principal and parents shortly after the video was uploaded on Funny or Die, a comedy video web site.

Funny or Die filmed the video, which protests massive education cuts planned by Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger.

"The school's PTA president came up with the idea of creating a video, and one parent suggested they ask Brian Austin Green to star in it," says Alaniz. "Green, whose son attends the school, agreed, and he got his girlfriend, actress Megan Fox, to costar."

Just like a cold or flu that spreads rapidly through close contact, the video spread virally online as web users shared the file with friends and social networking sites.

Uploaded on April 6, the video had garnered more than one million views on Funny or Die by early May. It also was picked up by YouTube, the Huffington Post, and a host of other sites.

The state PTA urged members to share the video via eMail and to use other tools developed as part of its "9 Million Reasons to Speak Up" campaign in support of California's public schools.

"In the past two years, the state has cut \$17 billion from schools, and deep cuts to social services have added to the burden borne by children and families," the California PTA states on its web site. "An additional \$2.4 billion is now being proposed in new cuts to schools, as well as the possible elimination of entire health programs that serve children. PTA strongly opposes these proposals."

One of the tactics recommended by the California PTA is a "pass-it-on eMail" blast campaign, along with more traditional techniques such as letter writing campaigns and petition drives.

"Send a message to your eMail lists of people you know in California and ask them to forward to their California friends," urges the web site, which includes sample messages in Spanish as well as in English.

As Wonderland's experience shows, the combination of online outreach with more traditional grassroots organizing techniques can be powerful. The innovative twist of telling the story through humor helped en-

sure an audience, along with the star power of Green and Fox.

While humor is always risky, a more traditional approach might not have resonated as well with parents or generated as much media interest.

Because most school PTAs don't count Hollywood actors, producers, publicists, and script writers among their members, replicating Wonderland's success might

seem beyond reach. Yet most school districts have a host of uninhibited, creative high school students they could probably turn loose with equally impressive results.

Faced with devastating cuts nationwide, public school officials have little to lose and much to gain in using new information technologies to tell their stories more effectively. Enlisting parents and students in the effort is a good place to start. 

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THE SIGHTS & SOUNDS OF EDUCATION

State tech perspectives

Michigan uses online learning to reach at-risk students

State's four-part plan for reducing the dropout rate involves an innovative cyber high school

By Bruce Umpstead
with Kyle Grigg



Bruce Umpstead

As a struggling high school student in metro Detroit, Kyle Grigg faced a terrible prospect. Last spring, Kyle was asked by his public high school counselor to leave the school because he did not have enough time to make up lost credits and graduate. Kyle knew he didn't want to be one of the 20,000 students who drop out of Michigan public high schools each year—but he didn't know what else to do.

When his high school doors closed behind him, Kyle's lifelong opportunities become severely limited. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the average annual income of a dropout is \$24,000, which is 60 percent below that of high school graduates. Kyle didn't want to bus tables for the rest of his life, but finding even a low-skill job in Michigan has become increasingly difficult. Michigan's 14.3 percent unemployment rate currently leads the nation. With limited earning potential and low chances of gainful employment, it's not surprising that many dropouts end up in correctional facilities or prison. The *New York Times* recently reported that, on any given day, a dropout is five times more likely to be incarcerated—with the cost of lifetime incarceration exceeding the cost of public school education by a factor of two or three.

While Kyle's story is striking, it is hardly unique. By pushing out students who are failing and unlikely to graduate, as well as truants and students with behavior problems, schools can raise their test-score averages and graduation rates while reducing suspensions and dropout rates. Many times, this happens when school systems do not quickly identify and support students who are struggling or exhibiting other early warning signs of dropping out of school, like disengagement and poor attendance.

Michigan's response

Michigan Superintendent of Public Instruction Mike Flanagan decided to spotlight the troubling dropout numbers across Michigan. He issued a "Dropout Challenge" and asked schools to step up their efforts in identifying youth exhibiting early warning signs of dropping out of school, providing appropriate support, and offering alternative routes for students to graduate. At the same time, the Michigan Legislature and Gov. Jennifer Granholm enacted legislation raising the dropout age to 18 and providing failing high schools with turnaround strategies and supports.

To support participating schools, the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) developed a four-fold strategy of engagement, funded in part by the state's Title II, Part D, Enhancing Education Through Technology (EETT) competitive grant program. Our work involves increasing the availability and use of prevention data, strengthening public policy, identifying and disseminating best practices, and sponsoring alternative routes to high school graduation.

Data

The 2005 National Governors Association "Compact on High School Graduation Rates" defined how public schools should be measured in terms of producing high school graduates. Michigan was one of the first states to adopt the compact's cohort method of measuring graduation and dropout rates.

Michigan's Center for Educational Performance and Information produced the first four-year cohort-based graduation report for the class of 2007, finding the statewide dropout rate to be 15.9 percent by actual head count. This meant that out of the 140,044 students enrolled as freshmen in 2004, 21,185 were reported as having dropped out. In 2008, the number decreased to 14.2 percent, or 20,594. Both annual reports provide a breakout of graduation and

dropout measures for each of Michigan's 552 public school districts and 232 public school academies.

These reports marked a heightened level of accountability for public school administrators and gave policy makers the means of identifying those schools producing the fewest graduates and the most dropouts. For a number of reasons, students like Kyle do not show up in state reports until it's too late. Annual graduation reports serve a broader accountability purpose by identifying dropouts in aggregate and after the fact. These reports lack the granularity needed by district or building administrators to tackle their own dropout problems.

The National High School Center published a report in 2007, "Approaches to Dropout Prevention," that provided a list of early warning signs—poor attendance, not enough credits earned, no progression in grades—that school leaders can use to identify students most at risk of dropping out. These types of indicators exist for every grade, yet Michigan's state-level data system currently does not collect these indicators, and it only reports off-track students after four years of high school.

Last year, Michigan made a priority of getting actionable dropout prevention data in administrators' hands by funding the Regional Data Initiatives grant program, allocating \$11.5 million in EETT funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. The project expands eight existing regional data systems to cover all 57 intermediate school districts. So far, 97.5 percent of public school districts and 45 percent of public school academies have signed up, so now providing dropout prevention reports for every school is well within reach.

Policy

Many proponents of dropout prevention see the new state law increasing the legal dropout age as a good first step. In December, the Michigan Legislature, challenged to address the state's unacceptably high dropout numbers, increased the legal dropout age from 16 to 18 as part of a larger package of education reform legislation passed to strengthen the state's Race to the Top (RTTT) application. Under the new law, parents will have to formally approve of a student's decision to leave school without graduating before age 18.

Increasing the dropout age was a clear message to at-risk students and their parents, and the Michigan Legislature sent a similar message to our state's "dropout factories" by including in the RTTT legislation provisions for a state takeover of the bottom five percent of struggling schools. The legislation provides limited choices for these schools: Use one of the state-mandated options to improve, or close. These options range from replacing administrators and staff, to hiring an outside management company, to reorganizing as a public charter school.

In addition to raising the dropout age and taking over failing schools, Michigan is experimenting with cyber school provisions that provide schools with alternative routes and flexible options for re-engaging students who have fallen behind. Superintendent Flanagan has extended "seat time" alternative education waivers to 21 programs across the state, in many cases allowing students to bypass the current, two-course limit on online, self-scheduled courses and receive up to 100 percent of their instruction online. As of September 2009, 1,450 students were enrolled in seat time waivers, and program administrators say about 80 percent of these students were either dropouts or at risk of dropping out.

Practice

To lower the dropout rate, more has to be done at the school level to provide the appropriate support for at-risk students. While school administrators might have an idea which students are at risk of dropping out, they often lack the definite indicators warranting intervention. Hence the need for adding early warning signs reporting to local data systems.

Providing data is only part of the solution. Many administrators and teachers have not been properly prepared to understand what the data are saying and to use them in helping at-risk students avoid dropping out.

To help Michigan schools adopt the most promising dropout prevention strategies, MDE partnered with the Michigan Association of Secondary School Principals and Oakland County Schools to bring 1,096 middle and high school administrators into an online professional learning community for developing and sustaining best practices (www.GraduationTown.org).

Programs

Fortunately for Kyle, Michigan didn't stop at just passing legislation, disseminating data, and promulgating best practices. Students need alternative routes for earning a traditional high school diploma, and so MDE started funding EETT competitive grant programs to bring changes in instructional models that would lead to improved opportunities and outcomes for at-risk students.

Kyle now is one of 540 students enrolled in Westwood Community School's Cyber High School. This is a pilot program, operating under a state superintendent-approved seat time waiver, that employs a constructivist, online learning model patterned after the United Kingdom's "Not School" (www.NotSchool.net), a research-based program designed expressly for re-engaging dropouts.

Westwood students enroll full time as "researchers," and they work with "mentors" and "experts" (i.e., certified and highly qualified teachers) to earn credit towards the Michigan Merit Curriculum graduation requirements by completing cross-curricular projects. Researchers work collaboratively and/or independently at their own speed in this year-round, 24-7 program. In addition to providing instruction that boasts a six-to-one ratio of students to teachers, Westwood provides researchers with computers, broadband connectivity, and access to in-person learning lab sessions.

"I was very skeptical and just immediately thought, 'Online learning ... you mean like college? Well, I'm screwed then. I can't pass high school, what am I going to do in college?'" says Kyle, who is now 19. "But without this school, I would be at my job where I am now—a bus boy. Now, in my future, I don't see myself as a bus boy. I see myself as a computer graphic and modeling designer. To do that, I need a college diploma. To do that, I need a high school education."

With students like Kyle re-engaged, and owning their own academic success, demand is rising. In December, MDE funded a larger EETT competitive grant to expand the program to four other locations around the state, including the most remote regions of Michigan's Upper Peninsula.

Early success

Michigan's dropout prevention and re-engagement strategy is starting to work: In the two years Michigan has reported actual graduation and dropout rates, the number of dropouts has dipped by 591 students, or 1.7 percent, even as overall enrollment climbed. Perhaps Michigan is experiencing the "Hawthorne Effect" by merely focusing on the problem, but the decline signals that concerted effort could make even larger and lasting gains by lowering dropout rates, boosting graduation totals and college enrollment, increasing standards of living, and lowering unemployment and incarcerations.

"I'm excited about my future," says Kyle. "My new high school has given me a second chance [that] many students ... have never been given. The school doesn't feel like a school all the time. ... Hopefully graduating is just my first step."

Bruce Umpstead is the state director of educational technology and data coordination for the Michigan Department of Education. Kyle Grigg is a student at Michigan's Westwood Cyber High School.

Security checkpoint

Digital copiers pose data security threat

Hard drives retain sensitive information that could be accessed after leases expire

Laura Devaney
Managing Editor

Although stolen laptops and computer-savvy hackers are frequently the focus of school security discussions, information retained when sensitive documents are photocopied poses another very real, although often overlooked, security threat for schools and colleges—and for the employees and students whose personal information could be at risk.

The hard drives in digital copiers record all images that are copied using the machine. While copier security risks have been known for a number of years, CBS News shined its spotlight on the danger with an April 19 news report.

The CBS investigative team purchased three previously owned copiers and accessed sensitive information on all three hard drives, including one that contained scanned records from a public high school.

The *St. Petersburg Times* reported that Florida's Pinellas County libraries are set to review all library copy machines and hard drives in light of the CBS report.

John Juntunen told CBS News that the industry has been slow to react and identify a solution to the security risk. Juntunen's company, Digital Copier Security, developed INFOSweep, software that erases hard drive data on digital copiers.

The majority of copier manufacturers offer a data security kit to accompany their machines, but the kit is not a standard part of the equipment—and many schools opt not to purchase it.



CBS News bought a copier with sensitive data from a public high school.

"Sharp has been offering [a data security kit] for 10 years, and in those 10 years, we still don't have more than 15 percent of machines leave here with a data security kit," said Mike Marusic, vice president of marketing and services for the Sharp Imaging and Information Company of America.

"At the end of the day, many people choose to save the money. If it's included standard, the [copier] prices go too high," he said.

Awareness is critical to prevention, especially in schools—where students' Social Security numbers, sensitive financial information, and personal histories are printed on documents that are likely to be photocopied.

A recent LinkedIn.com survey hosted by Sharp revealed that of 817 business owners and corporate executives, nearly 65 percent said they were not aware or sure that their copiers contained hard drives

with sensitive information.

"My advice to all schools would be to invest in a data security kit, because it is valuable," Marusic said.

Schools whose slashed budgets might not permit an upgrade to a new copier with a data security kit, or even the purchase of a data security kit alone, do have a few other options to tighten security when it comes to vulnerable photocopy machines.

When schools end a copier lease, administrators should request the hard drives from the machines, or ask their school's copier dealer to provide verification that the hard drives were cleared before leaving the building.

"In a lot of cases, schools buy under state contracts, so they buy off a pricing sheet," Marusic said. "If data security was not bid [for] in the first place, there's zero chance of them actually getting it, because it's not an approved product for purchase."

When searching for new copiers, schools should include a data security requirement on all future requests for proposals, he said.

MAC filtering, which uses a unique address assigned to each device's network card, is another option open to schools.

IT administrators assign certain devices to each copier, preventing unauthorized access. IT staff also are alerted when an unauthorized user attempts to gain access to the copy machine.

A third method, known as authentication, limits access to the copier on a walk-up basis. Authorized users will type in a code or use a swipe card to gain access to the copier. Marusic said the feature is usually standard on most machines but is rarely activated.

"We can continue to alert people, especially in schools ... [that] you want to protect your school ... from providing that kind of access to your machine," Marusic said. 

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Teen 'flash mobs' turn violent in Philadelphia ... and city officials respond

From staff and wire reports

The term "flash mob" used to mean on-line-organized groups having street-corner pillow fights or sidewalk dance-offs—but in Philadelphia they've turned violent, and the reasons are as tough to pin down as where the next one will be.

At least five such mobs have gathered in the City of Brotherly Love in the past year, all leaving property damage or injuries in their wake, after hundreds of teenagers communicating by text message, Twitter, Facebook, and other social media spread the word for everyone to show up at a designated spot.

Police Commissioner Charles Ramsey said recently that he has been talking to law-enforcement officials in other cities to see whether any have encountered similar problems. He doesn't think Philadelphia is unique but was unaware of another municipality that has seen teen mobs of the same size and frequency.

The local mobs involve mainly middle and high schoolers, not the college-and-older crowd that typically take part in nonviolent flash mobs. And the younger kids don't gather with the intention of performing something silly en masse; generally the only goal is to gather at a specific location, though one was

sparked as rumors spread of a brawl at a downtown mall.

"Social phenomena have to start somewhere," said Frank Farley, a psychologist and professor at Temple University. "It could be some kind of coincidence of fate that will get picked up later on elsewhere."

In the most recent mob, in late March, witnesses estimated as many as 2,000 teenagers thronged the narrow sidewalks, blocked traffic, jumped on cars, and roughed up bystanders around South Street, a 10-block strip of bars, clothing stores, pizzerias, and cheese steak joints that has long been a hangout for teens and 20-somethings.

There were three arrests and multiple assaults, and many stores and restaurants closed early amid fears of trouble brewing.

Farley, an expert in risk-taking and thrill-seeking personalities, said the flash mobs have attributes that many teens would find attractive.

"This kind of thing I could see catching on across the country the more it's publicized," he said. "It's easy to do; it's thrilling, it's fun, and they can turn on the TV the next day and say, 'I was there.'"

Philadelphia is stepping up enforcement and ratcheting up penalties against juveniles in an effort to put an end to the

roving groups wreaking havoc in downtown business and tourist districts.

"The lion's share of these kids don't have any nefarious intent," said Deputy Police Commissioner Richard Ross, "but if you have a group of 1,000, 2,000 kids and only 25 are disruptive, that's still unacceptable."

After the March incident, Mayor Michael Nutter said that if the "stupidity" continues, he will permanently move up the city's curfew for minors, currently 10:30 p.m. on weekdays and midnight on weekends, as police and businesses have suggested. The mayor didn't say what those earlier curfews might be.

Police also are monitoring social-networking sites and message boards for early warning of potential disturbances, and the city transit authority is monitoring subways for any unusual spikes in riders all headed to one area.

The message repeated by Nutter, Ramsey, District Attorney Seth Williams, and others: Parents must take responsibility for their children or face criminal charges themselves. They also sought to reassure residents, businesses, and tourists that the city is safe.

Ramsey urged parents to monitor their children's computer activity and check their cell phones for text messages, and

to contact police with any pertinent information. Educators also should look out for any online chatter that might suggest further flash-mob activity, experts said.

While not revealing tactics, police said they have "rapid response" plans in place to track down flash mobs before mayhem ensues. The FBI, undercover police, and the city's school district also will pitch in if necessary, Nutter said.

Those arrested in the three mobs that gathered since February face felony charges—a departure from previous clashes in May 2009 and December 2009, when misdemeanor counts were filed.

Family Court Judge Kevin Dougherty found 28 teenagers guilty of felony rioting for incidents on Feb. 16, when 150 teens stormed through a downtown department store, fighting and breaking items, and on March 3.

Dougherty's questions to the teens about what motivated them to join the crowd were largely answered with shrugs or one-word answers, and some of the kids denied being part of the mob.

Several of the juveniles, whose names were not released because of their age, acknowledged they learned through text messages, MySpace, and Facebook that a gathering—and possibly a fight—would occur at the announced location. 

Net watch

This month's very best web sites—exceptional instructional resources, special events, and state-of-the-art research and management tools—for the K-20 decision maker



New media literacy campaign teaches 'tweens' about advertising

<http://www.admongo.gov>

Advertising to American kids is nothing new—but now the internet and social media have taken kids' exposure to advertising to new levels: Ads are virtually everywhere. That's why the Federal Trade Commission, the nation's consumer protection agency, has launched a new campaign, called Admongo, that aims to educate "tweens" (kids ages 8 to 12) about advertising, so they can become more discerning consumers of information. The goal of the campaign is to boost advertising literacy by raising awareness of advertising and marketing messages; teaching critical-thinking skills that will allow tweens to better analyze and interpret advertisements; and demonstrating the benefits of being an informed consumer. The centerpiece of this multimedia campaign is a new web site, Admongo.gov, that teaches core ad literacy concepts through game play. Other elements of the campaign include in-school curricula that are tied to state standards of learning; sample ads that can be used at home and in the classroom; and teacher training videos. Although the campaign focuses on helping tweens analyze commercial messages, the critical-thinking skills it teaches can help them evaluate non-commercial messages, too, the FTC says—including editorial content and literature.



Web site encourages a closer look at nation's energy use

<http://www.needtoknow.nas.edu>

The National Academy of Sciences has launched a new web site that encourages a closer look at the nation's energy use, based on data from the National Academy of Sciences, National Academy of Engineering, Institute of Medicine, and National Research Council. A finalist for a Webby Award in the category of science, "What You Need to Know About Energy" provides an overview of our current energy system and covers four main topics: energy uses, sources of energy, the cost of energy (in terms of the environment, national security, and sustainability), and energy efficiency. Geared toward a nonscientific audience, the site offers objective and authoritative information in an accessible format. Its producers are developing curriculum-based materials for middle and high school classrooms as well.



'Quiz Maker' helps teachers enhance lessons and gauge understanding

<http://www.proprofs.com/quiz-school>

The educational web site ProProfs.com has launched a free, easy-to-use quiz creation site that can help teachers enhance their lesson plans and engage students. Called Quiz Maker, the site is based on feedback from thousands of ProProfs users who shared their ideas for how ProProfs could improve on its Quiz School application. Now, ProProfs has added several new features that will allow users to create more complex quizzes: User profiles have a dashboard where quiz authors can quickly access and compile the results and stats into a digital report card that is tracked and stored online; quiz authors have control over which users can access a quiz and place a limit on how many times it can be taken; and quiz authors can use tools such as Google Maps, graphs, and customizable styles, scoring, and result options to assess performance.



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Product Spotlight

Intel partners with McGraw-Hill on updated Classmate PC

Intel's newest Convertible Classmate PC design, unveiled April 26, gives elementary school students a chance to have "micro-mobility" as they move between individual, small group, and whole-class activities, Intel says. The new Classmate portable computing device also includes improved energy efficiency and enhanced eReading capabilities.

Intel has joined forces with McGraw-Hill to include that company's LEAD21—a new elementary-school literacy program that offers print, digital, and professional development resources—on the new device.



"Rich content and innovative applications bring the unique Classmate PC design to life, providing a complete solution that makes learning fun and teaching effective," said Greg Pearson, vice president of the sales and marketing group and general manager of worldwide sales and operations for Intel.

The new Classmate PC design features a touch screen with a user interface that is optimized for eReading applications; a water-resistant keyboard, touch pad, and screen; improved ruggedness, with the device having passed a drop test from desk height; bump and scratch-resistance surfaces; and an optional anti-microbial keyboard. It can convert from laptop to tablet mode with a pivoting screen.

Additionally, the screen has a "palm rejection" feature that ignores the touch of hands resting on the screen, which allows students to write and draw intuitively, Intel said.

The Classmate PC was designed to be a complete eLearning device, said Intel ethnographer Tony Salvador.

"It enhances the experience for a student," he said. "It's more than just text. You can begin incorporating multimedia. In tablet mode it can be a [digital] reader, but the touch screen allows students to annotate and highlight."

<http://www.classmatepc.com>

Dell expands its Connected Classroom solution

A new low-cost netbook whose screen can be rotated so students can read electronic texts as if they were holding a traditional book, and a 3-D capable, short-throw projector that can turn any smooth surface into an interactive learning space, are among the new education technologies introduced by Dell Inc. on May 11 as part of its Connected Classroom suite of products.

The enhancements to Dell's Connected Classroom aim to help teachers transform the traditional classroom into an environment where students can be prepared for life and work in the digital age.

"We're taking a student-centered focus on using technology in the classroom," said Mark Horan, Dell's global vice president and general manager of K-12 education. He said Dell has tried to create products that address teachers' needs, such as engaging the digital generation, differentiating instruction, teaching 21st-century skills, and improving the learning experience for students.

One of these is the Dell Latitude 2110, a next-generation netbook for students that features a rubberized coating on the chassis and a battery life of up to 10 hours with an optional 6-cell battery.

A solid state drive (SSD) provides storage of up to 64 gigabytes, and an optional anti-microbial keyboard includes a "tamper-resistant" design to help prevent the loss of key caps, Dell said. Available in red, black, and blue models, the Latitude 2110 starts at \$389.

Dell also announced a mobile computing cart that

stores and charges up to 24 netbooks. The Dell Mobile Computing Station includes a wireless access point and a wake-on LAN feature. This enables school IT staff to deliver updates via the school's network, greatly simplifying management, Dell said.

The additions to Dell's Connected Classroom also include a new 3-D capable interactive short-throw projector, the Dell S300wi, that combines the capabilities of an interactive whiteboard with a multi-purpose projector, allowing teachers to make any smooth surface an interactive learning surface, Dell said. eInstruction's Interwrite Workspace software is included with every S300wi projector at no cost, forming the platform that allows teachers to build interactive lessons.

Schools also can choose from three new multi-function printers that come bundled with Dell Classroom Station software, which can transform manual paper-based processes into efficient digital workflows, Dell said. The software includes education-specific applications that provide print-on-demand bubble sheet tests, as well as instant grading and reporting capabilities. (Schools will need a Windows server and additional software to take advantage of these latter features.)

Additionally, Dell offers Professional Learning Services—professional development to help teachers integrate digital content into their instruction—that Horan said play a vital role in ensuring that educators have the necessary skills and confidence to best use the Connected Classroom solutions.

"This way, teachers know how to use [the tools] effectively," he said.

<http://www.dell.com>



Adobe's Creative Suite 5 targets 21st-century skills

Adobe Systems Inc. has updated its multimedia design and publishing software with the April 12 release of Creative Suite 5 (CS5), which contains new curricula, a certification program, and learning resources to better train students and faculty in the digital communication and collaboration skills that are increasingly important in a global marketplace.

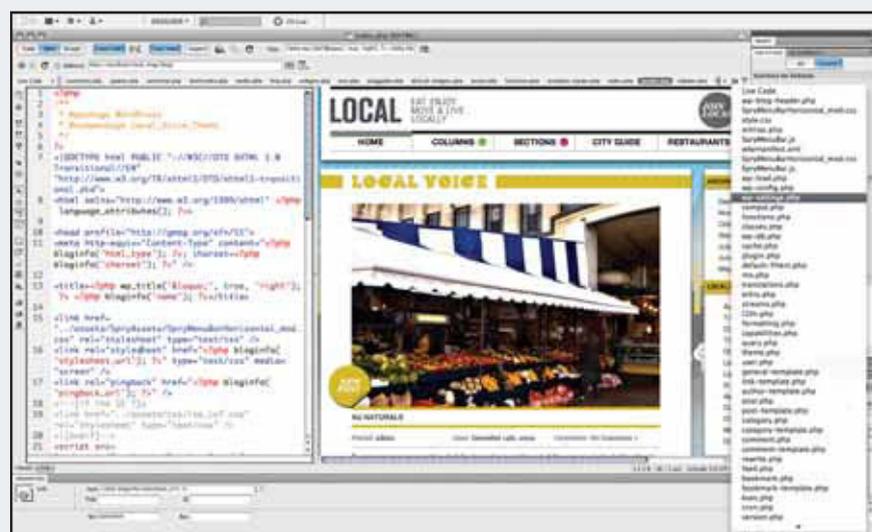
Adobe has developed three different CS5 curricula designed to help teachers implement design, web, and video programs. These curricula focus on the technical skills and design theory students need to be successful communicators in their fields: (1) Digital Design: Foundations of Web Design; (2) Visual Design: Foundations of Design and Print Production; and (3) Digital Video: Foundations of Video Design and Production. The year-long curriculum guides will be available free of charge from Adobe and will align with the International Society for Technology in Education's National Education Technology Standards (NETS) for Students.

In addition, educators and students can become certified for entry-level skills as an Adobe Certified Associate and professional-level skills as an Adobe Certified Expert. Developed and deployed by Certiport and Adobe, these certifications validate a broad range of technical and communication skills when entering post-secondary schools or the workforce.

"Being able to creatively express an idea using compelling facts and visuals is imperative in any profession. This process involves technology literacy, creativity, communication, critical thinking, and collaboration skills," said Peter Isaacson, vice president of worldwide education for Adobe. "With the launch of Creative Suite 5, we're giving institutions, students, and faculty the ability to learn these skills and use the tools wherever they are—in the classroom, at home, or online."

The latest update to Adobe's Creative Suite aims to make it easier for users to include interactive elements in their designs. A new tool called Flash Catalyst, for example, lets traditional designers create interactive web content without knowing how to code software. It uses drop-down menus that can turn boxes on a screen into buttons, for instance.

This is also the first time Creative Suite includes services from Omniture, a company Adobe bought last fall for \$1.8 billion. Omniture's technology helps companies



measure the ways people interact with web sites, ads, and online applications.

CS5 includes an upgrade of the Photoshop software that makes it easier to detect the borders of images within a photograph, among other new features. This could come in handy when trying to delete or move an image of a person from a photograph. Typically, detecting just where a person's hair strands end and the background begins is a painstaking process.

CS5 will cost between \$1,299 and \$2,599, but Adobe offers flexible volume licensing programs and low pricing for the education market. The new CS5 Student and Teacher Editions for individual home use are expected to start at \$299. It will be available in "major languages," which in the past has meant English, French, German, and Japanese, by June 4.

<http://www.adobe.com>

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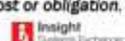
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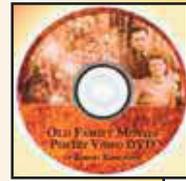
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AMX | SchoolView provides a world of technology at your fingertips

AMX | SchoolView might be the most complete K-12 technology solution in the market today, as it unifies multiple technologies that schools use every day on a single platform. As a result, administrators and teachers get simplified, touch-screen control and automation of technologies that include classroom control, distributed audio, video on demand, digital signage, public address systems, bells, security cameras, energy management systems, and emergency alerts—all while maximizing “green” savings.

“AMX | SchoolView has helped Round Rock ISD modernize traditional classroom technologies by using a single, networked platform,” said Ed Zaiantz, Round Rock ISD’s director of information. “By providing our teachers with an easy-to-use platform, it enabled us to upgrade the educational experience for our students. Teachers can now easily access and utilize a wider array of technology to enhance learning in the classroom.”

AMX | SchoolView aligns with the green-building initiatives that many school districts are implementing, as it automates the management of energy-consuming resources like PCs and AV equipment and further reduces costs by simplifying maintenance and support—which extends technology lifecycles. AMX | SchoolView is eligible for stimulus funding.

education@amx.com

<http://www.amx.com/schoolview>

Manage Windows and Mac devices easily with Absolute Manage

As schools expand the use of student computing, they must address inevitable administrative challenges. How can software licenses, security updates, inventory, and power usage be managed effectively, given limited resources? To automate and simplify IT processes, more school districts are turning to Absolute Manage, by Absolute Software.



Absolute Manage has the full range of capabilities schools need to manage both PC and Mac devices. With Absolute manager, you can track software applications; avoid over-install penalties; detect and remove unauthorized software; automatically update security patches; monitor and enforce configuration policies; deploy a complete operating system with standard applications to your computers; manage inventory by automatically gathering hundreds of data points from your devices and displaying them with user-friendly reports; save money and energy by deploying power-saving profiles to computers across your network; and much more.

Network administrators have praised Absolute Manage for its complete feature set, its functionality across both PCs and Macs, and the simplicity and speed of the installation process. For intelligent, automated, cross-platform computer management, look no further than Absolute Manage. Learn more by eMailing info@absolute.com.

<http://www.absolute.com>

Engage and motivate students with A+ Classroom Student Response Software

Wouldn't you like a fun way to engage and motivate your K-12 students to participate in classroom activities while building confidence?



A+ Classroom Student Response Software, from the American Education Corp., is a bank of more than 30,000 engaging, standards-aligned formative assessment items designed to improve student learning through interactive academic competitions, challenging quizzes, and automated assessments. A+ Classroom SRS works on many popular student response devices, as well as networked computers.

The product includes pre-packaged activities by subject area: science, math, language arts, social studies, ELL, health, and life skills. Activities are compatible with networked computers, Renaissance Responder and NEO2, Promethean ActiVote, eInstruction CPS RF and Pulse, TurningPoint ResponseCard RF and XR, H-ITT TX 3100 and TX 3200, and LearnStar V24 Starpad and StarLite.

For pricing information, please call (800) 222-2811 and ask for Kevin Lair. A free 30-day trial is available.

<http://www.aplusclassroom.com>



Expand your students' options with Aventa online courses

Aventa Learning is an award-winning provider of virtual school solutions, with more than 55,000 students served in 2009. Our online courses serve middle and high school students. We offer more than 140 courses, 19 AP courses, and 200-plus highly qualified instructors—and school district partners can expect a mere 72 hours from enrollment to online learning.

Aventa courses are designed to meet students' learning needs by aligning course content and assessments with state standards, proven instructional design theory, and accepted best practices in educational technology and instruction. Aventa accommodates the unique scheduling needs of students, without adding staff or classrooms.

From serving at-risk students struggling in the traditional classroom to helping high-achieving students seeking more challenging courses, Aventa can meet your school or district's needs. More than 1,000 virtual schools, charter schools, school districts, and state education departments across the United States rely on Aventa for expanded educational opportunities for their students.

(800) 684-3093

<http://www.aventallearning.com/>

Calypso offers one networked solution for classroom and school-wide audio

Imagine the dramatic financial and operational savings you could realize by combining two school audio systems on a single platform. Like most K-12 schools, yours likely has separate systems for classroom audio and

school-wide communications, including bells, pagers, intercoms, and emergency alerts. The result?

- Inflexible school-wide audio cabling
- Increased installation and maintenance costs
- Device duplication
- Potential for audio conflict

Introducing Calypso's Conductor Integrated School Communications System—a single-platform, school-wide communications solution that delivers financial and operational efficiencies by leveraging existing school-wide networks and investments in classroom AV. Conductor accommodates all classroom audio sources—PC, DVD, iPod, and more—while using streaming audio to serve school-wide audio communications requirements.

Delivering savings of up to 20 percent over traditional school PA systems, Conductor combines an easy-to-use Windows interface, an enterprise-class audio and device management server, and robust streaming audio hardware to deliver audio where and when it's needed. Conductor is a secure and reliable school-wide communications platform that integrates all audio—scheduled, on-demand, live, or recorded—while providing complete flexibility to meet changing needs.

Going to ISTE 2010? Visit us at booth #1078 for a Conductor demonstration.

<http://www.calypsosystems.com/integrated-school-communications>

Increase school readiness skills with the help of iStartSmart software

Developed by HATCH, iStartSmart is an educational software program designed to increase school readiness skills. Based on the most current research and learning standards, iStartSmart is an engaging, play-based system that has been child-tested in classrooms. The program is driven by an adaptive teaching technology that moves children through skill areas in a way that ensures competency before moving to the next level. The system includes built-in progress monitoring with fully formatted and printable reports for teachers, administrators, and parents.

The skill development area of iStartSmart, Shell Squad Games, includes five skill families identified for school readiness: Phonological Awareness, Numeric Operations, Language Development, Alphabet Knowledge, and Logic & Reasoning. Within these families, there are 18 skills and five different levels for each



skill. Henry's Hideout, the program's Free Play area, enhances the skill development with enrichment activities that include an art game and a nutrition game, as well as a playful, interactive room for children to explore. iStartSmart also includes Storytime, an enrichment area where children can access eBooks.

The All-in-One iStartSmart Computer Learning Center features an age-appropriate computer desk, the latest multi-touch computer hardware, and ECLaunch, a utility software program exclusive to HATCH that provides a safe, child-directed desktop management system for teachers and children.

HATCH representatives install Computer Learning Centers in each classroom, advise teachers on technol-

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ogy implementation, and provide complimentary, comprehensive training and staff development workshops with teachers to ensure the iStartSmart Computer Learning Center becomes an active, child-directed interest area in the classroom.

(800) 624-7968

<http://www.hatchearlychildhood.com>

i>clicker Student Response System transforms classrooms into active learning environments

As the classroom becomes a more active learning environment, teachers around the country are using a new interactive tool: i>clicker's student response system. i>clicker, a leader in higher education, is now rapidly expanding its reach into K-12 classrooms.

i>clicker was designed by educators, for educators, to help students play an active role in their own learning. The i>clicker system offers superior reliability, intuitive software, and a focus on student assessment and pedagogy. i>clicker's intuitive system, consisting of simple 6-button remotes and an instructor's receiver kit, operates at a wireless radio frequency and allows teachers to poll students anonymously. Students' focus remains on the lesson, not the technology.

i>clicker requires no installation of hardware or software, so any teacher can begin polling in minutes. Because i>clicker's polling menu bar floats over any application, teachers can ask questions using any material, including web sites, practice standardized test questions, or eBooks. i>clicker also works seamlessly with any brand of document camera and interactive whiteboard.



Developing ways to accurately assess student progress is critical to promote achievement. Using i>clicker to immediately gauge student comprehension helps track the progress of individual students or the whole class.

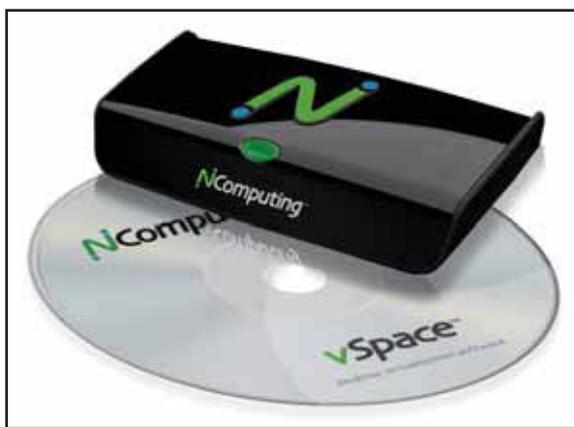
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With NComputing, multiple students can share a single computer

Educators around the world have the same problems: limited budgets and staff, not enough PCs, crowded and hot computer labs, and demand for more eLearning. There's only one way to do more with less—and that's to do things differently.

Today's computers are so advanced that most people use only a small fraction of their available power. NComputing taps this unused capacity so multiple students can simultaneously share one Windows or Linux PC. And even though they share a single system, each student gets his or her own rich PC experience—including web browsers, eMail, educational software, and multimedia. Every user has his or her own keyboard, screen, settings, applications, and files, so the users' ex-



perience is just like it would be if they were working at an independent PC.

The NComputing U170 sets a new standard for simple and affordable educational computing with impressive multimedia. The U170 solution combines NComputing's vSpace virtualization software and low-cost access devices that snap into place with USB plug-and-play simplicity.

Find out why millions of students in more than 10,000 schools across 140 countries are already using this remarkable technology—and how schools can increase students' access to computers and save money at the same time.

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educationsales@ncomputing.com

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Get the next generation of teaching tools...today!

RM Easiteach Next Generation is the latest version of RM's award-winning software program designed to deliver engaging and stimulating whole-class teaching using any interactive whiteboard, slate, or student response system. Hundreds of thousands of teachers across the United States have integrated RM Easiteach software tools into their curriculum, enabling them to easily create and present teaching and learning resources that incorporate text, clip art, animations, video, Flash files, hyperlinks, databases, and spreadsheets.

RM Easiteach Next Generation offers a new and improved design, providing intuitive navigation and easily accessible toolbars and widgets that allow users to create whole-class teaching activities to fit with specific learning objectives, simply and quickly. It has been designed



to support all lessons and is useful in any educational setting, regardless of students' ages or abilities.

RM Easiteach Next Generation provides the tools to help educators get the most from their investment in interactive whiteboards and whole-class teaching technologies. Built-in content packs in a range of topic areas will help fuel teacher ideas, and "Help me create..." tutorials will guide teachers through using the vast array of toolsets in a fun and practical way. With core tools for text, drawing, video, and animation, combined with a growing range of curriculum-focused activity builders and widgets, RM Easiteach Next Generation makes it easy for teachers to create and deliver interactive lessons that will captivate and educate every student.

(866) 728-6758 <http://www.RMeducation.com>



Samsung Techwin enhances the active learning experience with its new 'SAM CAM 860' Document Camera

Educators who want to engage their students in active visual learning through the use of a document camera now can enjoy Samsung's superior image quality in a compact size at a price under \$799. The state-of-the-art "SAM CAM 860" document camera includes:

- Superior optical image with 1.39 megapixel resolution
- 6x optical / 8x digital zoom, resulting in a 48x zoom
- SXGA output at 30 frames per second for high-resolution video streaming
- Built-in audio
- Auto photo capture
- Remote control
- Mac and PC compatible

Educators have determined that students taught with active learning instructional techniques, which engage and involve them in the lesson, will have better retention of the material.

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Highlights



Elena Kagan Nomination

President Obama discusses Elena Kagan's nomination; Kagan responds.



Tom Carroll Interview

Carroll, president of NCTAF, discusses his organization and why face-to-face learning is an outdated model.

And remember, you too can upload video to our site! Be sure to visit www.eschoolnews.tv and click on the 'Upload Video' tab, where you will find instructions on how to submit your videos.

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Department News

Duncan visits J.O. Wilson Elementary

Secretary Duncan visits J.O. Wilson Elementary to discuss the importance of eating well with students.

Turnaround Model

Harvard School for Excellence typifies the key components of the turnaround model.

ARRA Success Story

58 counselors in Fairfax County school district were notified that their jobs would be eliminated due to a \$120 million budget deficit. Through the ARRA, the school district received \$23.7 million.

Vendor News

Interactive Science Digital Path

Developed by leading science educators to meet today's generation in their digital world, Pearson announced its Interactive Science middle school program.

Brian Williams on NBC News Archives on Demand

NBC's Brian Williams and Lester Holt discuss the importance of the NBC News film and video archive as a learning resource.

Mizuni on CNBC & CNN Headline News

Mizuni, Inc. is featured on Inside Business Report with Fred Thompson. Mizuni is the focus of the show's "Data Management for 21st Century Education" segment.

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