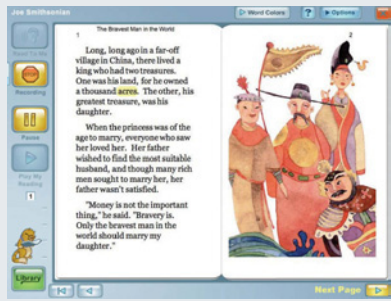


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## FCC to expand e-Rate funding

Agency wants to index the e-Rate to inflation and make it easier for schools to apply

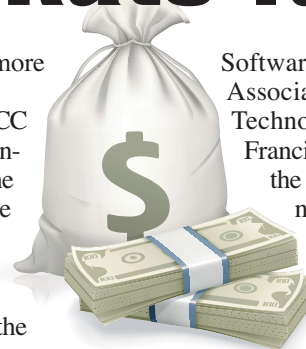
**Dennis Pierce**  
Editor

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has proposed new e-Rate rules designed to simplify the program and bring discounts

on networking services to more schools and libraries.

Among other actions, the FCC wants to index the e-Rate to inflation. That would result in the first increase in funding to the \$2.25 billion-a-year program since it began more than a decade ago.

But executives attending the



Software and Information Industry Association's annual Education Technology Industry Summit in San Francisco expressed disappointment in the FCC's proposal, saying it doesn't go far enough in meeting schools' needs.

Speaking off the record, one industry insider noted

**FCC, page 19**

## Video conferencing in the palm of your hand?



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Apple CEO Steve Jobs shows how the new iPhone 4 includes a front camera and software that allows for video conferencing. The iPhone 4 isn't the first smart phone with this technology, but it could help spur the use of mobile video. **Story, page 14.**

## Court mulls free speech online

Cases could decide limits on discipline for off-campus posts

**From staff and wire reports**

A U.S. appeals court in Philadelphia heard arguments June 3 over whether school officials can discipline students for making lewd, harassing, or juvenile internet postings from off-campus computers in a pair of cases that could help define the boundaries between students' free-speech rights and the rights of administrators to punish students for digital indiscretions outside of school.

Two students from two different Pennsylvania school districts are fighting sus-

pensions they received for posting derisive profiles of their principals on MySpace from home computers. The American Civil Liberties Union argued that school officials infringe on students' free-speech rights when

**Court, page 20**

## Common standards released

Key stakeholders urge adoption nationwide

**Laura Devaney**  
Managing Editor

A year-long effort to define a common set of academic standards for English and math culminated on June 2 with the release of the final version of the Common Core State Standards, which aim to establish consistent learning goals across states.

The K-12 English, language arts, and math standards are intended to ensure that students in Kentucky have the same learning opportunities as students in Wisconsin, for instance, and were developed in collaboration with content experts, state officials, teachers, school administrators, and parents.

A draft of the standards elicited roughly 10,000 public comments, and the final version reflects some of this feedback. Supporters and developers said they looked

**Standards, page 21**

## House passes major STEM bill

**From staff and wire reports**

The U.S. House of Representatives gave its assent on May 28 to \$84 billion in federal funding to help keep the country competitive in the fields of scientific and technological innovation, just days before a new list suggested China is challenging America's dominance in supercomputing.

Among other measures, the bill supports science, technology, engineering, and

**STEM bill, page 20**



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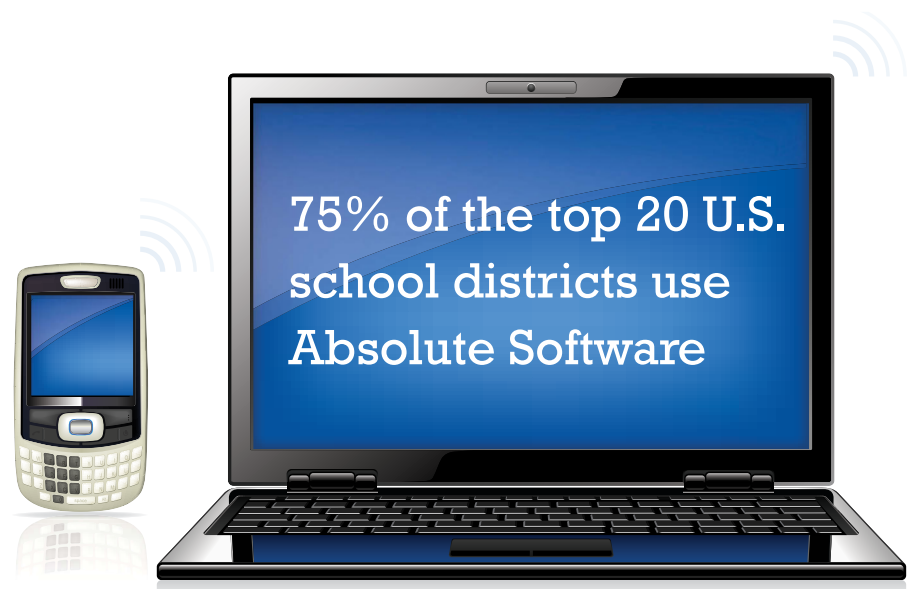
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JULY 2010

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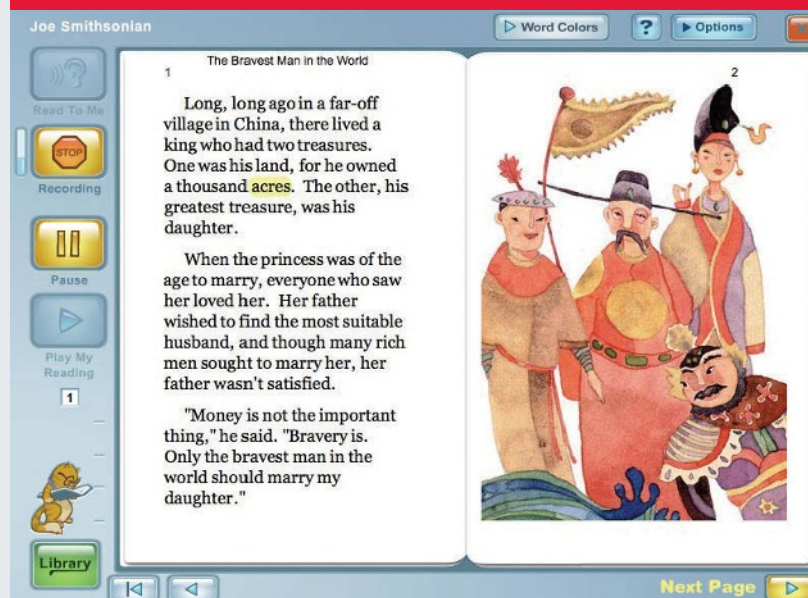
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### Private practices

Dennis Pierce, Editor  
dpierce@eschoolnews.com

I was trying to figure out what our front-page photo of Apple CEO Steve Jobs demonstrating the new iPhone 4's mobile video conferencing capability reminded me of, and then it hit me: The image of the Big Brother figure from Apple's famous 1984 commercial that heralded the launch of the Macintosh computer.

In that iconic TV ad, a female runner in a white tank top and red shorts (symbolizing the Mac) saves humanity from drab conformity by throwing a hammer at the giant Big Brother screen. The ad is an allusion to George Orwell's classic novel *1984*, which described a nightmarish society ruled by an omnipresent and ever-watchful government.

There's a vague resemblance between the close-up of Jobs' face on the video screen in our front-page photo and the image of Big Brother towering over the assembled workers in that old Apple commercial. But the similarity might not end there.

As Jobs demonstrated at the product's June 7 unveiling, the iPhone 4 adds a camera in the front and software that allows for mobile video conferencing with another iPhone user (story, page 14). Although the iPhone 4 isn't the first smart phone with this capability, Apple's powerful influence could help bring mobile video conferencing to the masses.

And that could be great for education. Right now, Apple's version of the technology only works over a Wi-Fi network, but imagine the possibilities when you can do this over a cellular connection: Without needing expensive equipment, scientists or students in the field could connect with their peers in the lab or the classroom for a face-to-face discussion that includes the sharing of live video images.

And yet, when you think about it further, the technology could be used for more troubling purposes, too—ones that could encroach on a user's privacy. For instance, if you use a work-issued iPhone for your job, what's to stop your boss from calling to check in on you during business hours? He or she could ask to see what you're doing at any time, unannounced—meaning there no longer would be any hiding from the watchful eyes of your employer.

How fitting, then, seems the similarity between the photo of Jobs on our front page and the image of Big Brother

in the old Apple commercial. And how ironic is it that Apple—which positioned itself as a champion for the rights of the people in that ad—would devise a technology that could lead to a possible Big Brother-like scenario?

Apple isn't the only large company whose technology raises privacy concerns. In Facebook's vision for how the internet should work, web sites would serve up information tailored to the interests of each user, based on the preferences they've indicated on the online social network. But privacy advocates have slammed the company's steps toward realizing this vision, forcing Facebook to give users easier control over who has ac-

**Privacy issues have evolved quite a bit from getting parents' permission to post photos online.**

cess to what type of information on the site (see Newslines, page 17).

Google, too, has taken recent flak for its privacy policies. Last month, Connecticut Attorney General Richard Blumenthal urged Google to "come clean to the American public" on whether the search giant illegally collected data from the wireless computer networks of residents and businesses for its mapping service, reports the Associated Press. Authorities in Germany and Australia already have launched their own investigations into the matter.

Meanwhile, some colleges are having second thoughts about moving their campus eMail systems to Google's free, hosted Gmail service for schools. The University of California Davis ended a Gmail pilot program for faculty in May, noting that faculty who took part in the pilot said the campus's commitment to privacy was "not demonstrated by Google, and that the appropriate safeguards are neither in place at this time nor planned for the near future."

Ironically, a move by Google to give users more privacy over their web searches has upset K-12 technology officials, who say Google's new encrypted search page prevents them from monitoring and logging the internet activity of students and staff and could put their federal e-Rate funding at risk. (See Associate Editor Meris Stansbury's detailed story on page 12.)

As companies grapple with the privacy implications of their technology innovations, school systems also are struggling with this issue. A Pennsylvania school district

at the center of a highly publicized "sexting" case last year was sued in May by one of the teens whose cell phone contained racy photos. The girl, 17, claims her principal's search of her cell phone was an illegal invasion of her privacy.

The teen's lawsuit against the Tunkhannock Area School District marks the second time this year that a Pennsylvania district has come under fire for alleged privacy violations. For several months, we've been closely following the developments in the case against the Lower Merion School District, which was sued earlier this year for remotely activating the webcams on district-issued laptops to help locate missing machines.

What all of these examples demonstrate is the need for school leaders to give serious thought to how rapidly evolving technologies affect their obligations for balancing the privacy, security, and productivity of students and staff. The issues surrounding privacy have evolved quite a bit from the days when the most pressing issue for schools was getting parents' permission to post their children's photos on the web—and even if you have a well-crafted set of privacy policies, you might want to revisit these policies if they're more than a few years old.

A school district's privacy policies should spell out what kinds of information and images are allowed to be collected from students and staff, how this information will be used, who has a right to it, and who does not. They also should address how new technologies may be used, or not, to capture and store this information—including by the technology vendors you work with every day.

The American Library Association has resources to help school librarians draft appropriate privacy policies, and organizations such as the Electronic Privacy Information Center and the Stanford Center for Internet and Society might help as well. And if you haven't done so already, your school district should specify a person—most likely the CIO or tech director—to ensure these privacy policies are being enforced.

Technology is advancing much more quickly than the laws can keep up. But that doesn't mean schools should be left behind as well. Addressing these issues now, and revisiting them every few years, could prevent your superintendent's photo from appearing above the fold on the front page of the local newspaper in the event of a privacy-related flap—and drawing the same comparisons to the Big Brother figure in that Apple ad of old. **eSN**



## 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](http://www.eschoolnews.com), search for the story in question, and add your own thoughts in the comments section. —The Editors

### Clearly speaking

Assistant Editor Maya T. Prabhu's story "Arizona law worries non-native educators" (page 14), about Arizona's new policy of removing English as a Second Language teachers whose accents are deemed too heavy, prompted a lengthy debate by our readers when it ran online May 25.

This comment from reader Andrew Mason was typical of many of the responses:

"I'd hate to point out the obvious, but *everyone* speaks with an accent. An accent is simply a regional pronunciation of a language. Most often, an accent has to do with where one learns their native language. ...

"So what constitutes a 'strong accent'? And what is the 'proper accent'? Since we're speaking about the English language, one might logically assume that the proper accent would be an English one. ... In this case, very few people in the United States are qualified to teach English, and the majority of Americans need to relearn how to speak. ...

"Obviously, this policy is ridiculous. If this country is going to be a multicultural one, the people must accept that there are going to be a number of different accents to its native language. It seems awfully suspicious to me. One might be led to believe this might have more to do with issues of immigration than anything else."

A reader identified as "computerhead" was more blunt in criticizing the policy: "The three Arizona measures establish a pattern. Think Mississippi, 1948. South Africa, 1968. The rationalizations smell the same to those who have a non-white field of experience."

On the other side of the issue was reader "iwalani," who wrote:

"Although the definition of a 'heavy accent' when speaking any language is certainly somewhat subjective, [the definition of a] qualified English teacher's mastery of and ability to teach proper English grammar and good writing skills [is] not.

"An ELL teacher is, by definition, a teacher of the

English language; it follows, therefore, that the English he or she teaches to those of any age learning English as a second language should ... be correct and proper, and that any teacher whose skills are not adequate to imparting this level of instruction should be questioned, just as any mainstream English teacher's lack of these skills and ability to teach them should likewise be questioned."

Seeking to find a middle ground in the debate, "avenir1961" wrote:

"I think the point many are missing is the 'heavily accented' and 'ungrammatical.' ... Personally, I don't want any teacher teaching my child if his or her accent is so heavy that (s)he cannot be easily understood or if (s)he has poor grammar. ...

"Let's not jump ship on non-native speakers teaching, and let's not jump ship on Arizona for seeking to improve the educational system. It is obvious that a problem has been identified. The solution has not yet been chosen, but there is one available!" **eSN**



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## Online update

# Security expert offers valuable advice for schools

New eSN blog contains insights on securing school buildings, emergency notification, and more

### From staff reports

Six things administrators can do to enhance the safety of their schools ... two key ways to prevent bullying from occurring ... how to control access to school buildings more effectively: These are some of the many helpings of wisdom served up in a new blog on school security at **eSchool News Online**:

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

Written by Patrick Fiel, public safety adviser for ADT Security Services and a former executive director of security for the Washington, D.C., Public School System, the blog offers valuable school safety insights every Tuesday and Thursday.

Fiel—who learned how to protect stakeholders' safety during his 22 years of service in the Army Military Police Corps, where he had special assignments to the Pentagon, NATO headquarters in Belgium, and the West Point Military Academy—has been a go-to source for the media on public safety issues for years. During his time with ADT, Fiel has conducted more than 100 television, radio, newspaper, and magazine interviews as a public and school safety expert.

In his blog for **eSN Online**, Fiel gives his perspective on a number of school security issues. Already, he's written about bullying, keeping intruders off campus, mass notification systems, how to maintain your security investment, and how to receive a free risk assessment, among other topics.

On the subject of bullying, Fiel says a new Massachusetts law that requires school staff to report incidents of bullying to the principal, who must notify the parents of both the victim and the bully, is a good first step that should be followed in the other 49 states.

"But there are a couple of things missing here," he writes.

"First, all schools should have hotlines that allow anyone to anonymously report incidents of bullying or violence. And schools need to make sure they have surveillance cameras in hallways, stairways, lunchrooms, locker areas, playgrounds, and outside restrooms, where bullying is most likely to occur."

He explains: "Often, charges of bullying get down to a 'he-said, she-said' situation. Having recorded evidence of incidents can break that potential logjam."

In another blog entry, Fiel observes that while everyone involved with schools has a role in keeping them safe, it is the administrators who can have the largest effect.

He describes six ways administrators can make a difference, including building strong relationships with local law-enforcement officials; paying attention to the best practices, policies, and procedures in place on other campuses; and encouraging parents to get involved in their children's safety.

Other advice from Fiel includes a lesson in why Twitter isn't reliable for emergency notification, and a suggestion to preserve your investment in security technologies by getting a maintenance agreement with an experienced system integrator.

"It's really not much different than taking your car to the mechanic for regular checkups," he notes.

### New Educator Resource Centers

#### Computing in the Cloud

<http://www.eschoolnews.com/2010/06/02/computing-in-the-cloud/>

Cloud computing—the idea of moving computer software and storage to a centralized server—is growing in popularity, thanks to its simplicity and affordability. On the flip side, schools will need robust networks with secure and reliable web connections to take advantage of cloud computing's benefits. With support from Microsoft, we've compiled this list of stories from the eSN Online archives to help you evaluate whether cloud computing makes sense for your district.

#### How technology can help with language instruction

<http://www.eschoolnews.com/2010/05/10/how-technology-can-help-with-language-instruction/>

Learning a foreign language is an increasingly important skill for success in the global economy—and learning to speak and read English fluently is vital to the success of ESL students. With support from Recorded Books, we've assembled this collection of stories to help you understand how schools are using multimedia technology to enhance language learning within the walls of their classrooms ... and beyond.



# Meet the future of assistive technology

**Meris Stansbury**  
Associate Editor

In what might result in great strides forward for assistive technology, the National Center for Technology Innovation (NCTI) has announced the winners of its "Tech in the Works 2010" competition, which funds innovative projects that pair researchers with industry vendors to improve outcomes for all students—especially those with special needs.

NCTI will award \$20,000 to each of four research teams this year. Each team has pledged to match this amount to facilitate its research project.

"Tech in the Works," which began in 2005, promotes collaborative research in developing innovative assistive technologies. Funding for the competition is provided by NCTI's own grant money, which comes from the federal Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP).

"The key part of this program is collaboration," said Heidi Silver-Pacuilla, deputy director of NCTI. "What's crucial to getting these projects from the lab to the people who need it most ... is the partnership between researchers and vendors."

The four winners this year are:

1. "Touching Lives and Creating Abilities: Social and Communication Skills with the iPad." Researchers Scott Renner and Margaret Flores of Auburn University have partnered with PUSH Product Design to improve the social and communication skills of young children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) using Apple's iPad.

Taking advantage of the iPad's large touch screen, PUSH will develop communication software and podcasts designed for the device. The communication software will target children's communication skills, and the podcasts will target their social skills. The podcasts will display social story interventions using words, pictures, audio, and video. Once the software and podcasts are developed for the Apple iPad, Auburn University's Assistive Technology department will assess their impact on children's social and communication skills.

2. "Efficacy of the GoTalk Express 32 for Increasing Communication." Researchers Susan M. Bashinski, Melissa Darrow Engleman, and Alana Zambone of East Carolina University have partnered with Attainment Company to examine the effect of Attainment Company's newly developed GoTalk Express 32, a voice output communication device, on the communication rates of individual learners who have disabilities.

GoTalks are battery powered augmentative/alternative communication (AAC) devices used by people who can't communicate well by speaking. Another person (a teacher, classmate, sibling, or friend, for example) records messages the user likely will need, and these are linked with an overlay of pictures, words, or symbols that help the user remember where to find these messages. Users can "talk" simply by pressing on a picture to play a message, allowing them—maybe for the first time—to communicate quickly and easily just by pressing a button. The Express 32 has the added ability to play multiple messages in sequence.

3. "Interactive Storybooks for Deaf Kindergarteners." Researchers Becky Sue Parton and Robert Hancock of Southeast Louisiana University, and Dan Hoffman and Curt Radford of Lamar University, have partnered with Burton Vision to study how storybook sharing can serve as a bridge between American Sign Language (ASL) and the language of English print books for deaf children. Conceptually, the project aims to use a real book in combination with a mobile computer so that deaf children and their parents can have story time in a more natural way while developing both languages and tracking progress.

For young deaf children who receive information primarily through ASL and are learning to read and write in English, a system similar to Accelerated Reader does not exist, according to the project's abstract. To address this issue, the researchers have designed a project called MBA Bound. ("MBA" stands for "Multimedia Books & Assessment.")

The system includes a hard-copy book with embedded radio-frequency identification (RFID) tags, an RFID reader, a netbook, modified LAMBERT software designed to launch video clips of the story in ASL, and specialized Burton Vision software for students and teachers to use in assessing book comprehension. Team members will partner with six schools for the deaf to test the MBA Bound project for its feasibility and its effect, if any, on storybook comprehension.

4. "Seeing the Possibilities with Videophone Technology." Researchers Judith Emerson, John Bishop, and Linda McDowell of the University of Southern Mississippi, and Toni Hollingsworth of the Mississippi Deaf-Blind Project, have partnered with Sorenson Communications to implement a face-to-face social networking program for students with deaf-blindness who often lack opportunities to develop meaningful relationships because of the challenges that combined hearing and vision loss create for connecting with other people and accessing information.

The term "deaf-blind" brings to mind someone like Helen Keller, but deaf-blindness has many forms and affects learning differently for each person, the researchers say. Deaf-blindness does not refer to a total inability to see or hear, and many individuals with dual sensory impairment have some residual vision and/or hearing. The project aims to provide evidence that, with the use of Sorenson Videophone Technology, students who are deaf-blind can benefit from available technologies.

The winning teams will share preliminary findings from their research at the 2010 Technology Innovators Conference in Washington, D.C., Nov. 15-16. **eSN**

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# Librarians weigh in on national ed-tech plan

## From staff and wire reports

School libraries are an important resource that should be leveraged as state and local leaders implement the recommendations in the National Education Technology Plan, the American Library Association (ALA) says.

In comments filed with the U.S. Department of Education (ED) on May 17, ALA said it applauds many of the plan's recommendations. The organization also stated its case for why school librarians should play a key role in state and local discussions on school technology use.

"The school librarian, as an expert in new and emerging information and communication tools, intellectual property issues, ... new interpretations of fair use and use of Creative Commons licensing, ... and information literacies—now often referred to as "transliteracies"—is a critical team member," ALA said.

In its filing, ALA listed examples of how school libraries are "at the forefront of creative, meaningful, ethical, and innovative technology integration in many schools throughout the country."

For instance, the school librarian at Chesapeake High School in Baltimore County, Md., was heavily involved in the school's creation of a 3-D research and learning lab, ALA said—where students combine traditional research done in the school library with virtual learning environments in a program that has helped boost the school's enrollment.

The organization also responded to many of the specific recommendations in the national ed-tech plan with its own observations.

In response to the plan's idea that technology should facilitate 24-7 learning, ALA noted: "Use of technology outside of school varies depending on availability and socioeconomic status. Devices such as cell phones, however, play an important role in bridging the digital divide. A Pew Study reports that 41 percent of teens from households earning less than \$30,000 annually go online with their cell phone— and 21 percent of teens who do not otherwise go online do so with their cell phones."

ALA also observed that many public and school libraries work together to support learning beyond the school walls.

"Partnerships include public libraries collaborating with teachers and school librarians in collecting resources that complement student research projects, offering online tutoring, and participating in classroom visits," the group said.

"Additionally, many school librarians are finding ways to extend the libraries' resources to be available on demand, outside of the school building, so that students' information needs can be supported at the moment of need, rather than after the learning moment has passed."

As for the plan's focus on teaching, ALA said it "strongly supports" the notion of "connected teaching" put forth by the national ed-tech plan—and it said school libraries play an important role in realizing this vision.

"Collaboration across disciplines is critical in order to address the learning needs of the students," the organization said. "School librarians eagerly participate in team initiatives and collaborate daily with teachers to create a robust curriculum that meet state curriculum standards but often go beyond the minimum requirement to

provide enriched learning experiences for students across grade levels."

On the subject of schools' ed-tech infrastructure needs, ALA said a study on public library connectivity found that successful libraries had effective leadership, a clear vision, a champion and other advocacy for the vision, strong partnerships, demonstration models, a solid technical plan, and staff training.

The group also said that many of the plan's recommendations rely on the success of the Federal Communications Commission's National Broadband Plan.

"As schools move toward making 24-7 learning more common, there needs to be

a recognition that this will challenge some students' ability to keep up with their peers simply because they do not have access to home broadband," ALA said. "The public library supports these students, as well as students who may not have a robust enough home connection to effectively participate in online activities. Just as [schools'] infrastructure ... must support multiple users and heavy bandwidth use, so must public library infrastructure."

Finally, regarding student productivity, this should be measured "in a way that reflects how their performance will be measured and evaluated in the future workplace," ALA said. "The goal of any

productivity measurement should be to support learners and provide them authentic feedback that they can use for continual improvement and growth." **eSN**

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# Ky. offers cloud-based software to 700,000 school users

State officials expect to save \$6.3M in one of the world's largest cloud-computing rollouts

## From staff and wire reports

In what state officials are calling one of the largest and fastest-ever deployments of cloud computing in the world, the Kentucky Department of Education has chosen Microsoft's Live@edu service to bring 21st-century communication and collaboration tools to more than 700,000 students, faculty, and staff statewide.

The cloud-based service, in which the software is hosted on Microsoft's servers and delivered to users via the internet, already has been rolled out to more than half a million users, officials said—and they expect the project will save them about \$6.3 million in operating costs over four years by not having to install or maintain the software themselves.

Live@edu is a no-cost suite of online software, based on familiar Microsoft communication and productivity tools. With Live@edu, students and educators can access their files and information in the cloud virtually anytime, anywhere, through popular web browsers and from any internet-connected PC or mobile phone, Microsoft says.

"With Live@edu, all school districts in Kentucky have access to the same powerful Microsoft applications and

Web 2.0 technologies. That means we can close the technology gap between rich and poor districts and level the playing field for students, regardless of where they live," said Terry Holliday, Kentucky's commissioner of education. "Because they are 'in the cloud,' Kentucky schools will always stay up-to-date with the latest innovations. And the features are far greater than anything we could have afforded to offer to every school in Kentucky."

The deployment is not only one of the largest in the world, but also one of the fastest, Microsoft says. The state reportedly moved more than half a million people from some 180 distributed Microsoft Exchange Server 2003 on-site servers to Live@edu during a single weekend. The rapid migration helped minimize disruption and gave users faster access to new technologies, such as Microsoft Exchange Server 2010, which powers Live@edu's cloud-based eMail service.

"Historically, it would have required months and potentially years to migrate hundreds of thousands of people to a new solution," said Chuck Austin of the Kentucky Department of Education's Office of Education Technology.

"With Microsoft's cloud technology and a collaborative focus between

Microsoft and the Kentucky Department of Education on the planning aspects, we were able to dramatically reduce the implementation cycle and migrate everyone in a single weekend."

Kentucky has become the second U.S. state in recent weeks to move to a statewide cloud-based model for school communication and collaboration. In April, Oregon announced that its 540,000 public school students would be the first to use Google Apps for Education in K-12 schools statewide, a move that Oregon officials said would save the state about \$1.5 million in IT costs.

Kentucky's announcement also ratchets up the rivalry between Microsoft and Google, both of which are competing to attract education users of their web-based eMail and productivity software.

"With [a] single sign-on, Live@edu integrates with existing school systems, including school web portals, allowing people to access all content with one identity that makes it easier to accomplish their work," said Sig Behrens, general manager for U.S. Education at Microsoft. "More important, Live@edu will help transform the learning environment by extending education opportunities beyond the traditional classroom walls and [will] help students master the



Ky. is the second U.S. state to move toward cloud computing for students.

technology they will use in their future careers." **eSN**

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# Wisconsin service agency aims to reinvent education

**Laura Devaney**  
Managing Editor

With support from all of its 45 superintendents, a Wisconsin regional service agency is determined to change the very nature of public education so that all students are equipped with the 21st-century skills necessary to compete and succeed in a global workplace.

Among its many innovative strategies for transforming teaching and learning, the service agency is moving from age-based groups of students to progress-based groupings; dropping standardized practices in favor of customized learning plans; phasing out print textbooks in favor of dynamic digital resources; and shifting from teacher-led instruction to a blend of face-to-face and online approaches.

Southeastern Wisconsin's Cooperative Educational Service Agency (CESA) No. 1 is one of 12 state regional service agencies and covers 45 school districts encompassing about a third of the state's student population. It includes Milwaukee Public Schools, the largest urban district in the state, as well as the smallest K-12 schools.

"Our starting point was that public education as we knew it was in danger of becoming totally dysfunctional," said Tim Gavigan, executive director of CESA No. 1.

"Rather than tweaking the existing system, we went back to affirm the core purposes of public education, separate those out from the systemic decisions made along the way 200 years ago—and those enduring core purposes guided our work."

That spurred a mobilization of a regional collaborative effort to address the issue, and superintendents realized that public education must be totally transformed to have the kind of lasting impact that the superintendents sought.

The superintendents approached the CESA No. 1 Control Board, an elected board from all 45 districts, asking for support, and from that meeting emerged a resolution to enact the transformation.

Group leaders organized into learning communities and took a series of workshops, including some led by national education consultants, to educate themselves on the current status of local and national education, as well as promising transformational education practices.

Those workshops led the superintendents to develop "Transforming Public Education: A Regional Call to Action," a white paper that establishes background and actions for true educational change.

State Superintendent Tony Evers endorsed CESA No. 1's efforts, provided technical support, and applied for a partnership grant with the Council of Chief State School Officers and the Stupski Foundation.

At the CESA No. 1 annual board delegates meeting in late May, James Rickabaugh, superintendent of the Whitefish Bay School District, said outdated school design and lack of funding are two major components in the white paper.

"The schools we have were designed for a different era with a different mission," he said.

And there is not enough money to support current educational practices while advancing teaching and learning to incorporate 21st-century skills.

"The lesson of the stimulus funds is that the money goes to stability, not necessarily innovation," he said. Even if schools had enough money to stabilize educational systems and then innovate, they would still be "innovating within the current [outdated] design," he added.

"We don't have the capacity in the schools, as they're designed, to educate all students at high levels in a way that would make them internationally competitive," Rickabaugh said.

CESA No. 1 will focus on research-based and emerging best practices to combine the core enduring principles of education with innovative ideas that will create ethical citizens and critical thinkers, he said.

Part of CESA No. 1's plan includes establishing Innovation Zones, which Gavigan said are "focused, collaborative networks of schools, educators, communities, higher education, and other community business partners."

Innovation Zones will establish sustainable and scalable, high-quality education and innovation, all of which will be research-based. The zones will be piloted in specific geographical regions with a goal of being replicated for other schools outside of that geographic area.

Each zone likely will work on one aspect of transformation—one zone might focus on personalized learning, for example, while another might work on curriculum—all while working together.

Educator practices, and professional

development to guide educators along the way, are two of the most important components in the transformation.

"The dynamic between the learner and the teacher is the most important dynamic that occurs," Gavigan said. "At the heart of it is understanding how that dynamic works and emphasizing that as the starting point."

He added: "Most of our current leadership has not been trained in a different educational delivery service system, nor have they been trained in terms of how to take an educational delivery system and transform it."

This led the CESA No. 1 Control Board to focus on professional development in terms of the processes and skills required to enact the educational transformation.

"We see the educator as the key to success," Gavigan said. "You can tinker with systems [and] funding methodologies, but if something substantial is not changed with regard to the teacher-student interaction, we have not accomplished the transformation." **eSN**

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# BECTA's closing sends shock waves throughout ed tech

## U.K. schools are losing a valuable ICT asset—and even U.S. schools could feel the impact of its loss

**Meris Stansbury**  
Associate Editor

In a move that has sent shock waves throughout the education technology world, the British Educational Communications and Technology Agency (BECTA), which has been a leading international voice in research and support for using information and communications technology (ICT) in schools, is shutting its doors—a victim of the new U.K. government's cost-cutting measures.

BECTA's closing could leave many U.K. schools on their own as they struggle to integrate technology effectively into teaching and learning, and its absence could be felt in the United States as well, observers say.

A "quango," or non-departmental body, BECTA is the U.K. government agency that has led that nation's drive to ensure the effective and innovative use of technology in teaching and learning. Through BECTA's work, U.K. schools have received expert advice on ICT purchases and applications in the classroom. BECTA also led the U.K.'s Home Access plan, an ambitious national initiative that sought to offer certain low-income families with children a free laptop computer and internet access.

Most recently, BECTA, with the help of RM Education, was the governing body behind the movement to develop a Common File Format (CFF) for interactive whiteboard content.

However, a new political administration came into power in May, putting in motion the Treasury's decision to close BECTA by November 2010. The move is part of the new government's plan to cut 6.2 billion pounds from the national budget for fiscal 2010-11, a plan necessitated by the global financial recession, officials say.

According to the U.K. newspaper *The Guardian*, the staff at BECTA's headquarters anticipated cuts and job losses, but few were prepared for the 12-year agency's closure. The closure will mean the loss of 240 jobs—and the loss of what BECTA Chairman Graham Badman said are valuable ICT services for schools and their students.

"Naturally we are very disappointed at the government's decision," said Badman and Stephen Crowe, chief executive officer of BECTA, in a joint statement. "BECTA is a very effective organization with an international reputation, delivering valuable service to schools, colleges, and children. Our procurement arrangement saves the schools and colleges many times more than BECTA costs to run. Our Home Access program will give laptops and broadband to over 200,000 of the poorest children. Our top priorities are now to make sure we have an orderly and fair process for staff, and that as far as possible schools, colleges, and children continue to benefit from the savings and support that BECTA has provided."

According to the agency's web site, 1.5 billion pounds has been spent on technology for U.K. schools through BECTA's procurement agreements since 2002, and this has saved the nation's educational system 223 million pounds—or an average of 28 million pounds per year. BECTA also says it has achieved cost savings of 55 million pounds for educational institutions and providers in the past year alone.



BECTA is a victim of the new U.K. administration's cost-cutting measures.

One example of how BECTA has helped U.K. schools save money on ICT is its support for open-source technology. In 2005, the agency produced a paper suggesting that schools could halve their ICT bills by adopting open-source software rather than Microsoft's Windows and other applications. In 2008, it again suggested that schools should adopt more open-source software—which led Microsoft to drop some of its costs for licensing software to U.K. schools.

The U.K. government says BECTA's closing will mean individual schools will be able to decide for themselves how to use technology. According to the Treasury, the closing aims to cut government spending waste, cut bureaucratic red tape, and protect individual school spending.

In a *Guardian* poll launched recently, teachers voted BECTA the most valuable organization among a list of six national bodies; 49 percent voted it the most valuable, compared with just 3.9 percent for the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency.

However, when asked who should be responsible for procuring technology, only 9.6 percent of teachers voted for BECTA, while 40.5 percent voted for independent schools.

Although closing BECTA will save the government money, some analysts say it will only hurt schools and the ICT industry in the long run.

"What happens to the existing technology and the knowledge that has been gained as part of these and other big IT projects?" asked Sarah Burnett, business intelligence analyst at the Ovum Group. "It is a given that the sector has to save money, but the current plans, if rushed through, could lead to good assets and skills being shed only to have to be redeveloped or regained later."

While there are a number of other government bodies that offer procurement expertise, including the Office of Government Commerce and other regional organizations, "it's not clear which will take on BECTA's ongoing contracts and programs," Burnett said. "There is a wealth of knowledge and technical know-how that the body has gained over a number of years and that must not go to waste."

Chris Keates, general secretary of the teaching union NASUWT, said in an interview with *The Guardian* that "scrapping BECTA represents a false economy marked

by an overriding principle of political ideology," rather than a genuine attempt to receive value for money.

"Schools often go for the most expensive systems, and they can fall prey to the slick salesmanship the big companies can afford," Keates told the newspaper. "They often get stuck with systems that are not fit for purpose, [are] difficult to integrate with other systems, and [are] ... expensive to maintain."

Not everyone agrees. One local school leader posted the following on a U.K. learning technology web site:

"Formed at a time when eMails were considered cutting-edge, BECTA was charged with taking the pain out of ICT in schools—good in theory, but in practice contracts between large software providers and [local education agencies] meant that schools had been under pressure to purchase over-priced, often badly designed systems. ... With the freedom from LEAs and BECTA, schools can now choose smarter, user-friendly software from start-up educational software companies, which has already shown to save huge amounts."

As BECTA prepares to close down, it's unclear what will happen to its current projects—or how U.K. schools will proceed with their ICT initiatives from here.

"There will be an orderly wind-down of BECTA over the rest of this government year. We anticipate completing all work planned for them and remain committed to CFF despite BECTA's closing," an RM spokesman told *eSchool News*.

"CFF will survive BECTA, as—like many of the organization's initiatives—it represents a real K-12 requirement, and one that will only increase with further adoption of interactive technologies and use of learning platforms."

According to reports, BECTA's Home Access plan hasn't yet been shut down. The U.K.'s Department of Education said the plan will continue, but not for much longer. The hotline number is still taking applications and will continue to do so; however, additional applications for free laptops will only be accepted until the set amount of allocated funding dries up, which is expected to happen sometime this summer.

A government spending review set to take place this fall will determine the program's future and whether it is deemed successful enough to continue.

In the United States, ed-tech leaders

agreed the loss of BECTA would be felt by U.S. schools as well.

"BECTA has consistently done some of the most important global research on ICT in education," said Keith Krueger, CEO of the Consortium for School Networking, a nonprofit organization that has frequently worked with BECTA. "Not having them will be a loss to everyone wanting to know about best practices around technology in education."

But ed-tech experts were divided over how BECTA's closing might affect ICT investment in the U.K. or other nations.

Krueger said he doesn't think the move should be interpreted as a sign that the new British government doesn't value ICT in education.

"The jury is still out on that question," he said. "Closing of BECTA is specifically a budget-cutting strategy, which the Conservative Party ran on a platform to end 'quango' government agencies."

He also said that while schools in the U.K. might suffer, he's not convinced it will necessarily discourage other countries from investing in education technology.

"For over 15 years, the U.K. has been a leader in investing in ICT in education. Clearly this is a bump in the road for them, but I think we have to see if it really is a retrenchment of strategy or simply a political decision about one specific agency," he said.

Don Knezek, CEO of the International Society for Technology in Education, holds a different view.

Knezek, who recently visited BECTA senior staff, said the decision to terminate government funding of BECTA might cause other governments across Europe to re-examine how they provide leadership and support to schools for transforming education through technology.

He said that as he continues to travel internationally, the closing of BECTA is "the 'shot heard 'round the world' in the ed-tech community."

"With the current world economy and the U.K.'s traditional influence on education outside the U.K., I believe it is likely to lead to decreased direct government funding for technology use in schools in many nations," Knezek said.

He continued, "I am concerned for the schools in the U.K. In situations where there is strong and consistent centralized effort to improve learning with innovative and effective use of technology—Korea, Singapore, Hong Kong—we see not only high levels of adoption of technology, but improved performance on international comparisons of educational achievement and effectiveness as well. The U.K. is facing a more complex landscape now to foster and nurture improved learning across that nation through innovative and effective uses of technology, and one might reasonably expect slower and less universal progress."

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# Software could ease pain of Windows 7 migration

InstallFree's Bridge 2.0 creates 'portable virtual apps' that can run on any version of Windows

## From staff and wire reports

The migraine-inducing process of migrating Windows from XP to 7 could get easier now that virtualization developer InstallFree has released InstallFree Bridge 2.0, a program that reportedly eliminates software compatibility issues.

InstallFree said this latest product should help speed up the migration of schools and businesses to Windows 7. Bridge 2.0 does this by giving users the ability to run older versions of Microsoft Internet Explorer and other applications on Microsoft's newest operating system—a process the company calls the “application repackaging business.”

InstallFree says its software creates isolated, modular, and portable virtual applications that can run on any version of Windows and be updated on the fly. These applications integrate seamlessly with the user's environment and communicate with the operating system (OS) and other applications without making any changes to the underlying OS file system or registry, according to the company.

“The typical problem is that you install an app, and it isn't compatible with another app or program or breaks that app or program. By isolating these applications, these problems won't happen anymore,” said Alon Yaffe, director of marketing for InstallFree.

Even though Windows 7 has an “XP Mode,” which allows users to run a virtual edition of XP from inside Windows 7, Yaffe said this mode is more of a “one-off, or niche solution,” that isn't effective if you have multiple conflicting applications.

“We are hearing from customers that ... they don't want to start dealing with VM-based solutions because they are trying to get rid of XP, not perpetuate it—they need something that will preserve the end-user experience and performance, while at the same time reduce the overhead for IT,” he said. “InstallFree [Bridge] does not require a full Windows XP VM to be deployed to every machine.”

Yaffe pointed to ANGEL Learning, a learning management system (LMS) used by several schools, to show how InstallFree can help.

“ANGEL Learning has web-based apps, but these apps have a dependency on plug-ins and different browser versions. By isolating these apps, they still think they're running on XP,” he said.

InstallFree supports full virtualization of Internet Explorer and can run multiple versions of the browser side-by-side on a single OS. For example, virtualized versions of both IE 6 and IE 7 can run at the same time on Windows 7, and each InstallFree Virtual (IFV) app can be configured to use its own specific version of Internet Explorer for full compatibility.



InstallFree's Bridge helped Georgia Northwestern College move to Windows 7.

What's more, URL Redirection rules can be defined to open each application in the right version of the browser automatically, Yaffe said.

Another perk to using InstallFree is its ability to support secure shared computing, he said. For instance, IFV apps can be assigned to specific users and computers and then delivered “on-the-fly” to any shared Windows PC at the time they are needed. This way, students reportedly can access their personal learning applications from any PC, whether these apps are already installed or not.

***InstallFree says its software creates modular virtual apps that can run on any version of Windows and be updated on the fly.***

Each IFV app can be removed instantly from the shared PC at the end of the user session, and IFV apps run in a protected environment that prevents users from modifying core application configurations. However, users are allowed to customize apps at the same time, even on locked-down PCs, which InstallFree says can help with teaching flexibility (for example, installing an add-on to Microsoft Excel).

Application changes made by the user are saved to a separate file that can be backed up, transferred to a new environment, or completely reset by school IT staff to restore the environment to its original state.

“Think of it like a Lego model,” explained Yaffe. “You can build the model according to its original design, but you can also add on other pieces if you want to make it your own—[and] each of these additions will be noted. However, at any time, you can remove those extra additions and know where they come from and what each are.”

If users accidentally upload malicious software, “this addition is separated in its own layer, and IT can simply remove that layer,” he said.

Schools and universities such as Georgia Northwestern Technical College, Indiana University of Pennsylvania (IUP), and Peach County Schools in Georgia are realizing the benefits of using Bridge 2.0, such as cost and time savings.

“InstallFree made it possible for us to migrate our environment to Windows 7,” said Dennis Thomas, information systems director of Georgia Northwest Technical College.

“We had many critical desktop and web-based applications that were not compatible with Windows 7. InstallFree enabled us to virtualize our Windows XP applications and then deploy them without any changes to Windows 7. For our web applications, InstallFree made it possible for us to run them using virtualized versions of Internet Explorer 6 and 7 on Windows 7. Without using InstallFree, we would not have been able to complete our migration project as planned.”

InstallFree Bridge is available for free evaluation, either by downloading the software or by using InstallFree's new online Hands-On Lab, which enables users to test the product “in the cloud.” Users can register for the evaluation on the InstallFree web site.

The company also has announced a limited-time promotional discount to help customers get a jump-start on their Windows 7 migration projects.

Said Yaffe: “It's really less about this whole concept of virtualization than it is about the question: ‘How do I make my applications work?’ It's more about how technology can solve a very painful problem.” **eSN**

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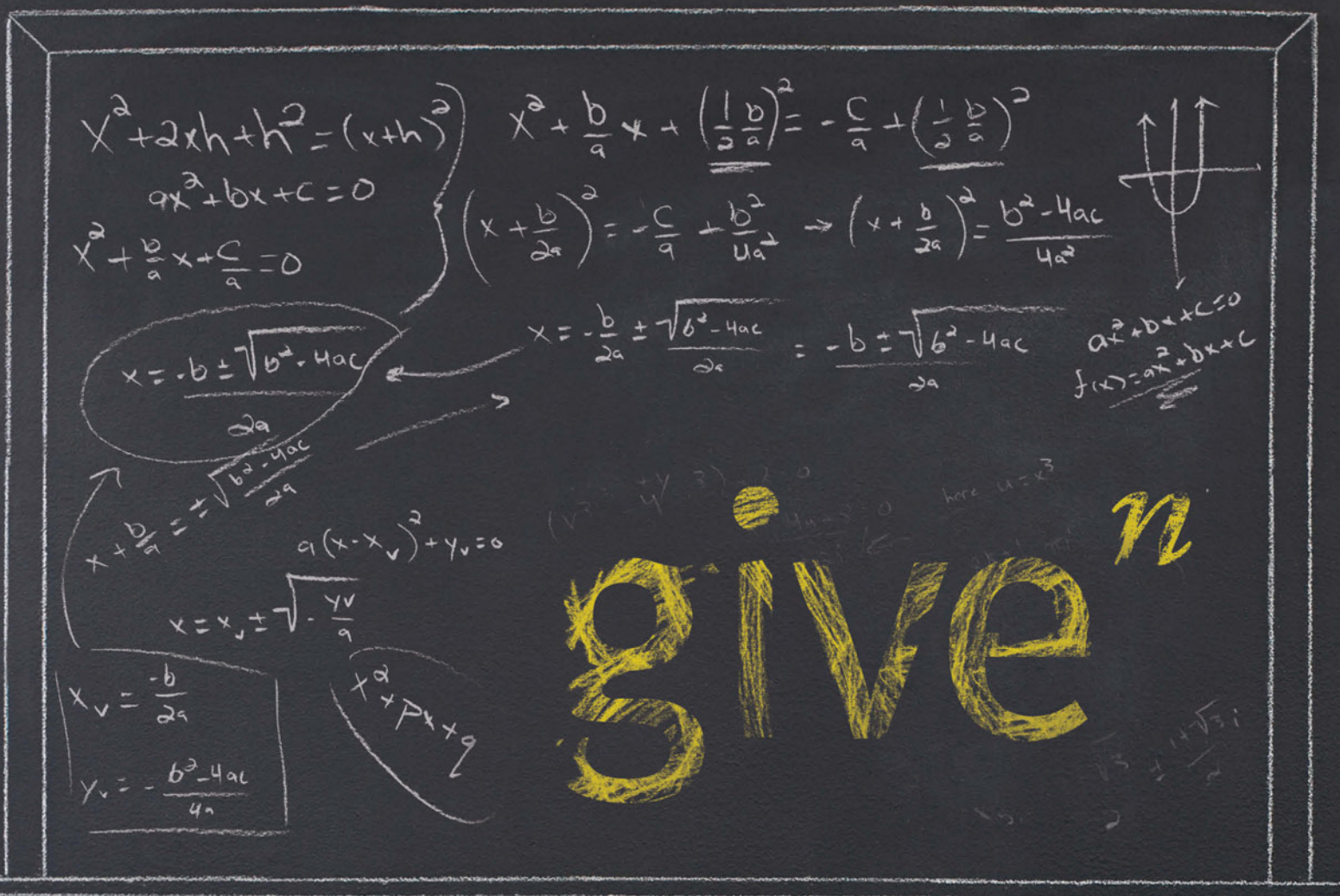
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# Google's encrypted search creates problems for schools

**Meris Stansbury**  
Associate Editor

A new encrypted search feature that internet search giant Google Inc. rolled out in May is causing problems for schools, which say the service keeps them from complying with the Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA) and could put their federal e-Rate funding at risk.

The service lets users search the web in a way that can't be tracked by employers or internet service providers. Google launched a beta version of the service May 21 to give users more control over the searches they make; the company has come under fire from privacy groups in recent months for how it handles sensitive information.

But in accommodating privacy advocates, Google ironically has angered K-12 ed-tech officials, many of whom are now blocking access not only to Google's encrypted search page but also Gmail and Google Docs. That could be a problem for Google, which is competing with Microsoft in supplying free software for communicating and collaborating to schools.

The encrypted search feature, which can be accessed at <https://www.google.com>, uses Secure Sockets Layer (SSL) connections to encrypt information that travels between a user's computer and the service, meaning that a user's search terms and search results pages cannot be intercepted by a third party on the network. Searches also are not archived in the web browser's history and won't appear in the auto fill during a subsequent search.

While some people believe this new encrypted capability will help advance users' privacy, especially those living in China, K-12 schools—which use third-party filters to monitor student and faculty conduct online—are saying the service might cripple their use of Google and its products.

The reason is simple: Schools must comply with CIPA to receive federal e-Rate funding. Without the ability to monitor student and faculty searches, schools no longer can be considered CIPA compliant, many say.

Although Google's encrypted search can't deliver SSL-protected images or maps at this time, video results will appear and can be viewed through the encrypted search. The company said it is working on providing image and map search results in the near future as more web sites and services provide SSL options.

And though encrypted search still allows third-party software to record and/or block web sites that users click on once they've conducted a search, the encrypted search has the ability to block third parties if the user clicks on an "https://," or SSL-protected, web site.

An example of an encrypted search might look like this: A user visits <https://www.google.com> and searches for "pornography." Google then encrypts the query and returns the search results. However, when the user clicks on a search result, that result would be blocked by the school's internet filter ... unless it's a site that is too new to appear in the filter's list of blocked web sites, or it's an encrypted HTTPS web site—such as a pornography-related eCommerce site.

In response to schools' concerns, Google spokesperson Kat Eller told *eSchool News* the company is "aware that encrypted search can create difficulties for some educational institutions. ... We're very sorry for the inconvenience and are work-

ing to identify a solution as fast as possible. An imperfect and temporary fix is to enable our SafeSearch lock feature."

SafeSearch automatically tells the Google search engine to filter out any pornographic or explicitly adult-related web sites from the search results. Eller said that by using a domain-level cookie, the SafeSearch lock is preserved even when students or faculty use Google's encrypted search.

But school technology experts say there's a way around SafeSearch.

"With standard HTTP Google searches, our filter is able to enforce the SafeSearch setting, regardless [of] what the user has set," said Darryl LaGace, chief information and technology officer for the San Diego Unified

which serves nearly 238,000 students.

"Our web filtering software logs all search requests on the standard Google web site," Jones said. "This information is not used unless there is reasonable suspicion that someone is misusing the internet, after which we can perform a thorough search to determine whether the activity was permissible or a violation of our acceptable-use policy. The Google encrypted search encrypts all data sent to the Google search engine servers, preventing our web filter software from logging any of this activity—which prevents our agency from being fully CIPA compliant."

Jones said that while the risk of losing e-Rate funding is bad enough, CIPA is in

encrypted Google searching as for Google Apps or Gmail," said Lightspeed's Chambers. "From the internet gateway, where CIPA-required content filters reside, this causes all of these sessions to look the same."

He continued: "There are schools that had planned to implement Google Apps for their districts this summer that have now put these projects on hold until a resolution is in place. Many schools that were using Google Apps had to block access to these services soon after the encrypted site was released, which understandably is frustrating to many educators and students who had been relying on these services for lessons and projects."

LaGace said several SDUSD schools "have begun to rely on Google Apps as a means to collaborate with students, parents, and the community. Google's timing couldn't be worse as we come upon the end of a school year."

As of press time, SDUSD had been blocking Google's encrypted search since June 3—meaning the district has been without eMail, Docs, or calendars as well.

According to a Google Certified Teachers listserv, an SDUSD employee said faculty were told to sign up for Yahoo or Hotmail accounts to use for the rest of the year.

"It is not the district's intention or desire to block access to Gmail and/or Google Apps," said LaGace. "We are only interested in blocking access to [Google's] beta secure search. ... Though we recognize the hardships this is causing both students and teaching staff at various schools and charters within the district network, the bottom line is the district has no alternative but to prevent student access to explicate material. ... We're hoping Google soon realizes they have created a tremendous conflict for all school districts that jeopardizes schools using Google Apps. Every school district across the country is going to have to deal with this same decision."

Lightspeed said it is taking measures to help schools deal with the new encrypted search.

The company has just completed a software change that it is now testing for release. The change would allow schools to decide by groups of users where to block the encrypted searching. For example, schools would have the option of blocking encrypted search for students, but not for staff.

In a June 14 blog post, Google Enterprise President Dave Girouard had this to say about the matter:

"We're working hard to address this issue as quickly as possible, and in a few weeks we will move encrypted search to a new host name—so schools can limit access to SSL search without disrupting other Google services, like Google Apps for Education. Longer term, we are exploring other options, like moving authentication to its own host name so that we can return encrypted search to <https://www.google.com>."

**eSN**



Google's latest search tool prevents schools from logging search requests.

School District (SDUSD). "With HTTPS, that ability is defeated, [because] filters can no longer see inside the HTTP packet."

Grant Gutstadt, security administrator in information technology for SDUSD, explained that it would be easy for a user either to delete the cookie or open a private browsing session—a feature of Internet Explorer 8.

"If all of your computers were in Active Directory, there could be the means of restricting those options through Group Policy. But since we are a large district of up to 60,000 computers across our wide area network, and a majority of those are Macs, we would not be able to push this policy," Gutstadt said.

Although a school's web filters can block access to HTTP sites delivered through an encrypted search, the service still presents many problems for schools.

"In many cases, the content that needs to be restricted can be viewed without leaving Google's encrypted search," said Rob Chambers, chief technology officer for Lightspeed Systems, a company that provides network security and internet content control services to roughly 2,000 school districts in the United States.

"One example of this is video and image searching. Image searching is not currently available; however, Google has said they will be adding it. Video searching is currently available. Encrypted searching for adult content that schools must restrict results in video thumbnails that otherwise would have been blocked. This will be even worse once image searching is enabled."

Another problem is that CIPA requires schools to monitor and log all web activity, so they can provide adequate reports should a faculty member or student be found accessing inappropriate material, said Jerry Jones, director of computer, network, and telecommunications support for the Sacramento County Office of Education,

place mainly to protect student safety. He explained that if a school allowed encrypted search, safety consequences could arise.

For instance, "a child predator [who] has contact with students in an educational setting could theoretically search for child pornography without the IT staff ever knowing about it," he said. "Since there are thousands of new web sites that are created daily, it would be impossible for our filter to have categorized all of them in order to block them before they show up in the Google search engine. ... Worst of all, none of this activity would be recorded, and therefore it would be undetectable to IT or human resources staff who are responsible for monitoring the network usage of staff and students, putting our students at risk."

With Google's regular search engine, such search queries would be logged and reportable and would appear during a "suspicious search queries" report that runs nightly, Jones said. But with encrypted search, it is impossible to "see" what a person has been looking for, should he or she be charged with a crime or suspected of nefarious activity.

One possible solution for schools would be to block access to all HTTPS sites—but that would mean potentially blocking web sites used to purchase products for school use, sites that require encryption to protect login information, banking web sites, health-care sites, or any web system that legitimately needs to encrypt data because it contains users' personal information.

Another solution would be to block HTTPS sites on the Google domain, and that's what many schools have chosen to do. But that means other popular SSL-protected Google services used by schools—including Gmail and Google Docs for Education—no longer are accessible, either.

"Google's encrypted implementation uses the same certificate information for

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# New smart phones enable mobile video conferencing

## From staff and wire reports

Apple's iPhone 4, unveiled June 7 and scheduled for release June 24 as of press time, features a mobile video conferencing application that could increase collaboration among students at different locations and make cross-district and on-the-go meetings easier for school officials.

Video conferencing is possible with the addition of a second camera on the front of the new iPhone, in addition to a five-megapixel camera and a flash on the back. For now, the video conferencing function, FaceTime, works only if both parties to the call have an iPhone 4 and are connected over a Wi-Fi network rather than a cellular network.

Apple chief executive officer Steve Jobs indicated that FaceTime eventually will work over cellular networks, saying Apple needs to "work a little bit" with wireless providers to make it "ready for the future."

The iPhone's FaceTime feature could help school technology staff hold meetings from different locations and troubleshoot specific problems.

SysAid Technologies is one company that has launched an iPhone IT assistance application. The Helpdesk Application and SysAid IT Mobile help IT staff control service requests, including viewing, updating, filtering, and customizing requests.

IT specialists might find the FaceTime application helpful during conversations if they must identify specific messages on computer screens or relay instructions for

a procedure occurring across a school district.

Various media outlets and technology enthusiasts had differing opinions of FaceTime and whether the feature would succeed.

The *San Francisco Chronicle* predicted that FaceTime will be a success, because mobile video conferencing "is available on a device that will achieve sufficient saturation among groups," the Wi-Fi networks over which FaceTime is set to operate will make the application look and sound top-notch, and Apple likely will make the application very easy to use, prompting more participation.

Meanwhile, CNET pointed to a handful of reasons why the video conferencing feature might not prevail: Holding a cell phone at arm's length to capture a continuous image of the caller's face, while keeping one's arm steady enough so that the image is not shaky, is not physically comfortable after a while. CNET also said that video calls are awkward by nature, and because FaceTime operates only on Wi-Fi for the time being, users will be forced to use the feature at home, at school, or in other Wi-Fi hotspots.

The news site also said that "according to Apple, FaceTime won't support 3G this year, which is strange given that Fring, Skype, and other VoIP apps offer it."

Mobile video conferencing might not have taken off yet, but Apple isn't the first company to offer this capability on a mobile device. Sprint HTC EVO 4G users can video chat with the new Qik software of-

fered on the phone. And with Fring, users can make free mobile video calls and live chats over a cellular or Wi-Fi network with other Fring members and other services such as Skype, GoogleTalk, Facebook, and more.

But given the company's influence, Apple's support of mobile video conferencing could help spur more widespread adoption of the technology, some say.

Apple is trying to tighten the links between the iPhone and its iPad tablet, which came out April 3. It is releasing a version of its iBooks eReading application for the iPhone, which means people could buy an eBook from Apple on either device and read it on either one as well.

That compatibility could incite more universities and iPhone-toting college students to turn to the iPad as an eReader.

The new iPhone 4 also will have a higher-resolution screen, longer battery life (up to seven hours of talk time—an improvement over five hours on the last model), and thinner design. It will cost \$199 or \$299 in the U.S. with a two-year AT&T contract, depending on the capacity. The iPhone 3GS, which debuted last year, still will be available, for \$99.

For mobile video conferencing to be successful, iPhone 4 users will have to hope the technology works better than it did during Jobs' presentation, when—in a scenario that might be painfully familiar to school IT folks—he couldn't get the new phone to connect to the facility's network at first.

"Our networks in here are always un-



Apple's new iPhone 4

predictable," Jobs ad-libbed as he waited for a web site to download. "You know, you could help me out if you're on Wi-Fi—if you could just get off..." he joked to the assembled media. **eSN**

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# Arizona law worries non-native educators

**Maya T. Prabhu**  
Assistant Editor

Many Arizona teachers who learned English as a second language or who speak in accented English, and who are educating English language learners, are worried about their job security after word spread about the state education department's suggestion that those educators with heavy accents be reassigned.

Recent media reports state that the Arizona Department of Education (ADE) has mandated that teachers whose spoken English it deems to be heavily accented or ungrammatical must be removed from classes containing students who are learning to speak English.

Reports quote ADE officials as saying that the intent of the initiative is to ensure that students with limited English have teachers who are highly qualified in fluency of the English language.

"The teacher obviously must be fluent in every aspect of the English language," Adela Santa Cruz, director of the ADE office that enforces standards in classes for students with limited English, said in an interview with the *Wall Street Journal*. An eSchool News request for comment from ADE was not returned by press time.

Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) and its Arizona affiliate issued a joint statement expressing the organizations' disappointment with the department's recommendation.

"For decades the field of English language teaching has suffered from the myth that one only needs to be a native English speaker in order to teach the English lan-

guage. The myth further implicates that native English speakers make better English as a second language or English as a foreign language teachers than nonnative speakers of English, because native English speakers are perceived to speak 'unaccented' English and understand and use idiomatic expressions fluently," the statement read.

Some say the myth does a disservice to those who have been trained to teach English but are not native English speakers.

"Does Arizona prefer a native speaker of English with no training in education [or instruction], or would they prefer someone with an accent who was trained as a teacher?" asked Michael Pasquale, director of the graduate-level TESOL program at Cornerstone University in Michigan.

"But even native speakers have varied accents all over the U.S. The way it's been reported, [the definition of 'accent'] is very vague," he said.

Educators also are not aware of the criteria used to judge a teacher's fluency, said John Segota, director of advocacy for TESOL.

"We've not been able to identify a set of assessment standards that are being used to evaluate teachers. It seems to be individual people making assessments," he said.

Officials said Arizona teachers who are deemed to speak with too heavy an accent or without proper grammar will be able to take classes or other steps to improve their English.

Some vendors offer accent reduction software, programs that many TESOL educators say may be able to help with certain areas, but might not be much help overall. Pasquale said it's nearly impossible

for a nonnative English speaker to completely lose an accent as an adult.

The TESOL/AZ-TESOL statement said ADE's policy is also troubling from a political standpoint.

"With the recent state legislation targeting undocumented immigrants in Arizona and other legislation banning ethnic studies in Arizona, TESOL and AZ-TESOL are deeply troubled by what appears to be an environment of fear and xenophobia being fostered by lawmakers in the state without consideration of the consequences upon student learning and achievement," the groups said.

"This impacts all educators and students, including U.S. citizens and legal permanent residents who speak a language other than English. ... TESOL and Arizona TESOL strongly urge lawmakers and education officials in Arizona to ensure that the education of all Arizona schoolchildren is not harmed by these developments, and that the right of all educators to be treated fairly and equally is protected."

The ethnic studies legislation cited by TESOL prohibits classes that advocate ethnic solidarity, that are designed primarily for students of a particular race, or that promote resentment toward a certain ethnic group.

The new law reportedly targeted a program in the Tucson Unified School District that offers specialized courses in African-American, Mexican-American, and Native-American studies, focusing on history and literature and including information about the influence of a particular ethnic group.

For example, in the Mexican-American Studies program, an American history

course explores the role of Hispanics in the Vietnam War, and a literature course emphasizes Latino authors. About 1,500 students at six high schools are enrolled.

State schools chief Tom Horne said he believes the district's Mexican-American studies program teaches Latino students that they are oppressed by white people. Public schools should not be encouraging students to resent a particular race, he said.

Sean Arce, director of the district's Mexican-American Studies program in Tucson, said recently that students perform better in school if they see in the curriculum people who look like them. The district is 56 percent Hispanic, with nearly 31,000 Latino students.

"It's a highly engaging program that we have, and it's unfortunate that the state Legislature would go so far as to censor these classes," Arce said.

The law doesn't prohibit classes that teach about the history of a particular ethnic group, as long as the course is open to all students and doesn't promote ethnic "solidarity" or resentment.

*Material from the Associated Press was used in this report.* **eSN**

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# Can video games solve college counseling shortage?

Researchers design a game for first-generation applicants with limited access to guidance

**Dennis Carter**  
Assistant Editor

A simple online search will turn up hundreds of web sites packed with advice for high school students applying to college. But few internet resources offer step-by-step guidance, and with college counseling dwindling in public schools, University of Southern California researchers have created a video game that lets student simulate the application process in all its complexity.

The online game, called Pathfinder, has been piloted among more than 100 Los Angeles-area high school students this year and could be available to school districts free of charge if USC's Game Innovation Lab secures \$1 million in grants and funding, said Zoe Corwin, a research associate in the university's Center for Higher Education Policy Analysis.

The Pathfinder pilot uses playing cards, but the finished product will be a web-based game, officials said.

Pathfinder lets students control a virtual character—a “super jock” or a “misunderstood artist,” for example—and move through the application process, choosing which schools to apply to and how to secure financial aid. Their characters are given a specific income bracket and high school resume, and players are told to focus on extracurricular activities, academics, work, and service to build a strong application.

“There are a lot of great web sites out there with information, but they don't teach strategy,” said Corwin, adding that the video game format maintained students' at-

tention for more than an hour and a half. “[High school students] just look at these sites and they're not engaged.”

Corwin said time management is a consistent shortfall for high school students, so meeting hard deadlines for applications, college essays, and scholarship paperwork often stalls the application process.

“They are not just being fed information, they're learning strategy and increasing their college literacy,” she said. “They need to know just how important deadlines are.”

William Tierney, a professor in USC's Rossier School of Education and director of the Center for Higher Education Policy Analysis, said the Pathfinder game includes a section that distinguishes among different kinds of colleges: liberal arts college, technical school, and state university, for instance.

“We have students in high school today who could go to college, but who don't know how to apply, and they need help in terms of navigating [the process], and figuring out how to write [a] college essay, and even where to go,” Tierney said.

Bringing college application lessons to a video game format, Corwin said, could be key in attracting a generation of teenagers who play web-based and console games en masse. Ninety-seven percent of 12- to 17-year-olds play video games, with seven in 10 playing games on their desktop or laptop computers, according to a study published by the Pew Internet & American Life Project. Ninety-nine percent of male respondents said they play video games, as did 94 percent of females included in the survey.

USC officials announced in January on the Pathfinder web site that the university is working on a Pathfinder prototype that would be available via Facebook, making the game more accessible to millions of teens who frequent the social media giant.

USC researchers said Pathfinder targets students whose parents didn't attend college, because those students are often left to navigate the demanding application process by themselves. And while some students have regular access to guidance counselors in high school, the average post-secondary U.S. public school has a student-counselor ratio of 460-to-1, according to 2008 statistics from the American School Counselor Association.

The association recommends a ratio of 250-to-1.

A proliferation of web-based advising sites like iAdmissions.com and Go4College.com has coincided with a national jump in college applications, according to the 2009 State of College Admissions report, released by the National Association for College Admissions Counseling in October.

The report, which used statistics from the U.S. Department of Education, showed that the average acceptance rate at four-year universities and colleges dropped from 71.3 percent in 2001 to 66.8 percent in 2007. This was partly owing to the 24 percent rise in applicants during that six-year span, according to the report.

College enrollment reached an all-time high in 2006, and enrollment numbers are expected to continue to climb until 2017, according to the admissions study. California's

ratio is closer to 1,000-to-1, according to research released last year by EdSource, a nonprofit organization that focuses on public policy research and analysis.

Edwin Brito, who graduated high school last week, said he piloted the Pathfinder video game after applying to eight colleges and universities. As he waits for responses, Brito said he wishes he had played the Pathfinder game before he sealed the envelope to his application papers.

“I didn't expect for it to take so much time, but at the end, it was totally worth it,” said Brito, 18, who graduated from James A. Foshay Learning Center in Los Angeles. “I thought I knew a lot about college, but [Pathfinder] opened my eyes to things I didn't know.”

Bruto said the game's competitive elements—fighting for a sought-after spot at a college with demanding academic requirements and high tuition—made Pathfinder interesting enough to play for an entire 90-minute session.

“I never expected it to be that much fun,” he said. **eSN**

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## Panel: Even violent video games can be learning tools

### From staff and wire reports

You're at the front lines shooting Nazis before they shoot you. Or, you're a futuristic gladiator in a death match with robots. Either way, you're playing a video game—and you might be improving your vision and other brain functions, according to research presented May 27 at a New York University conference on games as a learning tool.

“People that play these fast-paced games have better vision, better attention, and better cognition,” said Daphne Bavelier, an assistant professor in the department of brain and cognitive science at the University of Rochester.

Bavelier was a presenter at a daylong symposium on the educational uses of video and computer games from NYU's Games for Learning Institute. The event was another indication that electronic games are gaining legitimacy in the classroom. (The University of Wisconsin-Madison also hosts an annual conference on educational gaming.)

President Barack Obama recently identified the creation of good educational software as one of the “grand challenges for American innovation,” and the federal Department of Education's assistant deputy secretary for the Office of Innovation and Improvement, Jim Shelton, attended the conference as well.

Panelists discussed how people learn and how games can be engineered to be



A screen shot from the game 'Medal of Honor'

even more educational.

“People do learn from games,” said J. Dexter Fletcher of the Institute for Defense Analyses.

Sigmund Tobias of the State University of New York at Albany said an Israeli air force study found that students who played the game “Space Fortress” had better rankings in their pilot training than students who did not.

He added that students who played “pro-social” games that promote cooperation were more likely than others to help out in real-life situations, such as intervening when someone is being harassed.

Bavelier's research has focused on so-called first-person shooter games like “Unreal Tournament” and “Medal of Honor,” in which the player is an Allied sol-

der during World War II.

“You have to jump into vehicles, you have to crouch and hide,” said Tammy Schachter, a spokeswoman for game developer Electronic Arts Inc.

Bavelier said playing the kill-or-be-killed games can improve peripheral vision and the ability to see objects at dusk, and the games can even be used to treat amblyopia, or lazy eye, a disorder characterized by indistinct vision in one eye.

She said she believes the games can improve math performance and other brain tasks as well.

“We are testing this hypothesis that when you play an action video game, what you do is you learn to better allocate your resources,” she said. “In a sense you learn to learn. ... You become very good at adapting to whatever is asked of you.”

Bavelier believes the games eventually will become part of school curricula, but “it's going to take a generation.”

Schachter said the purpose of “Medal of Honor” and other games is to have fun, and any educational benefits are a bonus.

“Through entertainment, these games test your memory skills, your eye-hand coordination, your ability to detect small activities on the screen and interact with them,” she said.

Not everyone is a fan. Gavin McKiernan, the national grassroots director for the Parents Television Council, an advocacy group concerned about sex and violence in the media, said that when it comes to violent video games, any positive effects are outweighed by the negative.

“You are not just passively watching Scarface blow away people,” McKiernan said. “You are actually participating. Doing these things over and over again is going to have an effect.”

Bavelier said games could be developed that would harness the positive effects of the first-person shooter games without the violence.

“As you know, most of us females just hate those action video games,” she said. “You don't have to use shooting. You can use, for example, a princess [who] has a magic wand, and whenever she touches something, it turns into a butterfly and sparkles.” **eSN**

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# One Laptop Per Child's next move: \$100 tablet

OLPC teaming up with Marvell on a low-cost tablet device for students

## From staff and wire reports

The nonprofit organization that has tried to produce a \$100 laptop for children in the world's poorest places is throwing in the towel on that idea—and jumping on the tablet bandwagon.

One Laptop Per Child's next computer will be based on chipmaker Marvell Technology Group Ltd.'s Moby tablet design. Marvell announced a prototype of the device earlier this year and said it costs about \$99.

Nicholas Negroponte, founder of One Laptop Per Child (OLPC), is optimistic his organization will be able to keep the price under \$100, in part because Marvell plans to market its tablets widely to schools and health-care institutions.

"We want to see the price drop, and volume is the key to that," Negroponte said.

The quirky green-and-white XO laptop sold by OLPC to governments and organizations in countries such as Afghanistan and Uruguay wasn't destined for such a broad audience. OLPC repeatedly had to scale back expectations for how many of the laptops it could produce, and it didn't get the price much below \$200, twice the price specified by the device's "\$100 laptop" nickname.

In 2005, Negroponte envisioned having built 100 million laptops in about two years. Today, 2 million of the machines are in use.

The XO also was more expensive to produce than a tablet would be, because of its many moving parts and features meant to withstand glaring sun, blowing sand, and spotty access to electricity. In some cases, OLPC had to change the



FUSEPROJECT

This composite photo from OLPC shows a prototype of its new tablet.

XO's design by region. For example, the physical keyboard had to be customized for students in countries that don't use a Latin alphabet. It would be less expensive to change the software behind touch-screen keyboards.

Marvell's co-founder, Weili Dai, said the company also has found ways to cut costs in the way it's designing the chips.

The new tablets will have at least one, and maybe two, video cameras. They'll sport Wi-Fi connections to the internet, "multi-touch" screens, and enough power to play high-definition and 3-D video. Marvell hopes to make the screens 8.5 inches by 11 inches, the size of a standard sheet of paper. Unlike Apple Inc.'s iPad tablet,

the device also will work with plug-in peripherals, such as mice and printers.

Negroponte said he eventually wants the tablets to run some version of the free Linux PC operating software. But the first generation of the "XO 3.0" tablet likely will use Android, the mobile-device operating system from Google Inc., or something similar.

Although his group, which is based in Cambridge, Mass., worked with Microsoft Corp. to get its Windows operating system running on the XO laptops, Negroponte said the new tablets will not use Windows 7, because the software requires too much memory and computing power.

Negroponte said he plans to unveil the

tablet device at the annual International Consumer Electronics Show in January.

The One Laptop Per Child project has its share of skeptics, who have questioned the possibility of manufacturing a laptop for \$100 and the point of computers in countries that lack basic infrastructure.

Even so, OLPC's work turned competitors on to the growing market for technology in developing countries. Companies such as Intel Corp. came up with their own designs for inexpensive laptops for kids, while other organizations figured out ways to turn regular desktop computers into multiple workstations—dramatically cutting costs for school computer labs and internet cafes both in the United States and abroad.

The scramble to produce inexpensive laptops for kids in developing countries also helped prime the pump for the recent flood of "netbooks," which are smaller, cheaper, and less powerful than laptops.

Negroponte said the last few months have been a turning point for his group.

"People are no longer asking, 'Does this work?'" he said. "The one question I hear all the time is, how do I pay for it? How do the economics work?" **eSN**

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# Ten winners snag \$1.7 million in digital competition

MacArthur Foundation funds projects that explore new approaches to 21st-century learning

## From staff and wire reports

A project to show youth-produced videos on 2,200 Los Angeles city buses, the next generation of a graphical programming language that allows young people to create their own interactive features, and an online game that teaches kids the environmental impact of their personal choices are among 10 winning projects that will share \$1.7 million in funding to create new "learning labs of the 21st century" through the MacArthur Digital Media and Learning Competition.

The competition winners will use games, mobile phone applications, virtual worlds, and social networks to advance learning in the 21st century, the foundation said.

It is digital technologies such as these that ensure learning evolves with students, said Connie Yowell, the foundation's director of education.

"In the digital age, the learning environment is turned on its head—it's no longer just the dynamic of the student, the teacher, and the curriculum," Yowell said.

"Today, kids learn and interact with others—even from around the world—every

time they go online, or play a video game, or engage through a social networking site. This competition is helping us to identify and nurture the creation of learning environments that are relevant for kids today and will prepare them for a 21st-century workforce."

Now in its third year, the competition is an annual effort to find and inspire the most novel uses of new digital media in support of learning. This year's competition was announced in collaboration with President Obama's "Educate to Innovate" initiative, challenging designers, inventors, entrepreneurs, and researchers to create education technology "learning labs" for the 21st century, with digital environments that promote building and tinkering in new and innovative ways.

Other winners of the global Digital Media and Learning Competition include:

- Conservation Connection: Using web-casting, video blogging, and social networking sites, this project connects kids from Chicago's West Side with kids in Fiji to work together to protect Fijian coral reefs.
- Mobile Action Lab: Combining the expertise of social entrepreneurs and tech-

nologists and the knowledge and ideas of Oakland, Calif.-based teens, this project helps develop mobile phone applications that serve Oakland communities.

- Click! The Online Spy School: Designed to encourage girls' engagement in the sciences, Click!Online is a web-based augmented reality game for teen girls to solve mysteries in biomedical science, environmental protection, and expressive technology.

This year's application process included an opportunity for public comment, which allowed applicants to collaborate with others and improve their submissions prior to final review. Of the more than 800 applications from 32 countries, 67 finalists were asked to submit videos of their projects for a final round of judging. Winners were selected from this pool by a panel of expert judges that included scholars, educators, entrepreneurs, journalists, and other digital media specialists.

The competition is funded by a John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation grant to the University of California, Irvine, and to Duke University and is administered by the Humanities,

Arts, Science and Technology Advanced Collaboratory (HASTAC).

"The winning projects exhibit a wonderful creativity in developing learning platforms and environments that promote participatory and collaborative engagements for kids to learn with and from each other in their everyday engagements," said Duke University's Cathy N. Davidson, co-founder of HASTAC, along with David Theo Goldberg of the University of California Humanities Research Institute.

"We are witnessing the profound transformation in how young people will be learning in the future, and these projects are helping to lead the way," Goldberg said. **eSN**

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# News lines

## Facebook adjusts privacy controls after complaints

Responding to users' concerns, Facebook on May 26 announced that it's simplifying its privacy controls and applying them retroactively, so users can protect the status updates and photos they have posted in the past.

The changes came after Facebook—which counts many high school and college students and educators among its members—rolled out a slew of new features in April that spread its reach to the broader web. Among them was a program called “instant personalization” that draws information from a person's profile to customize sites such as the music service Pandora. Some users found it creepy, not cool.



Facebook is trying to earn back users' trust.

Privacy groups have complained to federal regulators, and some people threatened to quit the site. To address complaints that its settings were getting too complex, Facebook now will give users the option of applying the same preferences to all their content, so that with one click you can decide whether to share things with just “friends” or with everyone. For those who found it complicated to prevent outside web sites and applications from gaining access to Facebook data, there's now a way to do so in a couple of clicks.

It's not clear whether the changes will quell the unease among Facebook users, which has threatened to slow the site's breakneck evolution from a scrappy college network to an internet powerhouse with nearly a half-billion people.

“They've lost the users' trust. That's the problem,” said Marc Rotenberg, executive director of the Electronic Privacy Information Center, an advocacy group. “In the earlier days, there was time to regain it. It's not so clear now. I think it's getting more serious than making changes and moving on.”

Some of Facebook's loudest critics offered cautious praise but indicated the young company will need to do more to prove it cares about privacy.

Sen. Charles Schumer, D-N.Y., called it a “significant first step that Facebook deserves credit for,” but said he'd still prefer that Facebook require users to actively turn on sharing with outside sites, rather than having sharing be the default setting.

## Lawmakers push to regulate, tax online gambling

A push to rewrite federal law to legalize internet gambling, banned since 2006, is gaining traction as lawmakers eye billions of dollars in additional tax revenue—and schools and colleges could find themselves in the middle of an intense debate on the topic.

One on hand, education could benefit from the additional text revenue such a move is bound to create. On the other hand, research suggests that high school and college students are particularly vulnerable to addiction.

Problem gambling among college students reportedly is more than double that of the general population, with an estimated 3 percent to 4 percent of college student gamblers developing into problem gamblers. College students have easy access to credit cards, and some opponents of

internet gambling fear it could give them easier access to gambling opportunities.

Prohibition didn't work with alcohol, and it's not working with internet gambling now, say those who are pushing Congress to approve legislation that would legalize and tax online wagering.

Rep. Jim McDermott, D-Wash., told his colleagues during a congressional hearing May 19 that millions of Americans gamble on the internet each day, despite laws to prevent it. Citing industry analysts, McDermott said they wager nearly \$100 billion annually, generating an estimated \$5 billion for offshore operators. He said the money would be put to better use in the U.S. and would create thousands of jobs for people who would be employed by licensed gambling sites.

“Regulation and taxation have proven to be a better policy for our country when it comes to alcohol,” McDermott said. “The same is true for online gambling.”

Opponents of the proposed legislation called the hearing a waste of time.

Rep. Bob Goodlatte, R-Va., told lawmakers that almost all the nation's attorneys general have opposed similar legislation in the past. He referred to a constituent whose son committed suicide after generating enormous debts from internet gambling.

“Unfortunately, financial ruin and tragedy are not uncommon among online bettors,” Goodlatte said.

While McDermott's bill would provide for taxing internet gambling, companion legislation from Rep. Barney Frank, D-Mass., would license and regulate the industry. The Treasury Department would be tasked with licensing operators that meet financial requirements and pass criminal background checks.

Frank's legislation prohibits the operators from accepting sports bets, as well as bets initiated in states or tribal lands that prohibit particular types of internet gambling. It has drawn support from online poker players.

The House voted overwhelmingly four years ago to ban U.S. financial institutions from handling transactions made to and from online gambling sites. That ban took effect June 1.

## FCC aims to measure home broadband speeds

The Federal Communications Commission wants to find out whether broadband providers are delivering internet connections that are as fast as advertised—and so the agency is seeking 10,000 volunteers to take part in a study of residential broadband speeds.

Specialized equipment will be installed in homes across the country to measure internet connections. Those results then will be compared with advertised speeds. The agency hopes to get a cross section of volunteers who subscribe to broadband services provided by a range of phone and cable TV companies.

The new project grows out of several proposals outlined in the FCC's national broadband plan, released in March. “The big issue here is knowing what you are paying for,” said Joel Gurin, who heads the FCC's Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau. According to data cited in the national broadband plan, average residential download speeds are typically only half as fast as the maximum speeds advertised by U.S. broadband providers. The FCC will summarize its findings on home broadband connections in a report later this year. The commission also is seeking input on ways to measure mobile broadband speeds.

Broadband subscribers who want to participate in the FCC's new study can register at [www.TestMyISP.com](http://www.TestMyISP.com).

## Heart association backs video games in obesity campaign

Talk about strange bedfellows: The American Heart Association and Nintendo Co. are teaming up to promote the popular Wii video game console, as the health advocacy group concedes that its campaign for traditional exercise isn't working.

The surprising partnership, announced May 17, comes amid growing concern about obesity among kids who

spend much of their time watching television and playing video games.

Nintendo will be able to brand its Wii products with the AHA's iconic heart logo to let consumers know that the organization considers the items a healthy choice. Nintendo also will donate \$1.5 million to the AHA as part of the partnership.

“We can keep beating the drum on traditional exercise and make small changes to the obesity epidemic, or we can try something that is really provocative and new,” said AHA President Clyde Yancy.

Numerous studies show a correlation between obesity and the amount of time children spend with television and video games. Jeffrey Levi, executive director of Trust for America's Health, said the best solution is simply to cut the cord and encourage youths to spend less time in front of screens. But the AHA said it is endorsing the Wii because it will encourage sedentary Americans to take the first step toward fitness.

With 70 percent of Americans doing no regular physical activity at all, the AHA wants to find a way to reach out to people turned off by gyms and traditional sports. The organization said its studies show that 40 percent of those who don't exercise say it's not entertaining enough. The AHA says the Wii addresses this fun factor.

## Judge allows limits on web-based sports coverage

The Wisconsin school athletic association has the right to limit who broadcasts games live on the internet, a judge ruled June 3 in a dispute over the media rights to high school sports in the digital age.

U.S. District Judge William Conley ruled that the Wisconsin Interscholastic Athletic Association's exclusive agreement with the video production company When We Were Young Productions doesn't stifle media freedom.

In a 51-page decision, Conley noted that media outlets can stream games not produced by When We Were Young Productions for a fee. As for games the company does stream, media outlets can still publish stories, offer opinions, and offer limited live coverage, the judge said.

“Ultimately, this is a case about commerce, not the right to a free press,” Conley wrote.

The ruling came in a lawsuit between the Wisconsin Interscholastic Athletic Association and *The Appleton Post-Crescent* newspaper, its parent company, Gannett Co., and the Wisconsin Newspaper Association. The sports association sued after *The Post-Crescent* streamed live coverage of four high school football playoff games in 2008.

The newspaper claimed the deal between the sports association and the video production company violated the constitutional right to freedom of the press and the equal protection clause.

Bob Dreps, the attorney who represented Gannett Co. and the newspaper association, said in a written statement that the defendants were disappointed Conley authorized the “continued commercialization of high school sports.” The defendants were considering their options, including a possible appeal, Dreps said.

## Apple offering price breaks for educators, college students

Apple has announced a promotion giving college students and educators at all grade levels a price break on some of its products.

The promotion, which launched May 25 and runs until Sept. 7, will give college students, teachers at any grade level, and parents shopping for their college-bound kids the chance to get a free iPod Touch with the purchase a new Macintosh computer. In addition to the free iPod, students also can qualify for educational pricing on Macs.

Qualifying computers include the iMac, MacBook, MacBook Pro, MacBook Air, and Mac Pro. Build-to-order configurations of these models also qualify, but refurbished Macs are not eligible, according to the rules and conditions posted on Apple's web site.

While the offer specifically lists the iPod Touch, those taking advantage of the offer can choose any iPod they want, up to a \$199 value.



# Report: 'Scare tactics' don't work in teaching web safety

**Laura Devaney**  
Managing Editor

Although internet safety education is essential, says a federal web safety task force, "scare tactics" do little to influence the behavior of children and teens, who spend a large part of their lives on social networking sites, text messaging, and using other tech-based forms of communication.

Instead, the Online Safety and Technology Working Group (OSTWG), created by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration, said that proper education about appropriate online behavior and digital media use can help children evaluate potential online risks. The group suggested in a June 4 report that the government "promote nationwide education in digital citizenship and media literacy as the cornerstone of internet safety."

The report's recommendations include creating a web-based clearinghouse of online safety education research, promoting digital citizenship at all grade levels, establishing industry best practices for effective internet-safety education programs, and looking to young people as experts in the online and digital media arenas by involving them in risk-prevention education.

The report said that "protective tools" are best used in a layered approach along with education and parental involvement. It also emphasized that scare tactics "simply do not work" and should be avoided. Instead, educators and online safety advocates should focus on educational programs that model positive behavior.

"With all potentially negative behavior, it's important that adults do what they can to discourage it, but avoid overreaction and 'panic' when it isn't called for," the working group noted.

## Online predators

Although unwanted online solicitations can have an alarming impact, recent stud-

ies have shown that "the statistical probability of a young person being physically assaulted by an adult who they first met online is extremely low," the group noted.

And young people's use of social networking sites does not increase their risk of victimization, according to a 2008 report that appeared in *American Psychologists*.

A Berkman Center Internet Safety Technical Task Force, after reviewing peer-reviewed studies, found that "cases [of adult-to-child sexual encounters on social networks] typically involved post-pubescent youth who were aware that they were meeting an adult male for the purpose of engaging in sexual activity."

## Cyber bullying

Cyber bullying is much more common than many people think and starts as early as the second grade, the report said, while "new" issues such as sexting attract much media attention but are not as common as many initially believed.

The Berkman Center Task Force found that "bullying and harassment, most often by peers, are the most frequent threats that minors face, both online and offline."

Between nine and 35 percent of young people reported being bullied electronically, according to a 2008 Centers for Disease Control report. An Iowa State University study found that 54 percent of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth had experienced cyber bullying within 30 days of the study.

## Sexting

The report points to a recent Pew Internet & American Life Project study, which revealed that 4 percent of teenagers who own cell phones said they have sent "sexually suggestive nude or nearly nude images or videos of themselves to someone else via text message."

And while 4 percent is a large number,

the report said, it is not nearly as large as previously reported by various media outlets.

The Youth Online Safety Working Group (YOSWG), which consists of law enforcement, child protection, and education organizations and agencies, has developed a document recommending, among other things, that authorities "recognize possible causes of sexting within schools by examining school climate and any underlying behavioral issues" and that they "use discretion when determining legal actions." The group supports prevention education programs for educators and law enforcement and encourages a "team approach" to "combat the problem of sexting."

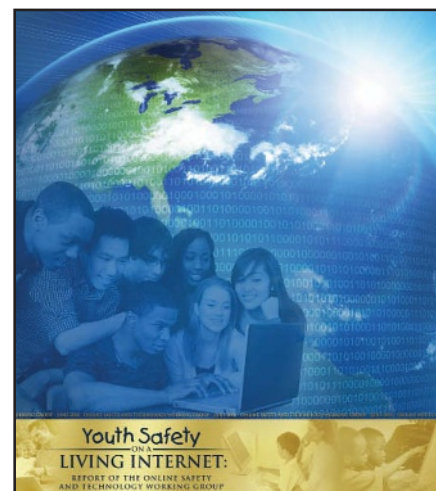
## Social media

Restricting or forbidding access to social networking sites will likely do more harm than good, because social networking sites and the way young people use those sites have created not only places for social interaction, but also "informal learning environments," the report said.

In fact, students would greatly benefit if educators are able to incorporate social networking sites into classroom instruction.

"Unless new media are used in schools and within families, youth are on their own in figuring out the ethics, social norms, and civil behaviors that enable good citizenship in the online part of their media use and lives," the OSTWG said.

"We are not suggesting that schools allow kids to update social network profiles in class, but rather that schools find ways to incorporate educational social-technology tools in the classroom to enhance learning and provide pre-K-12 educators with an opportunity to, in the process of teaching regular subjects, teach the constructive, mindful use of social media enabled by digital citizenship and new-media-literacy training—using the media and technologies familiar and compelling to students."



OSTWG's web safety report

## Future actions

Coordinating federal, state, and local internet safety education and research efforts would greatly help the state of internet safety education across the nation, the group said. Media literacy and computer security should be part of an ongoing national awareness effort.

"The most important recommendation we can make is for all involved with internet safety education to base their messages on accurate, up-to-date information," the report said. "Of course, in a changing technology landscape, that's easier said than done, but we can do better." **eSN**

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# Image-conscious youth rein in social networking

## From staff and wire reports

It might go against conventional wisdom, but a new report from the Pew Internet & American Life Project is adding fuel to the argument that young people are fast becoming the gurus of online reputation management, especially when it comes to social networking sites.

Among other things, the study found that young adults ages 18-29 are the most likely to limit the amount of personal information they share online—and the least likely to trust free online services ranging from Facebook to LinkedIn and MySpace.

Marlene McManus, 21, is among those young adults. On the job hunt since graduating from Clark University in Massachusetts, she's been "scouring" her Facebook page, removing photos that contain beer cups and any other signs of college exploits. She's also dropped Twitter altogether.

"I have to present a public face that doesn't have the potential to hurt my image," McManus says.

Adults over the age of 30 might do well to listen. The Pew study is the latest in a mounting body of new research that suggests the very generation accused of shar-

ing too much information online is actually leading the pack in online privacy.

The Pew study found, for instance, that social networkers ages 18 to 29 were the most likely to change the privacy settings on their profiles to limit what they share with others online. The percentage who did so was 71 percent, compared with just 55 percent of the 50- to 64-year-old bracket. Meanwhile, about two-thirds of all social networkers who were surveyed said they've tightened their security settings.

The survey also determined that:

- About half of young people in that 18-29 bracket have deleted comments that others have made on their profile, compared with just 29 percent of those ages 30 to 49 and 26 percent of 50- to 64-year-olds. The numbers were similar when it came to social networkers who removed their names from photos that were tagged to identify them.
- When asked how much they can trust social networking sites, 28 percent of the youngest adults surveyed said "never." A fifth of those surveyed in the 30-49 age bracket said that, and just 14 percent of those ages 50 to 64 agreed.

The Pew report, which was released May 27, was compiled from telephone in-

terviews conducted by Princeton Survey Research International between Aug. 18 and Sept. 14, 2009, among a sample of 2,253 adults. The margin of error is plus or minus 2.3 percentage points.

Mary Madden, the Pew researcher who was the study's lead author, says the findings partly reflect the fact that young people have been using social networking longer than their elders, thus making them more experienced in dealing with its intricacies.

But she says young adults also are at a point in their lives where, like McManus, they're looking for work and just starting to develop a name for themselves.

Consider also that the study found that a quarter of online adults said their employers now have policies about how they portray themselves online.

"Young adults have, in many ways, been forced to become experts in their own form of social revision," Madden says.

They're also an extremely "brand conscious" generation, says Fred Stutzman, a doctoral candidate at the School of Information and Library Science at the University of North Carolina who co-founded ClaimID.com, a free online identity management service that he now uses as a research project.

"Increasingly, it's the advice that young people get from counselors and elsewhere: 'You need to have your own brand, and you have to watch that brand,'" Stutzman says.

Stefanie Juell has become increasingly aware of this. She recently opened an extra Facebook account after her supervisor and people she'd met through work started to friend her on her personal account.

"You don't exactly want to reject your supervisor," the 28-year-old says. "Nor do you want him or her to see everything."

So now, she uses that new professional Facebook account for her job in alumni relations at a small liberal-arts college. In the evening, she shifts to her long-standing personal Facebook account, which has its security settings set as tightly as possible. **eSN**

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## FCC...

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that a 3-percent increase in funding would yield only \$67 million more in discounts next year, hardly enough to make up for years without an inflation adjustment—and especially when you consider that school budget cuts are expected to be even worse this fall.

The FCC also aims to make the e-Rate more user friendly by streamlining the application and competitive-bidding processes for telecommunications and internet services, as well as making it easier for schools to calculate their discount percentage.

For instance, schools would not have to submit a technology plan if they're applying only for Priority One discounts on telecommunications services and internet access, as long as they are subject to technology plan requirements at the state or local level.

Also, schools that are bound by local procurements laws would not have to file a Form 470 request for Priority One services.

Under the FCC's proposal, schools would calculate their e-Rate discount by using the average discount rate for the entire school district rather than the weighted average for each building. This would make it easier for program administrators to calculate their discount rate: They'd simply take the total number of students in the district who are eligible for free or reduced lunches and divide it by the total number of students in the district. This rate would apply to all schools in a district.

Although this change would streamline the application process, it could penalize high-poverty schools within large districts whose overall discount rate is lower.

The FCC also seeks to change the definition of a "rural" school by using the Education Department's National Center for Education Statistics' (NCES) urban-centric locale codes.

"We propose that any school or library that is within a territory that is classified as 'town-distant,' 'town-remote,' 'rural-distant,' or 'rural-remote' by an NCES urban-centric locale code will be considered rural for purposes of calculating its e-Rate discount level," the agency said, noting that rural schools receive 5 to 10 percent more funding in some discount bands.

In addition, the FCC proposal seeks to give schools more flexibility in deploying broadband services. It would provide full e-Rate support of wireless internet service delivered to portable learning devices that are used off premises, for instance, and it would provide greater flexibility to use low-cost fiber for broadband connectivity.

"We emphasize that this proposal only relates to support for internet access monthly service, and not the purchase of devices or equipment, such as mobile broadband cards, smart phones, or eBooks," the FCC said. "This proposal, therefore, would allow e-Rate funding for internet access services, which are already eligible, to be used to facilitate learning both on and off premises."

The FCC also seeks comment on

whether it should let applicants receive support for the lease of fiber, even if unlit, from third parties that are not telecommunications carriers, such as municipalities and other community or anchor institutions—which would give schools more flexibility to choose the most cost-effective broadband solutions.

To ensure that more eligible schools and libraries receive e-Rate discounts on Priority Two services (the wiring, routers, switches, file servers, and other equipment necessary to bring internet access into classrooms), the FCC seeks comment on whether to establish a flat cap on funding per student, per district, for each funding year.

For example, if the cap were set at \$15 per student, a school district that has 100,000 students would have a cap of \$1.5 million in yearly funding for internal connections.

The agency also seeks comment on eliminating the 2-in-5 rule, which allows schools to receive funding for internal connections no more than twice in a five-year period.

Finally, the FCC is seeking comments on the process for disposing of obsolete equipment funded through the e-Rate.

Current program rules bar applicants from reselling or transferring obsolete equipment for money or anything of value. Furthermore, the current rules don't allow applicants to transfer equipment to other eligible entities within three years of purchase—even if the applicant is not receiving any money or anything of value in exchange for the equipment.

The FCC seeks comments on whether it should allow schools to dispose of obsolete equipment for payment or other consideration, subject to four basic conditions:

(1) The equipment has exhausted its useful life, but no sooner than five years after the equipment is installed;

(2) The equipment is formally declared to be surplus by the school board, information technology officer, or other authorized body or individual;

(3) The school or library notifies the Universal Service Administrative Co., the agency that oversees the e-Rate, within 90 days of disposal and keeps a record of the disposal for at least five years following the disposal; and

(4) The disposal process fully complies with state and local laws, where applicable.

Schools and libraries have until July 9 to comment on the FCC's proposals, and they'll have until July 26 to submit replies to the comments of others. **eSN**

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# HISD hopes \$8K-a-year program can save millions in e-Rate funding

After reaching a federal settlement, Houston schools will use software to help spot possible conflicts of interest

**Laura Devaney**  
Managing Editor

The Houston Independent School District (HISD) will implement monitoring software to ensure that district employees abide by federal e-Rate compliance rules, after the district settled a lawsuit with the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) in which former district employees were accused of accepting gifts and meals from e-Rate vendors.

HISD is in the process of purchasing Hoover's Relationship Manager, which district e-Rate Compliance Manager Richard Patton said will help the district monitor its e-Rate vendors. The district will pay almost \$8,000 a year for the service, which officials hope will keep HISD from missing out on additional e-Rate funding as a result of program violations. According to the Houston Chronicle, HISD lost out on at least \$82 million in potential e-Rate funding during the FCC's investigation.

Patton said the software will help district officials identify potential conflicts of interest among board members and e-Rate vendors through campaign and business receipts, which must be turned in within seven business days.

HISD's agreement with the FCC stipulates that HISD board members, as well as e-Rate program employees, are not per-

mitted to accept gifts of any kind from e-Rate vendors. If a trustee on the board has accepted more than \$500 in annual campaign contributions or \$2,000 in business contributions from an e-Rate vendor, that board member is not allowed to vote on e-Rate contracts. Additionally, once a request for a proposal is issued, HISD trustees must not communicate with or contact e-Rate vendors until a contract is awarded.

"This software will help me determine the parent-child relationship of these companies, as well as individuals associated with those companies," Patton said. "[It will] help me identify those individuals in an efficient manner."

The \$2,000 settlement figure applies to outside businesses; if an HISD board member owns a technology consulting business, the agreement precludes that board member from receiving funds from an e-Rate vendor, Patton said.

"None of our board members have that relationship, but I think the agreement is being cautious just in case," he said.

"We're taking the settlement agreement very seriously, and we're establishing the best practices to monitor compliance," Patton added. "In my opinion, we have no reason to believe that we haven't met the expectations and exceeded the expectations."

Many school district officials wear many hats and juggle different tasks, but e-Rate rules are complex and can change from year to year, said Peter Kaplan, director of regulatory affairs for e-Rate consulting firm Funds For Learning.

Funds For Learning offers e-Rate Manager, a service for both e-Rate applicants and service providers, in addition to other compliance services.

"Many of the issues tied to competitive-bidding violations are [a result of] not understanding the various components of the e-Rate procurement process, as opposed to the school officials engaging in a fraudulent manner," Kaplan said.

When a district like HISD has had serious compliance issues that result in federal involvement, that district will have to establish policies and a procedures manual to document that it is in compliance with e-Rate rules before participating in the e-Rate program again.

"That process can take months, if not years, to get resolved," Kaplan noted.

HISD's actions reflect a growing trend in using software to help ensure not only e-Rate compliance, but also school and district compliance to a number of policies—from accounting practices and fraud



HISD will use software to ensure compliance.

reporting to bullying and crime on school grounds.

PublicSchoolWORKS, whose products include a bullying reporting mechanism that enables school employees and students to anonymously report bullying and ensure that proper follow-up action is taken, recently introduced a Fraud Reporting System as a part of its EmployeeSafe Suite.

The Fraud Reporting System lets district employees anonymously report ethical issues, accounting contradictions, and fraudulent behavior they might observe. The system tracks each report from its submission through its investigation.

"When employees know what constitutes fraud, they are more likely to steer clear of the action. At the same time, giving employees the tools to make reports anonymously empowers them to take control of a situation before it gets out of hand," said Tom Strasburger, vice president of PublicSchoolWORKS. **eSN**



## STEM bill...

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mathematics (STEM) education through a coordination of activities at all levels.

Passage of the legislation, called the America COMPETES Act (H.R. 5116)—the biggest science bill that Congress is expected to consider this year—came on a third try. Republicans objecting to the cost of the bill succeeded in sidetracking it on two previous occasions.

The bill also approves funds over five years for basic and applied research programs at the National Science Foundation (NSF), the Department of Energy's Office of Science, the National Institute of Standards and Technology labs, and others. It passed 262-150.

The NSF would have access to more than \$40 billion over the five-year period for research and education programs, although the actual money allotted is determined in annual spending bills. The bill still needed Senate approval as of press time.

"If we are to reverse the trend of the last 20 years, where our country's technology edge in the world has diminished, we must make the investments necessary today," said Science and Technology Committee Chairman Bart Gordon, D-Tenn.

He said the bill puts basic research programs on a path to doubling their approved funding levels over the next decade. It supports the Advanced Research Project Agency, which is involved in high-risk, high-reward energy technology development; provides federal loan guarantees to smaller businesses pursuing new technologies; and offers scholarships for K-12 teachers working in STEM education.

Congress enacted a first version of the legislation in 2007 with a large majority in the House and a unanimous vote in the Senate.

But in a highly partisan election year when the federal deficit is at record levels, Republicans succeeded twice in blocking the Democratic-led initiative.

On May 13, Democrats were forced to pull the bill after Republicans pushed through an amendment combining crippling cuts to the bill with a provision cracking down on federal workers watching



STEM funding almost was a victim of election-year politics in the House.

pornography on their office computers. Many Democrats, not wanting to face ads in the coming election charging that they had voted against an anti-pornography measure, voted for the amendment.

Legislation presented May 19 restored the programs the Republicans tried to kill but reduced to three years, rather than five, the life of the measure—thus cutting the original \$85 billion price tag to about \$47 billion. It also included the anti-pornography provision.

But Democrats made a losing gamble by bringing the bill up under a procedure that prevented Republicans from offering more amendments, but required a two-thirds majority for passage. The vote was 261-148 for passage, short of the two-thirds needed. Every Democrat supported it, but only 15 of 163 voting Republicans backed it.

The original 2007 act grew out of a 2005 National Academies report warning that the country's economic future was jeopardized by its lack of focus on science and technology education.

Many college and university faculty rely on NSF funding to support their research, including an engineering professor at Northern Illinois University who created a video game that allowed students to design a desired movement or action using the re-

quired formulas and algorithms that apply to all types of engineering. Higher-ed researchers also submitted proposals to the NSF earlier this spring that would grant them access to Microsoft Corp.'s massive cloud-computing power for three years.

Every year, the agency reviews 45,000 grant requests and doles out 11,500 research awards.

"This bill continues to recognize that our nation's long-term success is dependent on the strength of our education system," said Rep. Chris Van Hollen, D-Md., co-chairman of the Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Caucus. "It coordinates STEM education efforts across the federal government, invests in grants and scholarships for college students pursuing STEM careers, and provides resources to diversify our future STEM workforce."

The bill would encourage STEM participation from female students and underrepresented groups by creating scholarships and other incentives, and it also would examine the challenges that rural school districts face as they try to give students a 21st-century education, including sparse access to high-speed internet service and lab resources.

The bill also would provide funding for scholarship and training programs to recruit

new K-12 math and science teachers, and to enhance the skills of existing teachers.

The House passed the bill just days before a Chinese supercomputer was ranked the world's second-fastest machine in a list issued by U.S. and European researchers, highlighting the strides that China has made in its own ambitions to become a global technology center.

The Nebulae system at the National Supercomputing Centre in Shenzhen in southern China came in behind the U.S. Department of Energy's Jaguar in Oak Ridge, Tenn., according to the list released May 31.

The Nebulae is capable of sustained computing of 1.271 petaflops—or 1,271 trillion calculations—per second, according to the semiannual TOP500 list, which said the Jaguar was capable of sustained computing of 1.75 petaflops.

The list highlighted China's efforts to join the United States, Europe, and Japan in the global technology elite—and its sharp increases in research spending, driven by booming economic growth.

The communist Beijing government wants China to evolve from a low-cost factory into an prosperous "innovation society." A 15-year government plan issued in 2006 promises support for areas ranging from computers to lasers to genetics.

Boosted by Nebulae's performance, China rose to No. 2 overall on the TOP500 list, with 24 of the 500 systems on the list and 9.2 percent of global supercomputing capacity, up from 21 systems six months ago.

The United States held onto its overall lead, with 282 of the 500 systems. Europe had 144 systems on the list, including 38 in Britain, 29 in France, and 24 in Germany.

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## Court ...

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they reach beyond school grounds in such cases to impose discipline.

"While children are in school, they are under the custody and tutelage of the school," ACLU lawyer Witold Walczak argued in the 3rd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals. "Once they leave the school-house gate, you've got parents that come into play."

But a lawyer for the Hermitage School District in western Pennsylvania offered a different view.

"It's not a matter of where you throw the grenade, it's where the grenade lands," Anthony Sanchez said.

The appeals court agreed to rehear the two cases in a rare "en blanc" session—with all 14 eligible judges on the bench—after its judges issued conflicting rulings in the two cases in February. One three-judge panel upheld a girl's suspension, while another found the suspension of a boy unconstitutional.

Such disparities are common around

the country as school districts wrestle with how to address online behavior that can range from pranks to threats to cyber bullying.

Some school officials mete out discipline, opening themselves to lawsuits, or refer cases to police. Occasionally, a targeted school employee sues the suspected culprit for defamation.

David L. Hudson Jr., a scholar at the First Amendment Center in Nashville, Tenn., has reviewed many such cases across the country and said the extent of school officials' jurisdiction remains unsettled.

Legal experts hope the Supreme Court soon will clarify the limits of school discipline for online speech that is posted offsite. Hudson told The Associated Press that many school officials "would welcome further elucidation by the courts."

The two Pennsylvania school districts argued June 3 that the postings can be disruptive at school, and said they need to be able to maintain order.

"The profile did create an immediate disruption, which required immediate action," argued lawyer Jonathan Riba, who

represents the Blue Mountain School District in eastern Pennsylvania.

A 14-year-old Blue Mountain student who had been cited for a dress-code violation created a fake profile of a principal purportedly from Alabama. She used her actual principal's photograph and described him as a pedophile and mentioned a sex act. The girl later apologized, took down the page, and was suspended for 10 days.

"For a school administrator, one cannot be called a worse thing than a sexual predator of young children," Riba argued.

But Walczak said no one, including the principal, took the profile seriously, and that the parody is protected under the First Amendment. He suggested other remedies for such behavior, from talking with the student and her parents to calling police or counselors.

The student's mother has said punishing the girl should have been left up to her.

In the other case, Hickory High School senior Justin Layshock created a parody that said his principal smoked marijuana and kept beer behind his desk. The Hermitage School District said it substantially disrupted school operations.

Layshock was suspended, and the principal sued him.

During the June 3 hearing, the judges threw a barrage of hypothetical questions at the lawyers, asking if it mattered whether the students intended to harm their targets or if the offending sites were accessed at school.

Chief Judge Theodore A. McKee suggested yet another response to the "buzz" among students about outrageous postings.

"Teachers might say this is a teachable moment," McKee said. "Maybe in retrospect, that's the best way to deal with it, to get the students talking about the hurtfulness of the conduct."

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## Standards ...

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to standards in other top-performing countries for inspiration. The standards were released in a joint launch by the National Governors Association (NGA) and Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO).

American Federation of Teachers President Randi Weingarten said the final standards are “much improved” over earlier drafts and are crisper and more focused on what students need to learn.

Delaware Gov. Jack Markell, whose state, along with Tennessee, won the first round of federal Race to the Top funding, said it is “critical that our nation makes clear its renewed focus on making sure kids graduate not only ready to compete, but ready to win.”

States should view Race to the Top and the common core standards not as a competition, but as a relay race in which one state shares a successful program or practice with other schools and states across the country, he added.

“Chief state school officers from across the country believe that through collective state actions such as these, we can provide all the country’s children with a world-class education,” said Gov. Steve Paine of West Virginia. “These standards lay the groundwork for students to live and compete in today’s global world.”

Paine said the standards pay particular attention to teacher support and preparedness, which in turn will build students’ capacity to emerge from high school ready for the workforce or college.

Key English and language-arts components include:

- Skills related to media and technology use are especially important, the standards say—including how to evaluate media sources.
- A “staircase” model for reading is advocated, so that students master increasingly complex material.
- There is no set reading list, because the standards “recognize that teachers, school districts, and states need to decide on appropriate curriculum.” The standards do include sample texts to help teachers prepare for the school year and to let parents and students know what to expect at the beginning of the year.
- The standards mandate certain critical types of content for all students, including classic myths and stories from around the world, foundational U.S. documents, seminal works of American literature, and the writings of Shakespeare. The standards defer the many remaining decisions about what and how to teach to states, districts, and schools.
- Beginning in the earliest grades, students will learn how to formulate a clear written argument, the standards say.
- Speaking skills, and especially small-group and collaborative discussions that lead to problem-solving, are emphasized. Mathematics standards include:
- K-5 standards will give students “a solid foundation in whole numbers, addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, fractions, and decimals.” This will help students build strong math foundations for more advanced concepts.
- Kindergarten students will follow successful international math models and recommendations from the National Research Council’s Early Math Panel

report by focusing on numbers, how numbers correspond to quantities, and how to put numbers together and take them apart—the beginnings of addition and subtraction.

- Teachers will have detailed guidance on how to help K-5 students through traditionally difficult topics such as fractions and negative numbers.
- Conceptual understanding, in addition to procedural skills, will be essential.
- After building a K-5 math foundation, students should be prepared for geometry, algebra, and probability and statistics. “Students who have completed 7th grade and mastered the content and skills through the 7th grade will be well-prepared for algebra in grade 8,” the standards say.
- High school standards will ask students to apply mathematical ways of thinking to real-world challenges, and they will help students develop the ability to apply knowledge as college students and employees regularly do.
- The high school standards “emphasize mathematical modeling—the use of mathematics and statistics to analyze empirical situations, understand them better, and improve decisions.”

Forty-eight states and Washington, D.C., signed on to help develop the common core standards. Kentucky was the first state to pledge adoption, and West Virginia, Maryland, and Hawaii have since signed on to adopt the standards.

The Council of the Great City Schools also urged adoption of the standards. In an open letter to school leaders, the organization said that “even the best efforts will not get all students to the levels of performance

needed to compete in today’s global economy until we repair the patchwork system of U.S. standards that encourages high expectations in one community while discouraging those expectations in another.”

“In all, the initiative has been an important and strong step toward ensuring [that] all states have a consistent approach to rigorous standards,” said Ken Kay, president of the Partnership for 21st Century Skills (P21). “P21 believes this initiative will lead us in the direction of internationally benchmarked standards that ensure 21st-century readiness for every student.”

The National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) lauded the standards’ release as “a major step toward elevating the expectations for every student,” and the group said it “looks forward to assisting state boards in this effort.”

If states decide to adopt the standards, they will have to develop curricula, align assessments, and train teachers and other staff.

Toward that end, the Obama administration has made \$350 million in Race to the Top funding available to help states develop new tests based on the Common Core Standards in English and math. **eSN**

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# Speech recognition, mobile apps help build reading skills

Educators are turning to technology for help in boosting largely flat reading scores

**Maya T. Prabhu**  
Assistant Editor

Students' scores on a national reading assessment have remained relatively flat for nearly 40 years, with students ages 9-17 scoring an average of 255 points on a scale of 0 to 500. As educators work hard to bring that average up, many are excited about the potential for new technologies to help.

Some schools, for example, are using tools such as speech recognition technology to give students a personal reading coach inside the classroom. Others are taking advantage of mobile technology to help students build the skills they need for reading fluency in their spare time, wherever they might be, by downloading audio books or applications to their mobile phones or mp3 players.

"Technology changes the whole game," said Matt Walker, vice president of sales and marketing for Recorded Books, a company that provides audio books and other products for schools.

Meanwhile, there is new research to suggest that this approach can be successful: A PBS study found that mobile applications can help increase students' vocabulary. That could be welcome news for educators who have seen students' reading scores remain largely flat in national exams.

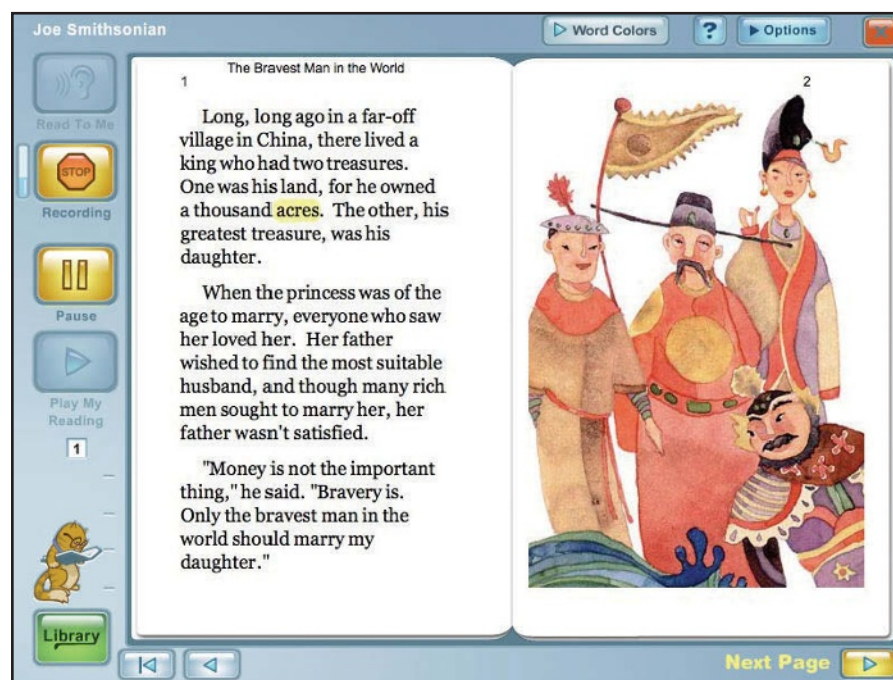
Long-term trend results in reading from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) are available on the National Center for Educational Statistics web site for 12 assessment years, going back to the first in 1971.

The average reading score for 9-year-olds was 220 points in 2008, increasing 4 points since 2004 and 12 points in comparison to 1971. While the average score for 13-year-olds in 2008 was higher than in both 2004 and 1971, it was not significantly different from the scores in some assessment years in between, at 260 points. The average reading score for 17-year-olds was higher in 2008 (286 points) than in 2004 (283 points) but was not significantly different from the score of 285 points in 1971.

Scientific Learning Corp.'s Reading Assistant software aims to change that. The program is a guided oral reading tool that is used to build fluency. The software uses speech verification technology to monitor for signs of difficulty in reading—which include hesitations, silence, mispronunciations, and other cues—and provides assistance when students stumble or get stuck.

"Reading Assistant was developed with the idea of bringing additional reading tutors to students through computers," said Maura Deptula, projects manager for Scientific Learning. "The computer can listen to students the way a teacher can and prompt the student when he or she gets stuck."

The software automatically calculates a student's fluency rate, and there is a direct correlation between fluency and comprehension, said Liz Kline, product manager for Reading Assistant. The software not only helps teachers identify problem areas but also allows them to make sure each student's reading has been assessed.



Reading Assistant uses speech recognition to give students a personal tutor.

"Normally, a teacher has to sit with a stopwatch while the student is reading—so it's a big time saver," she said.

Jacky Egli, executive director of Bridges Academy in Florida, said she's used Reading Assistant for about two years and is constantly amazed by the confidence that students build using the program. Bridges, a private school for students with disabilities, focuses on helping students close the academic gap.

"You see changes by January or February. Reluctant readers are becoming more confident readers," she said.

## Getting a good read on reading skills

Diagnostic Online Reading Assessment (DORA), created by Let's Go Learn and distributed by Curriculum Associates, is another online tool being used to help improve reading. Theresa McKee, instructional supervisor for secondary English in Virginia's Newport News Public Schools, said DORA's individualized and differentiated assessments made the tool a must-have in her district. The program is used at all of the district's middle schools and for some at-risk high school students.

"We administer the test to all middle school kids in the fall, about two or three weeks into the school year, and then we assess them again in April," she said. "Teachers are then able to do individual conferences to talk about each student's scoring."

DORA quickly identifies student's strengths and weaknesses. That helps teachers group students based on their skill level, so teachers can better provide individualized instruction.

DORA is a comprehensive, web-based assessment that diagnostically assesses students' reading abilities. Functioning like a reading specialist, it adapts to students as they respond to each question in the online program, getting harder or easier as needed to complete the diagnosis. DORA's interactive style is designed to make testing fun, engage students, and enable them to initiate tests remotely, its

maker says. The assessment program uses visual and audio tools to help test students' abilities.

McKee said she has seen DORA enable teachers to apply the appropriate strategies to help students improve their reading by one or two grade levels in a semester.

## Support for reading on the go

An April paper, written by Nian-Shing Chen, Daniel Chia-En Teng, and Cheng-Han Lee and presented at the 2010 Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) International Conference on Wireless, Mobile, and Ubiquitous Technologies in Education, looked at the attempt to integrate the strengths of mobile technology into paper-based reading activities to enhance learners' reading comprehension.

"While conventional print text provides very limited information in fostering learners' comprehension, integrating mobile technology with paper prints is a possible way to offer learners essential content-related resources to make sense of the text," they wrote.

Additionally, the PBS Kids study found that students who download mobile applications to their smart phones can boost their vocabulary significantly within just a few weeks.

The study found that vocabulary improved as much as 31 percent in children who played with the Martha Speaks Dog Party app, based on the popular PBS Kids' television series *Martha Speaks*, about a dog who eats a bowl of alphabet soup and gains the power of human speech.

The app features four different games. For example, in "Chow Time," children build vocabulary by helping dogs clean their plates—identifying different shapes (like "triangular" or "rectangular"), patterns, colors, and objects (from "astronauts" to "instruments" and "vehicles"). Martha, "the world's only talking dog," explains what each word means.

To see how well mobile apps can help

students learn, the study tested the vocabulary level of 90 Title 1 students, ages 3 to 7. Then, the children each were given two weeks with an iPod Touch containing the Martha Speaks app. The study followed how the students used the iPod, for how long, and in what context. A voice mailbox was created for parents to share their observations about their child's experience.

On average, the study found that children played with the iPod Touch for a total of five hours across the two weeks, with half that time spent playing the Martha Speaks app. The study didn't actually require kids to play with the application; all play was self-initiated. At the end of the two-week period, the students were given another vocabulary test, which revealed a vocabulary increase of as much as 31 percent.

"Mobile apps can be a great learning tool in the hands of children," said Lesli Rotenberg, senior vice president of children's media for PBS. "This research is important in helping to better understand and guide the development of new apps that improve the value of children's screen time with significant educational outcomes."

That is particularly relevant as smart phones and mobile devices have become increasingly popular among families, PBS said—and parents are faced with a proliferation of mobile apps designed for kids. According to a recent Nielsen study, smart phone usage is 12 percent higher in households with children than in other households.

The use of mobile technology to help teach reading is something that Recorded Books' Walker said he understands.

"So much about what kids do is about what they can download and take with them. That's how they operate now," he said.

Recorded Books' One-Click Audio Academic Collection is similar to an iTunes store for audio books.

"We operate on a multi-access model. So if a teacher wanted all of the students in his or her class to study one book, [the students] could all download it to their iPods" or other mp3 players, he said, emphasizing that One-Click Audio is a supplemental tool. "When the student can listen along while reading the book, it can be helpful" in developing reading skills, he added.

The library features more than 800 downloadable titles, with nearly 500 geared toward students in grades K-8 and another 300 or so geared for ninth through 12th graders. Titles include classics such as *The Call of the Wild*, as well as contemporary books like *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*.

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## Best Practices

# Math video games help defeat summer 'brain drain'

### From staff and wire reports

Statistics show that over the summer break, most students lose an average of two to three months of math computational skills they learned during the previous school year. This loss of learning can mean an academic setback for some children that can take weeks to remedy when school starts in the fall.

For educators in Florida and Texas, the concerns over losing ground academically over the summer were the same, yet their needs were somewhat different. One district was looking for enrichment to keep kids excited about learning, while the other needed tailored remediation. Yet the quest led them both to video games. Not your ordinary "commercialized" games, but rather immersive, instructional video games designed to teach and reinforce key math concepts: Tabula Digita's DimensionM.

In Texas, eighth grade students must pass the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) mathematics test before they can advance to the ninth grade. They are given three chances before the end of June, and then a Grade Placement Committee determines their fate. Couple that with the trepidation many students have when it comes to learning algebra, and you can understand the dilemma educators face.

"It's a one-two punch for teachers and students alike," said Mary Thomas, who oversees state and federal accountability for Austin Independent School District, which serves more than 82,000 students in 120 schools. Nearly 58 percent of the student

population is Hispanic, with 28 percent exhibiting limited English proficiency.

"We have to prepare the students for the tests, which are necessary and critical, and we have to combat their real fears and insecurities about mastering math. We decided we had to find a solution to alleviate students' fear of learning a complex subject by teaching it through a more relevant and exciting means—and we decided that high-impact, engaging educational video games were the answer."

AISD's use of the supplemental games began as part of an intensive, 10-day program for 350 students in the eighth grade who failed the mathematics portion of the TAKS retest for the third time. The program, designed to prepare students for ninth grade Algebra I, offered students four hours of accelerated core instruction each day. Program organizers decided to test the games as a new instructional approach to drive student achievement and combat the inherent fears in mathematics.

"Students were given 30 minutes a day to play the games," said Norma Jost, secondary mathematics supervisor for AISD. "What we saw next was amazing—our students were not only succeeding but truly becoming interested in learning mathematics again."

"What's great about the multiplayer video games is they incorporate a series of first-person action adventure missions that feature graphics, sound, and animation similar to those in popular video games," said Thomas. "By successfully navigating the missions, which are ripe with embedded

lessons, students quickly master the mathematics concepts previously discussed in class, or in this case, the remedial core instruction. This helps to simplify the complexities of mathematics by presenting them in a format—video games—that today's students understand."

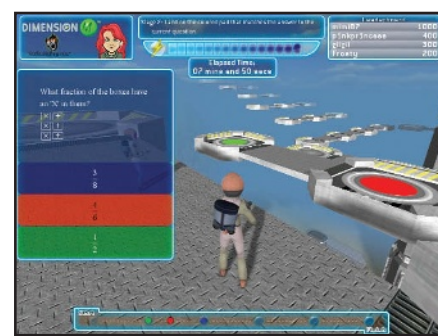
Hillsborough County, Fla., educators likewise knew it would be difficult to keep kids engaged, interested, and excited about learning during summer enrichment programs. That's why they turned to video games for their educational activities at their Hillsborough Out-of-School Time (HOSTS) Program.

Hillsborough Superintendent MaryEllen Elia, who leads a district serving more than 193,000 students in 243 schools, first learned about the supplemental software at a conference and brought the information back to her staff.

The immersive games require students to create their own avatars and then face numerous mathematical obstacles that necessitate knowledge of content and swift reaction to navigate through the games and score points. As they compete, students build upon basic skills like multiplication, division, and fractions, which in later years will lead to mastery of more complex operations.

Janet Boatman, middle school math supervisor for Hillsborough County Public Schools, immediately saw the games' appeal and decided to incorporate them into the county's eight-week summer enrichment program at three school sites.

"We saw firsthand how these games get students excited about learning math. They



Tabula Digita's DimensionM

were so engaged that they not only caught up to where they should have been the previous year, but many even gained ground, allowing them to start the current school year ahead of the game," said Boatman. "As a result of the successful summer experience, we have incorporated the math games at one site this school year and plan to expand next year to additional sites."

During AISD's 10-day program, students were assessed twice via a survey. Nearly 82 percent of the student respondents indicated they were improving in understanding key mathematics concepts such as negative numbers and generalizing patterns.

In Hillsborough, the results were stunning. Pre- and post-test results indicated a 19-percent gain in math scores.

"The students [said] they never knew they could have this much fun at summer enrichment camp," said Boatman. "As educators, we love to see this kind of enthusiasm for math. Coupled with improved student learning, it makes us all winners." **eSN**

## 21st-century tools mean no 'failure to communicate'

### By Jim LeMasters

For those of us who remember classroom announcements in the 1950s, 60s, and 70s, we recall the tinny, muffled "voice of God" summoning an unlucky classmate to the principal's office. Some might remember an old rotary phone on the teacher's desk—similar to the Cold War-era U.S.-Soviet nuclear "hotline"—that frequently interrupted class with a ring loud enough to derail even the most dedicated students' concentration.

With four new elementary school buildings under construction in my district, and a powerful new data network forming the technological backbone for each building, we didn't want our communication systems to be throwbacks to 1970s telephony, with no ability to adapt for today's intercom and paging needs. Our district's technology team—including network engineer Scott Sibert and network administrator Randy Martz—had a rare opportunity to start fresh and harness the power of 21st-century technology throughout these buildings, and we weren't about to let school-wide communication systems be an afterthought.

From the moment construction began, finding a single, integrated communication system for school-wide administrative audio functions was challenging. Since every school has multiple priorities for building communications, a "one-size-fits-all" approach can present major problems.

When we started looking at options in 2007, most schools used separate two-way and broadcast communications—with broadcasts controlled from a central location, usually the office, using a series of switches and dials. Unfortunately, these systems came up short for emergency communications purposes. Also, there was no way to ensure broadcast announcements were being heard in classrooms where multimedia lessons, such as DVDs or presentations, were taking place.

That's why we needed a single, dedicated system in each building that could control communications functions—such as paging, bell tones, and emergency alerts—over a school-wide Internet Protocol (IP) network. But when we started specifying hardware and software for this project, we realized the type of solution we imagined hadn't been invented yet.

We met with several manufacturers early in the process and learned that one company—Calypso Systems—planned to launch a system that suited our needs perfectly. Calypso's CM-3000 is a networked, streaming audio controller and amplifier that encodes analog audio at the head-end (such as an administrative office) for delivery on a standard IP network. In the classroom, the CM-3000 decodes the audio stream for standard playback over conventional, analog speakers and encodes any return audio (such as a two-way intercom call) for delivery over the network.

The CM-3000 is coupled with Conductor, Calypso's unique software package that controls all aspects of administrative audio through a remote console. Bell tones, intercom systems, and emergency communications all converge in a single, easy-to-use interface that is pre-programmable, yet easily adapts on the fly without complicated setup and configuration.

One of the CM-3000's most important features is message prioritization. When building administrators issue an emergency alert, the system overrides any queued messages and broadcasts the alert school-wide, automatically muting volume controls on every classroom AV peripheral to ensure the message is heard loud and clear. Our administrators simply love that their severe weather sirens, fire alarms, and emergency pages are now clearly delivered to all rooms in the building, without delay or confusion.

The Conductor software allows for intelligible voice instructions to be broadcast in the classroom during emergencies, rather than relying only on an alarm tone. The system also will lower the alarm volume to deliver voice instructions, and then restore the alarm at full volume. When used in conjunction with a fire alarm/life safety alert system, Conductor is a very effective enhancement that will help keep students safe.

This single system does much more than a traditional intercom or AV control system can do, but our goal was never technology

for its own sake. Rather, we wanted the technology to make teachers' and administrators' lives easier and improve school communications in the process. Its simplicity makes the Calypso solution even more attractive, because we know it's being used every day.

We see our jobs as integral to the education process, and we believe technology has a huge impact on academic outcomes. Engaging students and inspiring them to learn is the *raison d'être* behind everything we do, whether it's installing cable or buying new projectors. Fortunately, our technology partners share this vision and commitment, and it shows: During this project, we never felt as if we were being "sold" a solution—we always felt our vendors were true partners in the process.

Like all good students, we never want to stop learning about new solutions to old challenges. Whenever people think they have everything figured out, we like to remind them that technology is always a moving target. Fortunately, we have vendor partners who are always moving at high speeds and adjusting their solutions appropriately. Had this not been the case, we might have been stuck with 1970s technology in our 21st-century classrooms.

*Jim LeMasters is the technology director for Warsaw Community Schools in Warsaw, Indiana.* **eSN**





## Grants & Funding

# A strong budget narrative can help sell your proposal

By Deborah Ward

If you've written a significant number of grant proposals, you might have noticed there are two narratives that funders often request as a part of an application. The first is the narrative that contains your statement of need, your goals and objects, your methodology for carrying out the project, and your description of the staff members who will be responsible for doing this. The second narrative accompanies the budget for your proposal and is called the "budget narrative."

We typically think of budgets as numbers, so the request for a "budget narrative" might seem unusual. However, the budget narrative gives an applicant the chance to explain in words how the numbers were derived. Budget figures often are the result of mathematical equations, and it's important for reviewers to understand these calculations. If you think about it, just providing reviewers with a budget full of numbers doesn't explain how these figures were chosen—and can leave reviewers wondering if they were just pulled from thin air.

Budget narratives should explain every

line item that appears on the budget form that contains a dollar figure. Salary and benefit line items, for example, should explain the annual salary for the position(s) of the people working on the project, their required experience or education, the percentage of their time they will spend on the project, and the percentage of fringe benefits that corresponds to the salary amount requested. To illustrate, here is a sample personnel segment of a budget narrative from the Office of Safe and Drug Free Schools on the ed.gov web site:

### Project Director (1.0 FTE) \$50,000

*The project director will have oversight of the program and provide supervision, recruitment, and training of the program liaisons. At a minimum, this position requires a master's degree with an emphasis in social work or other related field*

### Program Liaisons (2 @ 1.0 FTE) (2 x \$35,000) = \$70,000

*Two program liaisons will be responsible for day-to-day school/community*

*outreach activities. At a minimum, staff will hold a bachelor's degree (or equivalent) in the social services field. It is anticipated that each liaison will be responsible for 25 annual events.*

### Staff Assistant (1.0 FTE) \$25,000

*The staff assistant will perform all clerical duties for the project staff. This position requires a high school diploma or equivalent.*

Here is the sample fringe benefits section from the same proposal:

*Happy Days pays 100% medical, dental, vision, life, and disability for full-time employees and is calculated at .25% of annual salary. The calculations are as follows:*

**Program Director (\$50,000 x .25)  
= \$12,500**

**(2) Program Liaisons (\$70,000 x .25)  
= \$17,500**

**Staff Assistant (\$25,000 x .25)  
= \$6,250**

If you are including matching funds in the budget for your grant proposal, you should also include them in the budget narrative. List the matching funds amount with the corresponding budget line item, and indicate the source of the matching funds.

If you are purchasing equipment, it is helpful to indicate where the cost for the equipment originated. This might be a web site, for example, or from a vendor quote. Again, let the reviewers know that these numbers are actual numbers provided by a reputable source.

Remember that a budget narrative is another source of information for reviewers as they look at your budget to determine if the amount you are requesting is reasonable. There are many samples of budget narratives on the internet that can help you create a narrative that's easy to understand and supports a credible budget request.

eSN

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

## Grant Deadlines

### July

#### \$2.5 million to provide media services for students with disabilities

The U.S. Department of Education's Technology and Media Services for Individuals with Disabilities program aims to improve results for children with disabilities by promoting the development, demonstration, and use of technology. In this specific competition, called Television Access, federal officials will fund cooperative agreements that will improve learning opportunities for children with disabilities by providing access to TV programming through video description and captioning. Projects must support access to widely available TV programs that are appropriate for classroom use but aren't otherwise required to be captioned by the FCC. State and local education agencies, as well as higher-education institutions, are eligible to apply. An estimated five awards will be made, ranging in value from \$400,000 to \$500,000.

**Deadline: July 19**

<http://www2.ed.gov/legislation/FedRegister/announcements/2010-2/060210a.htm>

### September

#### Win up to \$2,000 worth of educational software

U.S. and Canadian schools can take advantage of the Spin-2-Win game from Help Me 2 Learn Co. Every eligible participant will win a software subscription valued between \$900 and \$2,000, the company says. The grand prize is a free, six-month subscription to all 11 of the titles in the company's Super Star Online product for the entire school. Super Star Online offers educa-

tional titles for students in kindergarten through sixth grade, such as "Games of Math 3: Multiplication," "Language Arts Review 3a: Advanced Level with Sports," and "Letters and Numbers." Any employee of a public, private, or charter school in the United States or Canada is eligible to participate, but the school's principal must approve an entry from before it is sent in.

**Deadline: Sept. 1**

<http://spin.helpme2learn.com/spin-to-win.html>

#### Back-to-school sweepstakes will award \$12,500 in classroom products

Carson-Dellosa and 3M's Scotch Brand have teamed up to give U.S. teachers the chance to win a total of \$12,500 in Carson-Dellosa and Scotch Brand products through their "Create, Decorate, Motivate! Classroom Sweepstakes." Twenty-five winning teachers each will receive a prize pack that includes \$200 in Scotch Brand products along with a \$300 gift certificate, redeemable at participating teacher supply stores, for the purchase of any of Carson-Dellosa's standards-based learning resources.

**Deadline: Sept. 30**

<http://www.createdecoratemotivate.com>

### Ongoing

#### Free access to SAS online curriculum resources

SAS Curriculum Pathways, which is used by thousands of teachers in more than 30 states, is now available for free to every educator in America. SAS Curriculum Pathways provides content in the core disciplines of English, mathematics, social studies, science, and Spanish. Aligned

with state standards, it offers more than 200 InterActivities and 855 ready-to-use lessons that enable technology-rich instruction and engage students' higher-order thinking skills. It is primarily for use in grades 8-12, though middle school content is in development.

<http://www.sas.com/govedu/edu/curriculum/index.html>

#### 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

# Back-to-school supply drives can boost teacher morale—and the web can help

By Nora Carr, APR, Fellow PRSA

A new study confirms what most of us in education already know: Teachers dig deep into their own pockets to make sure their students don't go without.

Teachers spend an average of \$623 annually on everyday supplies like paper, crayons, and pencils, according to the study, which was sponsored by OfficeMax.

About 97 percent of teachers surveyed in April reported using their own cash to buy supplies, prizes and incentives, snacks, and materials for arts and crafts projects (see graphs below).

With cuts hammering school budgets, stocking classrooms with basic supplies is only getting tougher. For teachers who haven't had a raise since the economy tanked and were underpaid to begin with, their personal generosity is taking a toll.

About three in 10 teachers (28 percent) who were surveyed admit they've cut their family budgets to help fund their classrooms.

While these teachers' devotion to their students is admirable—nearly a third also said they'd give up two vacation days to ensure their students had the best possible learning environment—funding classrooms on the backs of educators isn't.

"It's shocking, it really is," says Bill Bonner, senior director of external relations with OfficeMax. "What other profession says, 'Sure, you're hired, now bring in all your supplies.' That's like telling a fireman to bring in some hoses and a ladder, and we'll let you go do your job."

That's why OfficeMax teamed up with Adopt-a-Classroom, a nonprofit organization that uses the web to match teachers with community donors to purchase resources for the classroom.

Founded by Jamie Rosenberg in 1998, Adopt-a-Classroom directs 100 percent of its donations earmarked for classrooms to the teacher in the form of online credit. The charity is accredited by the Better Business Bureau as part of its "wise giving" program.

Teachers register their classrooms for the program. Donors select classrooms by geography, school name, teacher name, or other search criteria. If donors don't have a preference, the program pairs them with underserved schools in their area.

Teachers then shop online using Adopt-a-Classroom's vendor network. Supplies and materials are delivered to the teacher.

The transactions are tracked online; teachers and students typically write notes or send artwork to say thanks. Donors receive impact reports from Adopt-a-Classroom.

OfficeMax hopes its partnership with Adopt-a-Classroom and the new study will prompt more parents and community leaders to sponsor back-to-school supply drives.

"This is not to cast administrators in a bad light," says Bonner. "Most administrators wish there was more they could do. Our effort is to really try to drive some public support. There are a number of

things parents and others who want to help our schools can do to support teachers. Masses of people each doing a little bit will help us get to where we need to be."

The company started focusing on teachers a few years ago after its customer research indicated that education was something customers believed OfficeMax should support.

"It's underknown that teachers spend their own money on basic school supplies," says Bonner. "This is something we feel we can legitimately help with and bring to the national forefront."

While OfficeMax's philanthropic efforts are also market-driven—an increase in supply drives could mean an increase in sales—the company says it's committed to ending "teacher-funded classrooms."

The company also sponsors A Day Made Better, a national program that surprises more than 1,000 teachers at Title I schools with \$1,000 in school supplies. Title I schools serve high percentages of

students whose family incomes meet federal standards for poverty.

Teachers say they welcome more support from parents, volunteers, and community partners, the study shows. Seven in 10 teachers report their schools are not able to provide them with all the necessary tools to effectively teach their students.

Since A Day Made Better debuted in 2007, OfficeMax and Adopt-a-Classroom have served more than 3,500 teachers and have attracted donations for 10,000 classrooms.

As part of the program, each winning classroom receives a digital camera, printer, and a large gift box containing essential classroom supplies. Teachers also receive a high-quality office chair.

"So many teachers' desks and chairs are just horrible," says Bonner. "We give them a leather work chair or office chair, and they get pretty excited about it."

To identify the supplies included in the gift box, OfficeMax conducts research,

surveying teachers and school administration on their greatest classroom needs. Typically, basics such as paper, colored paper, stickers, and pencils top the list. For the past two years, Bonner says, the No. 1 item has been electric pencil sharpeners.

"Teachers say that if they can get the line moving faster, they have more time to teach," notes Bonner. "It just shows how teachers are really thinking about what they can do to improve learning." **eSN**

*Award-winning eSchool News columnist Nora Carr is the chief of staff for North Carolina's Guilford County Schools.*

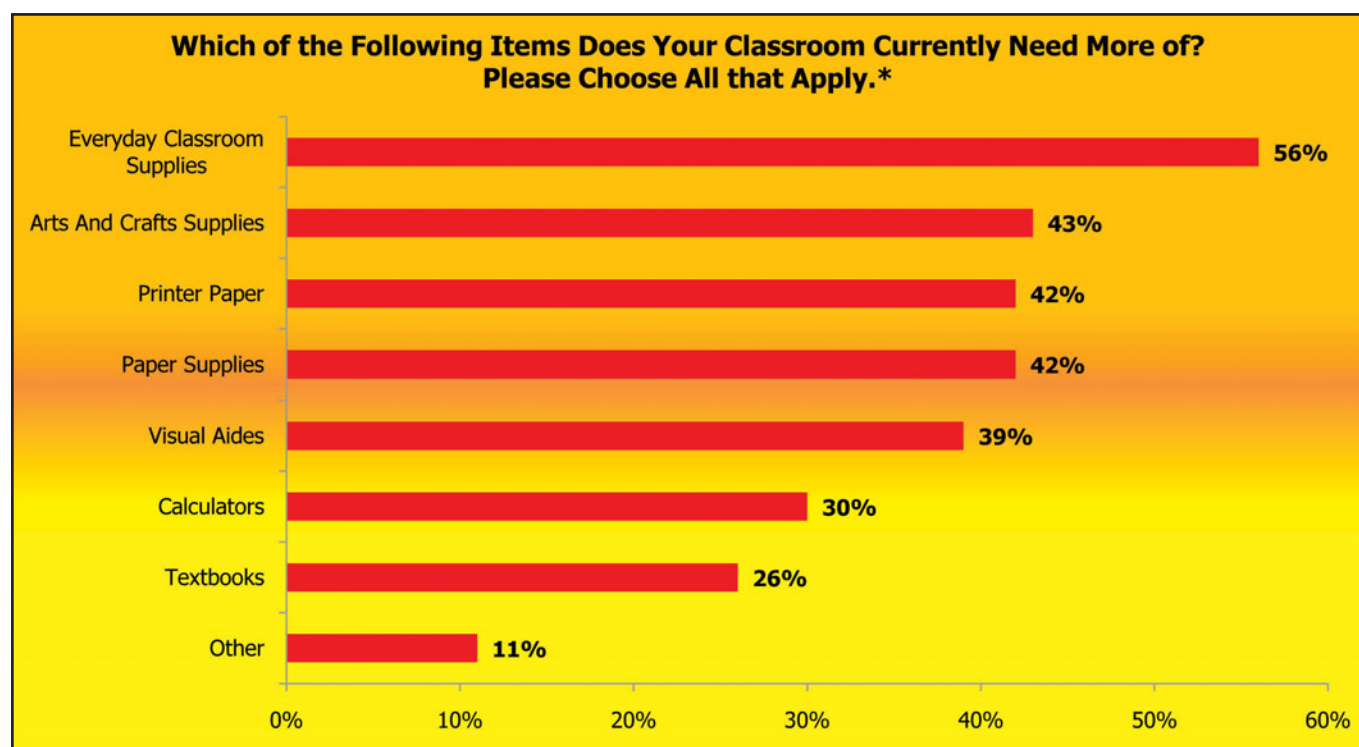
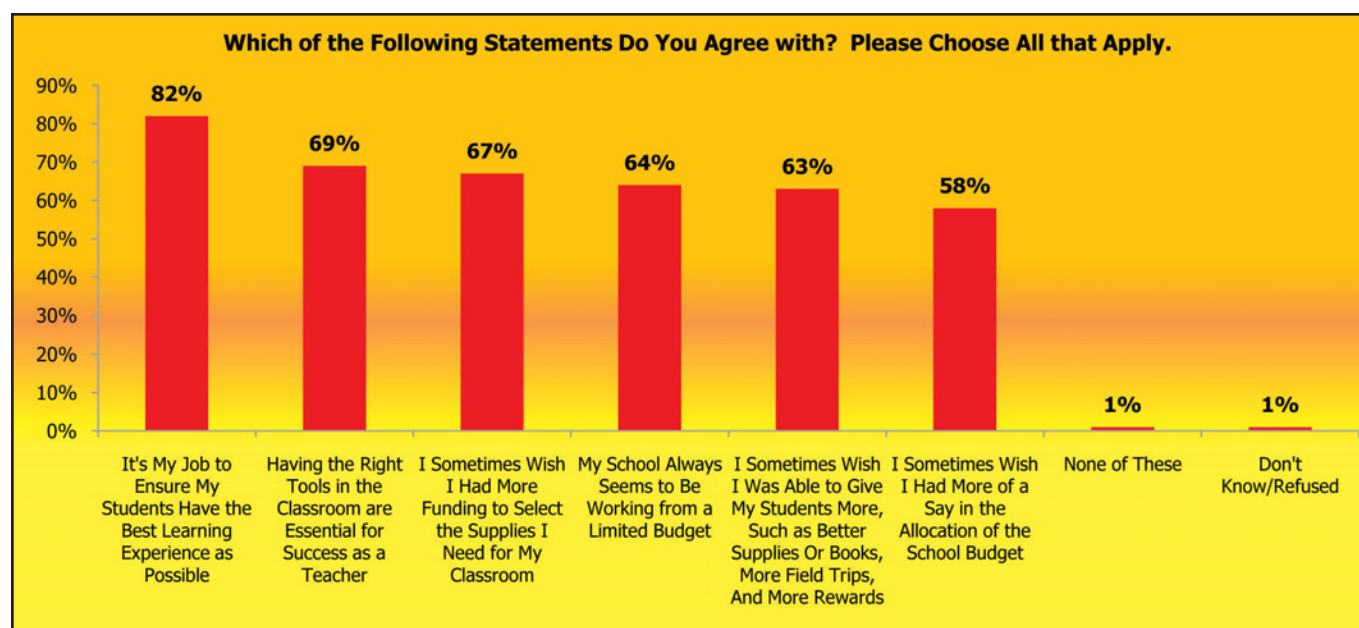
### LINKS:

Adopt-a-Classroom

<http://www.adoptaclassroom.org>

A Day Made Better

<http://www.adaymadebetter.com>



\*Among Teachers Who Say There Are Items Their Classroom Needs More Of



## View point By William Kist

# Teaching in a socially networked classroom

Today's students are always plugged in and ready to learn—so why not take advantage?



William Kist

Let's face it: Social networking is here to stay. Whether it's Facebook or Twitter, or the next web application waiting to become a phenomenon, social networking is a part of our students' lives. The only place where it isn't usually present is in our classrooms.

And yet, how many of us haven't sensed our students itching to reconnect as soon as class is over? The moment they leave the classroom, the cell phones come out and the air is abuzz with various versions of, "Where are you?" or "What are you doing?"

Imagine if we could harness this drive to connect for the purpose of learning. Is it possible to use social networking to further learning?

While doing research for my book, *The Socially Networked Classroom: Teaching in the New Media Age*, I spoke with dozens of pioneering teachers across the country and even around the world about how they are figuring out ways create a new media classroom while keeping their students safe and focused on learning. Their responses covered a range of examples, from social networking in a low-tech environment to teaching at the most advanced levels of technological innovation.

The result is a real-world chronicle of their attempts to navigate the socially networked classroom and their struggles against the barriers that we all encounter—lack of technology, lack of support, lack of time, and, of course, standardized curriculum and testing. Their experiments weren't always successful, but each attempt gave them insights that helped them further refine their methods.

Take, for example, Rachelle Ring, a sixth-grade teacher at West Branch Elementary in West Branch, Ohio. She took advantage of an intranet setup at her school to set up blogs for all her students. She monitors all student blog comments and admits that she has trouble keeping up.

"It's difficult when I need to get around the room to answer questions or supervise students who may be off task," she said.

However, Ring said she feels it is worth the trouble; she has noticed quite a jump in student engagement with writing as she has added blogging to her classroom. She plans to add online literature circles with another teacher in the building and have students collaborate and communicate about the literature they are reading through blogging rather than traditional classroom writing.

Elizabeth Helfant, a former chemistry teacher who is now the instructional technologist at the Upper School of the Mary Institute and Saint Louis Country Day School in Missouri, shepherds a variety of Web 2.0 projects in her school. She described how the science teachers in her school use wikis to assess lab reports.

"The wiki allows the teacher to see exactly who did what part and when it was done, and the wiki also offers students a discussion area to negotiate the lab results. Teachers can watch as the lab report is created and can also offer students feedback during the process using the discussion tab," said Helfant.

She views the wiki as helping the teacher monitor work levels of various group members.

"Keeping track of student progress may also be aided by using Google Notebook with the 'Clip to Notebook' add-on," said Helfant, allowing the teacher and librarian to monitor the research that the student is doing. "Everything that they collect electronically, text and images, can be highlighted, and when the students right click, they get an option to send it to their notebook."

There is also a space for the teacher to make comments and potentially guide further research.

"It provides a means for assessing the skill that

heard of several more. The uses of Facebook are too powerful to ignore even though, as the teacher I found said, his project "flew under the radar screen" of his school's administrators.

Brett Moller is head of learning and educational technologies at a private school in Queensland, Australia. He was working as a media teacher at his previous school when he used Facebook in a project with another teacher who taught religion. The religion teacher expressed a desire to use media more in his classroom, so Moller showed him Facebook.

For several years, Moller had his students post their final films on Facebook. Brett connected with a group of media professionals who gave his students positive feedback about their films, all of which were done through Facebook.

"I showed this teacher, and he got excited," Moller explained. "The idea was to get students who were doing a unit on theoretical ethics and ethical issues to learn a small amount of the content well enough to teach it to the rest of the class in a creative and effective way."

Each student was given a prompt related to an ethical issue, such as slavery in the cocoa industry, for example. Students were expected to research both sides of the ethical situation and then communicate their own ideas in blogs and podcasts.

"Facebook was used to connect the group members with the experts in the given fields, most of whom were professors in areas of ethics or philosophy," Moller said.

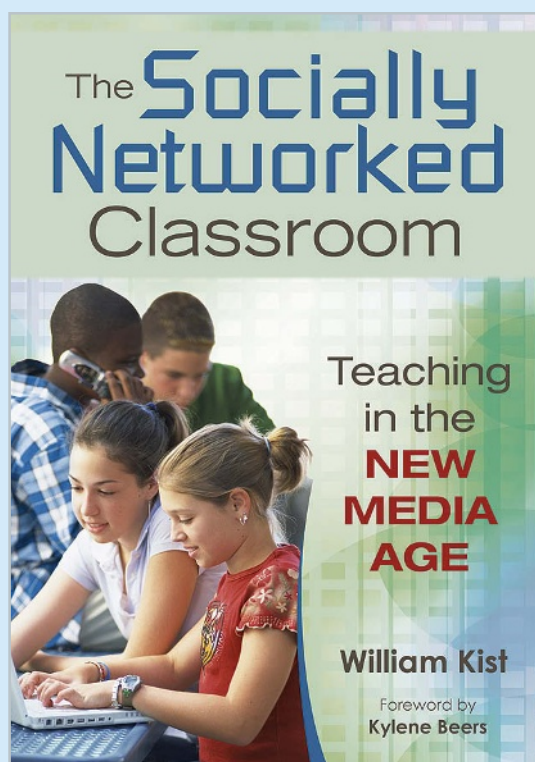
As each group began to blog and produce podcasts about their issue, some local university professors played a crucial role. The professors, who were "keen about the project," Moller said, began to generate some critical thinking on the site by posting some "devil's advocate" arguments, trying to suggest, for example, that stopping slavery would mean the end of candy bars as we know them.

When I asked about security issues, Moller responded that the Facebook group was set up in a completely secure way, allowing only the students and the university professors to comment. Moller said he only had one parent complaint about the project, and when he showed her that it's impossible for an outsider to log into the group, she was satisfied with the project's safety. He did admit there were some challenges to this project.

"You still have to be a vigilant teacher," he said. "At the beginning, kids were more interested in checking their own Facebook profiles."

These are just a few examples of the possibilities and challenges of using social networking for learning. The teachers I've interviewed each take a different approach to the tools available to them, but they all believe passionately in what they do and in opening up a new world for themselves and their students.

eSN



*Whether it's Facebook or Twitter, or the next web application waiting to become a phenomenon, social networking is a part of our students' lives. ... Imagine if we could harness this drive to connect for the purpose of learning.*

is being taught, while it is being taught," she explained.

Even Facebook can be used for educational purposes, though most schools still filter access to the site as well as to similar social networking platforms. During my research for *The Socially Networked Classroom*, only one teacher I interviewed admitted to using Facebook unfiltered within the school day in a K-12 setting, but I've since

*William Kist is an associate professor at Kent State University, where he teaches literacy education courses at the graduate and undergraduate levels. His book, The Socially Networked Classroom: Teaching in the New Media Age, presents a snapshot of how teachers are currently using Web 2.0 to educate today's students. Complete with real-world examples, lesson plans, sample assignments, and assessments, the book is available from Corwin.*





# Netwatch

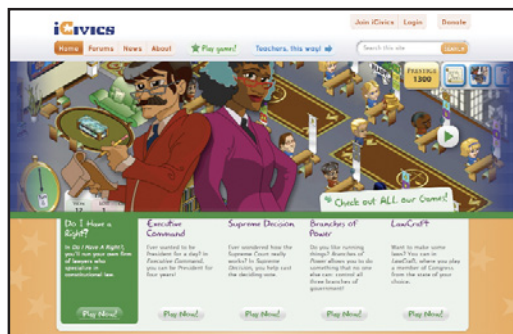
## Curriculum

Best new instructional resources on the internet

### Free computer games promote civics education

<http://www.icivics.org>

An “unintended consequence” of No Child Left Behind has been a decrease in civics knowledge, because it placed all its emphasis on reading and math scores, former Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O’Connor said May 26 in promoting an expanded version of a web site that uses free computer games to put a fun spin on learning about government. Launched on May 24, iCivics.org is a rebranded, expanded version of an earlier site called OurCourts.org. “Barely one-third of Americans can even name the three branches of government, much less say what they do,” O’Connor said. “... I’m worried.” O’Connor’s new web site aims to right that wrong. Games on iCivics include “Do I Have A Right,” in which the player runs a virtual firm specializing in constitutional law; “Executive Command,” which offers a chance to play president; “Supreme Decision,” about the Supreme Court; “Branches of Power,” which gives the player control of all three branches of government; and “LawCraft,” in which the player is a member of Congress. The iCivics program is based at Georgetown University Law School. O’Connor is the project founder and leads the board of the nonprofit iCivics Inc. The online role-playing games on iCivics are free, teacher-friendly, and effective—and kids like them so much in school that they play them at home, too, O’Connor said.



### New YouTube channel features fun science experiments for families

<http://youtube.com/user/FamilyScienceQuest>

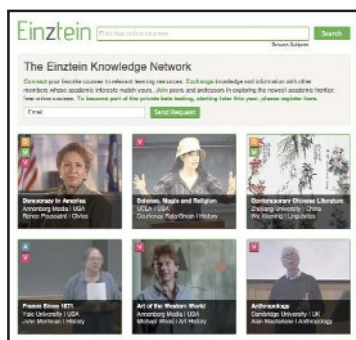
A new survey of science teachers and parents, from Boehringer Ingelheim and the National Science Teachers Association (NSTA), shows that an overwhelming majority of science teachers wish their students’ parents had more opportunities to engage in science with their children at home—and most parents admit they could use more help to support their child’s interest in science. One resource that could help is a new YouTube channel from Boehringer Ingelheim, called FamilyScienceQuest. Families nationwide can take advantage of the information presented on this dedicated YouTube channel, featuring simple, fun science experiments that parents can conduct at home with their children—such as making colors explode in a puddle of milk, creating sidewalk chalk, and making a cloud. “Science education has been identified as a national priority, but science teachers can’t do the job on their own. They need the help and support from key stakeholders, especially parents,” said Francis Eberle, NSTA’s executive director. “We know that family involvement is important, and parents need help getting involved with their kids in a subject they may not feel comfortable with themselves. We must continue to find ways to break down the walls of the classroom and encourage learning together among families.”



### Web service helps users search for open online courses

<http://einstein.com>

Sifting through archives of open online course material soon could get easier: A new public beta version of a web-based college course library aims to help students and faculty find open curriculum content with a search function designed to narrow their hunt for free video and audio lectures. Einstein, a California-based nonprofit, launched the beta version of its library in May with more than 2,000 complete online courses grouped into more than 30 categories. Einstein’s library features a search engine that helps students and educators drill down to the course they’re searching for. Users can sort their search by tags, media type, subject matter, and course provider, among other criteria. Students also can see course ratings on the Einstein site. Web sites featuring hundreds or thousands of free online lectures are often difficult to navigate, and students can struggle to find the next in a series of lessons from the same professor in the same course. “Search engines have inherent limitations when it comes to filtering content and discovering useful academic courses, and these shortcomings aren’t being adequately addressed elsewhere,” Einstein CEO Marco Masoni said in a statement.



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

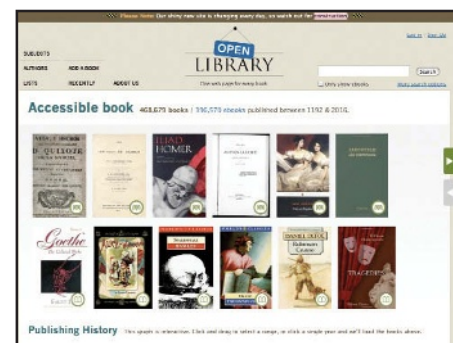
## Leadership

Research and management resources for the K-20 decision maker

### Project puts 1 million books online for blind, dyslexic users

[http://openlibrary.org/subjects/accessible\\_book](http://openlibrary.org/subjects/accessible_book)

Even as audio versions of best sellers fill store shelves and new technology fuels the popularity of digitized books, the number of titles accessible to people who are blind or dyslexic is relatively small. A new service announced May 6 by the nonprofit Internet Archive in San Francisco is trying to change that. The group has hired hundreds of people to scan thousands of books into its “Open Library” digital database—more than doubling the titles available to people who aren’t able to read a hard copy. Brewster Kahle, the organization’s founder, says the project initially will make 1 million books available to the visually impaired, using money from foundations, libraries, corporations, and the government. He’s hoping a subsequent book drive will add even more titles to the collection. “We’ll offer current novels, educational books, anything. If somebody donates a book to the archive, we can digitize it and add it to the collection,” he said. The Internet Archive is scanning a variety of books in many languages, so they can be read by the software and devices blind people use to convert written pages into speech. The organization has 20 scanning centers in five countries, including one in the Library of Congress. “Publishers mostly concentrate on their newest, profitable books. We are working to get all books online,” Kahle said, adding that the organization does not run into copyright concerns because the law allows libraries to make books available to people with disabilities.



### Parents get help in choosing an online-learning program

[http://www.inacol.org/research/promisingpractices/docs/NACOL\\_PP-ParentsGuide-Ir.pdf](http://www.inacol.org/research/promisingpractices/docs/NACOL_PP-ParentsGuide-Ir.pdf)

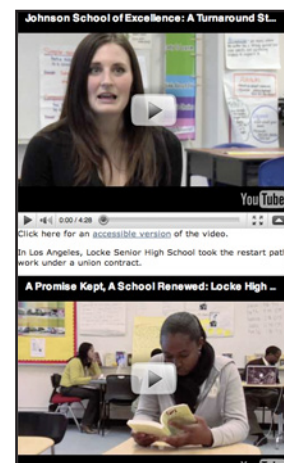
A new guide offers parents a roadmap in their quest to find the right online-learning program for their child. “A Parent’s Guide to Choosing the Right Online Program,” written by John Watson and Butch Gemin of the Evergreen Education Group and Marla Coffey, a distance education consultant at the University of Maryland University College, is part of the Promising Practices in Online Learning series from the International Association for K-12 Online Learning (iNACOL). According to the guide, online-learning options can be public or private, full-time or supplemental, fully online or a blend of online and basic instruction—and these multiple models can create an intimidating array of options from which to choose. To help parents, the guide lists 10 “Defining Dimensions,” or characteristics of online learning, and it describes the options that are available for those characteristics. “The guide also goes into some ‘Getting Started’ questions,” said Rose Fernandez, founder of the Wisconsin Coalition of Virtual School Families, “which helps parents to figure out requirements, costs, and their—and the programs’—expectations.”



### Videos highlight successful school reform

<http://www.ed.gov/blog/2010/03/whats-possible-turning-around-americas-lowest-achieving-schools/>

To help local education leaders with their own school-reform efforts, the U.S. Department of Education (ED) has produced a new series of online videos highlighting successful school improvements from districts across the nation. The videos illustrate how several school districts have successfully turned around their low-performing schools using the four models endorsed by ED’s \$3.5 billion Title I School Improvement Grant program. This program makes funds available to states by formula, to help them target the bottom 5 percent of U.S. schools—or approximately 5,000 chronic underperforming schools nationwide. Local school districts compete for the funds after identifying the schools they want to overhaul and then determining which of four models is most appropriate: transformation, turnaround, restart, or school closure. Through interviews with school administrators, teachers, parents, and students, the videos aim to show how sometimes difficult changes in school leadership, personnel, curriculum, and culture can lead to dramatic improvements in student achievement, ED says.





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# Product Spotlight

## HP injects web technology into new printers

Hewlett-Packard Co. is rolling out new technology that will give internet capabilities to its printers, allowing users to print documents via eMail commands from a smart phone or any other web-connected device.

The printers each will have their own eMail address, to which smart-phone users can send photos and any other files they want to print. The printers also will be able to connect to an HP web site, from which users can tell their printers to do specific things at certain times, such as printing out copies of the day's top news stories every morning.

Vyomesh Joshi, executive vice president of HP's imaging and printing group, said the changes answer demands from customers to make it easier to print from any internet-connected device, including phones, small laptops known as netbooks, and tablet computers such as Apple's iPad.

HP is soliciting partners for a web site, called the ePrintCenter, that it envisions as an app store like the ones Apple, Google, and others have for their smart phones. The idea is that these partners can build software and services for HP's web printers, which will range in price from \$99 to about \$400.

<http://www.hp.com>



## Pearson unveils next generation of its online student information system

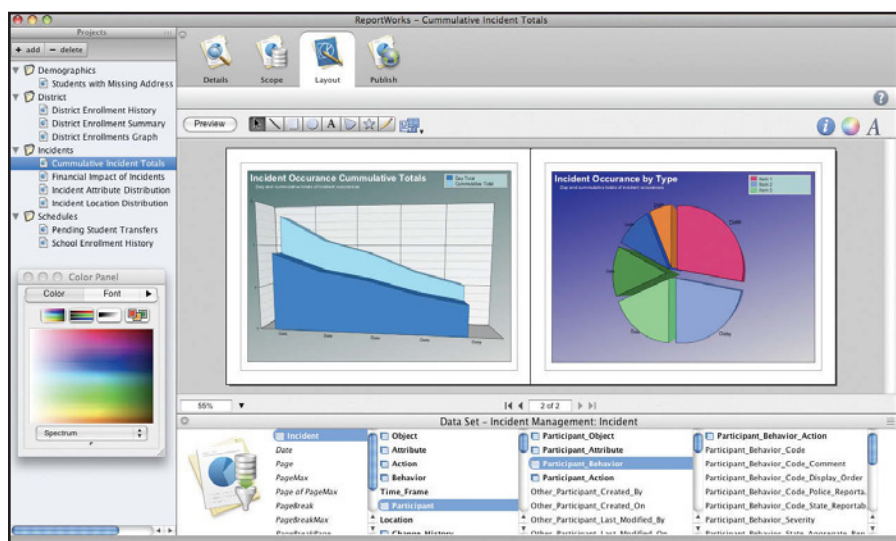
Pearson has launched a new version of PowerSchool, its online student information system (SIS), and PowerTeacher, its teacher gradebook application.

The new version of PowerSchool, version 6.2, enables teachers and administrators to access the software via an iPhone or Google Adroid mobile device, and it features an enhanced parent portal and improved graduation planning, Pearson says. PowerTeacher 2.0 now includes standards-based grading capabilities down to the assignment level, in what the company calls "an intuitive and elegant user interface design."

The enhanced Parent Portal in PowerSchool 6.2 lets parents with more than one child in the school system access all their children's records with a single login account. And a new feature of PowerSchool, Graduation Planner, provides a more robust tool for planning a student's academic career, by tracking and reporting on a student's progress toward meeting graduation requirements.

What's more, administrators now can track student absences by using a combination of thresholds and triggers. Each time a student meets or exceeds a defined threshold, the student is flagged in the database and is included on a report. This allows administrators to track when notifications—what are commonly referred to as three, five, and 10-day letters—are sent to the student's family. (Thresholds can vary depending on a school's policy.)

<http://www.pearsonschoolsystems.com>



## Learning.com's new digital learning environment could support cash-strapped schools

Learning.com has introduced a digital learning environment, called Sky, that aims to help districts make the most of their limited resources, while engaging students with 21st-century learning experiences.

Sky makes it easy for districts to assemble and distribute web-based curriculum resources to teachers, while meeting accountability and reporting requirements that are aligned with state standards and their own local district goals, the company says.

Using Sky, a school district can create its own curriculum and send it to teachers. Teachers then click on the unit to assign it to students. Sky gives teachers access to all of a district's digital resources through a single sign-on, and it includes collaboration features so teachers can connect with students, parents, and even with other teachers in professional learning communities.

"We're making it easy for teachers and districts to customize and deliver web-delivered resources in the way that works best for them and their students," says Learning.com CEO William J. Kelly, who founded the company in 1999. "Sky eliminates for teachers the difficulty and time spent on administrative tasks like curriculum setup and class management, leaving more time for teaching."

District leaders also can understand what resources work, with reports that provide insight into what digital resources teachers are using and what the results are with their students, so they can target their limited resources more intelligently. Additionally, districts can import test data to see where the gaps in learning are, and Sky can provide prescriptive recommendations to fill those gaps.

All current Learning.com customers receive immediate access to Sky, the company said—a \$2 per-student, per-year value.

<http://www.learning.com/sky>

## Advertisers' Showcase



## Casio's Green Slim Projector features a revolutionary new patent-pending hybrid light source

Casio is once again leading the way with an innovative semiconductor light-source technology that combines LED and laser light to create a completely new, mercury-free light source. These high-brightness projectors have up to 2,500 lumens, creating brilliant, natural colors—and they have a quick on/off capability.

When it comes to the environment, Casio sets the standard with a mercury-free light source that will provide more than 18 years of daily use—or up to 20,000 hours.\* Green Slim Projectors are virtually maintenance-free, which saves time, money, and the environment.

Every presentation or classroom experience will make an impact, with images rich in color and fine detail.

<http://www.greenslimprojector.com>

*\*Product warranty is for 3 years or 6,000 hours as measured by internal projector timer.*



eSN.tv viewer's guide

www.eschoolnews.com/eSN-TV/ViewersGuide

With dozens of videos being uploaded each week on eSN.TV, *eSchool News* has created a **Video Viewers' Guide** to help navigate our archive. Below you will find our videos of the month—selected based on their relevance to educational technology and viewer popularity. Our video site is powered by Eduvision from JDLHorizons—<http://www.jdlhorizons.com/eduvision/>

From the Student Video Network to interviews with leading experts in education, and from important vendor information to conference keynotes, we've collected a large variety for you to choose from. Simply go to our **Video Viewers' Guide** page on our web site [www.eschoolnews.com/eSN-TV/ViewersGuide](http://www.eschoolnews.com/eSN-TV/ViewersGuide) to check out our top videos.

Highlights



**Arne Duncan's favorite teacher**  
Secretary Arne Duncan and his favorite teacher, Darlene McCampbell.



**Tom Trigg Interview**  
Trigg, Superintendent, Blue Valley Public Schools, KS discusses the districts process for creating and executing their five year plan with two goals focused on academic and character development.  
<http://www.bluevalleyk12schools.org/searchforstrategicplan>

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

[www.eschoolnews.com/eSN-TV/ViewersGuide](http://www.eschoolnews.com/eSN-TV/ViewersGuide)

What's Hot

**John Tyler Elementary School's After-School Programs**  
Secretary Duncan toured a new Outdoor Classroom and after-school program focusing on health and fitness. While at Tyler, the Secretary visited a specialized after-care program for students with special needs and participated in healthy foods and yoga demonstrations.

**Mel Blackwell Interview**  
Mel Blackwell, VP of Schools and Libraries Division of USAC presents an e-rate update at the NAMTC Leadership Summit.

**Stand Up For Learning: A Healthier School Day**  
The concept of Stand Up for Learning focuses on student's interaction with their classroom environment and how standing and movement can help them stay focused on their tasks, whether it's homework, tests or group projects.

Vendor News

**NBC News Archives on Demand Video Tour**  
NBC News has created 10,000 historic and current event resources. To learn more, sign-up for a FREE trial at [www.nbclearn.com](http://www.nbclearn.com).

**Bring Cloud Computing to Your School With Microsoft®**  
Microsoft cloud computing gives better choice and flexibility to schools. The platform and applications you use can be on premises, off premises, or a combination of both, depending on your academic organization's needs.

**Technology Tools for Better School Leadership**  
Mark Willis, Assistant Executive Director of the Georgia School Boards Association and COO of eBOARD solutions, explains that eBOARD is a web-based governance tool that helps the system leverage technology in such a way that aligns the work of the system and keeps the focus on the strategic goal of improving student achievement.

Partner index

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