



Connections

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From the CEO...

By Bruce E. Hawkins, CEO

MCOECN Moving Forward with Technology

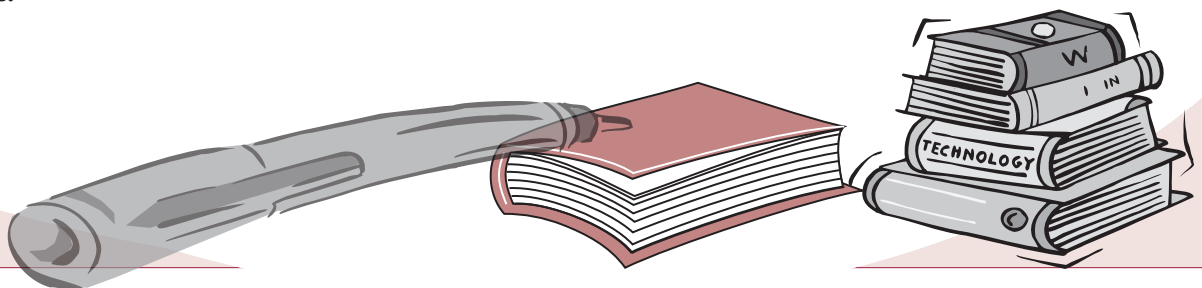
With many exciting things happening in the world of technology, the Management Council of the Ohio Education Computer Network (MCOECN) is working on three exciting initiatives; the Third Frontier Network, a new Internet service contract for Ohio schools, and D3A2 (Data Driven Decisions for Academic Achievement).

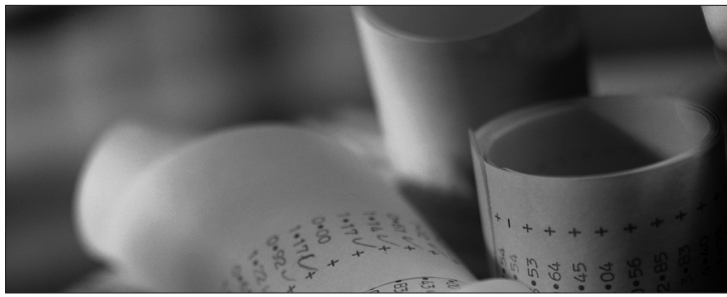
The Third Frontier Network is a collaborative effort of Ohio's K-12 Network and will involve fiber connectivity to the 23 Information Technology Centers (ITC's, formerly known as DA Sites) and 7 large urban school districts. This increased bandwidth will enable school districts to have greater access to the Internet, video connections, and other technologies used in today's classrooms. Many of the contracts between the ITC's/large urban school districts and the fiber providers have been finalized, and this new fiber connectivity is being implemented around the state. There will be an official lighting ceremony for the Third Frontier Network on February 27.

The Management Council sent out a request for proposal (RFP) to vendors for providing Internet access to Ohio schools. The schools are by far the largest user of Internet bandwidth in the state and by collectively leveraging this volume of use, we believe there is potential for substantial savings to our schools. It is anticipated this competitive bidding process will enable the OECN to purchase Internet services and greater bandwidth to increase services to schools.

The Data Driven Decisions for Academic Achievement is a collaborative effort involving many agencies such as the Ohio Education Computer Network, eTech Ohio, the Ohio Department of Education, local school districts, INFOhio, the Resource Center and many professional organizations such as OASBO (Ohio Association of School Business Officials), BASA (Buckeye Association of School Administrators), and OESCA (Ohio Educational Service Center Association). The D3A2 project's success depends upon active participation of many organizations and individuals. To find out how you can become more involved in D3A2, please visit http://www.ode.state.oh.us/Data_Exchange/ on the Ohio Department of Education's website.

All three of these projects are essential for the ultimate goal of technology in schools which is to increase student academic achievement. Technology is simply a means to an end with the ultimate goal being increasing student achievement.





INFOhio Adds Resources for Parents to Its Web Site

The Parent Resources section of the INFOhio Web site has been improved by the addition of several resources to help parents help their children find appropriate materials on the Internet. "Parents are their children's first teachers," says INFOhio's Executive Director, Theresa M. Fredericka. "INFOhio provides a basic collection of age-appropriate, curriculum related materials to all Ohio PreK-Grade 12 students and educators. And our new Parent Resources section leads parents to lots of other resources to help with homework, foster a love of reading and keep kids safe online."

INFOhio, the state's virtual library and information network for PreK-12 public and nonpublic schools, is using a Reinberger Foundation grant to develop educational materials to help parents learn about and take advantage of the free electronic educational resources available to children at home. The new Parent Resources pages were developed with the assistance of a series of focus groups that gathered hundreds of ideas and suggestions from parents.

These parents told us that our biggest issues are overall awareness and helping parents, as well as students and teachers, understand what INFOhio is all about. To respond to this need, we worked with a commercial studio to create a fast-paced and fact-filled four-minute video that is a perfect overview of INFOhio's efforts to provide Ohio PreK-12 students, educators and parents with the resources they need to enrich student learning. Point your web browser to <http://www.infohio.org> and select the link to "What Is INFOhio?" Thirty and 60 second public service announcements, created from this video, will be distributed to school districts to play on their community channels and to make available to TV stations across the state.

A second concern identified by parents was the need to simplify how to find specific resources inside the INFOhio web site. The new Parent resources can be found by clicking the parent button on our home page. The first entry is a getting started guide for parents. Just one page, the guide summarizes the main points about INFOhio that parents should know.

The Books and Reading section has links to reading lists, author information, tips to encourage children's love of reading and sites that help improve reading skills. There are even links to e-books to read online.

For parents who need a bit of help in order to help their child complete assignments, Homework Help Tools suggests several resource types in areas requested by parents:

- Biographies
- Conversion tools
- College tools
- Current Events
- Grammar, spelling & vocabulary
- Images & pictures
- Quotations
- School projects
- Search engines for kids
- Test practice & tutorials
- Writing research papers

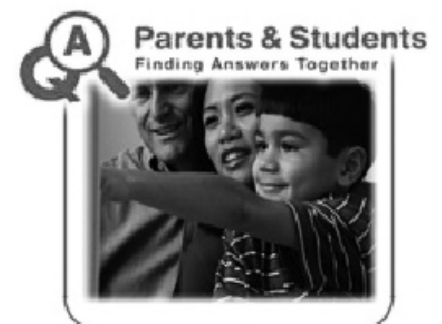
There is a new link for How to Help With... which offers web sites to assist with:

- Book reports
- Computer presentations
- Maps
- Making a poster
- Science fair projects
- Study skills
- Survey projects
- Timelines

And a special section on Internet Safety just for parents.

INFOhio will also publish a booklet for school librarians to help them reach out to parents in their communities to make them aware of, and help them use, INFOhio. The 40 page booklet, entitled "Toolkit for Promoting INFOhio Resources to Parents," will contain sample articles for school newsletters, sample letters to send home, monthly activities, promotion ideas that have been used successfully around the state, masters for bookmarks and posters and much, much more. It will enable local schools to reach out to parents, show them the breadth of the INFOhio resources and help them get started with specific ways to work with their children.

Two Ohioans established the Reinberger Foundation in 1966, Clarence T. Reinberger, a pioneer of the auto parts industry, and his wife, Louise Fischer Reinberger. The Foundation is committed to enhancing the quality of life for individuals from all walks of life and favors proposals in the areas of arts, education, medicine and social services.



DASL Project Moving Forward

Less than one year after it first went into production, thirty-six districts in five ITCs now use DASL. Another 102 districts expect to put DASL into production this school year for a total of 138 districts in 13 ITCs. Growing numbers of districts will put DASL into production thereafter across all 16 participating ITCs. The current DASL implementation schedule has most participating districts in production by the end of the 2006 – 2007 school year.

DASL ITCs participated in intensive implementation planning this autumn and winter. Their wholehearted participation has been encouraging and commendable. The ITCs jointly produced excellent ITC and district implementation plans, and they are refining these plans continually. The plans are evidence of improving implementation support statewide. Additionally, the State DASL Team plans to expand its staff in the near future. With more support analysts and application developers which will improve service further in 2006. Part of this service is DASL training for ITCs, which are scheduled through December 2006.

Recently released additional DASL features include the following:

- Custom formatters for report cards and transcripts
- Enhancements to custom GPA calculations
- Real time data transfer with Software Answers ProgressBook
- USPS address standardization

In the next weeks and months the DASL Team is excited to work on items such as:

- Ad hoc database query access (Thanks to the generous assistance of volunteers in various ITCs!)

- Ad hoc memberships
- Automated State Student ID feed
- Custom formatted schedule cards and class lists
- District-to-district student transfer
- Improved reporting capabilities and performance
- JVS-specific features
- Tightly integrated item analysis and other academic tools
- Various daily gradebook exports
- Verification that student addresses are in the district's boundaries

Project participants are excited to serve their districts to their fullest capacity.

eSMOC Update – eSIS' Parent and Student Assistant

eSIS, through the Parent Assistant (PA) module, allows parents and students to securely access student information over the Internet. PA allows for separate parent and student logins, allowing customized access for both sets of users. For example, a district could determine that a parent should have access to the messages feature (the ability for a parent and teacher to communicate with each other), but that the student should not have access to this feature. PA is available in three languages (English, French, and Spanish), any of which may be selected by individual users upon sign-in. Performance over a dial-up connection has been entirely acceptable.

PA differs from other web-based parent portals in a number of ways. For example, rather than focusing solely on academic progress, PA allows for access to detailed student information system information as well. PA allows parents and students to create course requests for the next school year as well as transfer requests for the current school year and can be done in conjunction with a counselor's visit or at home, all over the web. Information such as student demographics, attendance, academic progress, fees, discipline, credit history, diploma progress, standard tests, nursing, immunizations, special education, and team/program assignments are all available through the PA interface. Also, any of these modules can be turned on and off at a district's request. eSIS also offers a complementary module, Teacher Assistant (TA), which provides a full-featured grade book package, including assignments, attendance, weighting, custom grading scales, and a simple upload to the report card.

Sharing data via PA requires little or no additional work by teachers or administrators. School users simply go about their normal business, and PA "looks" into the eSIS database to gather the pertinent information. There is no external database to synchronize and no additional hardware or software to purchase. Information is real-time and reflects the current status of the student.

The screenshot shows the eSIS Parent Assistant interface. At the top, there is a navigation menu with tabs for General Info, Current Activity, Academic Progress, Nurses, Messages, Student Update, and Miscellaneous. Below this is a section titled 'Marks/Grades' with a 'Student Schedule' and 'Log Off' link. The main content area is titled 'DISPLAY DETAILS' and shows a dropdown menu for the student 'John Abertford' and a 'Display' button. Below this is a table with the following data:

Courses	Teacher	Reporting Period	Mark	Exam	Final	Abs	Tardy
Keyboarding 4	Frampton, Peter	36 week - Final Report	58	60	63	2	0
Geography - Regional	Vaulkner, Peter	1st 18 Week - Interim	75	-	74	2	0
		2nd 18 Week - Final	74				
Keyboarding 2	Fortunato, Nicholas	2nd 18 Week - Final	80	-	80	1	0
English 1 - Advanced	Harry, Deborah	2nd 18 Week - Final	79	-	79	1	0
English 4 - Advanced	Rivera, Richard	2nd 18 Week - Final	79	-	94	17	3

Above is a screen shot of a sample PA screen, with a student's current grades displayed.

Mrs. Phelps, from the Cardinal Middle School in the Lake/Geauga ITC, had this to say about PA:

"Just wanted to let you know that I think PAM is great!! I find it a very useful tool. Already it has been a great advantage for Jenna. One of her assignments was marked as a zero. This brought her grade down to an 89 – a B – when this was researched by her with the teacher, the misunderstanding was straightened out and she is now receiving a 99 – an A. Had I not been able to view assignments and grades through PA, it probably would not have been discovered until I went to conferences and by that time it would have been too late. I am looking forward to using this on a regular basis, with all of the teachers participating. I am definitely a BIG FAN!"

For more information on implementing PA at your eSIS site, please contact your ITC. For more information on the eSIS Management Operations Cooperative (eSMOC), please contact John LaPlante at laplante@access-k12.org or (330) 270-7474.

LNOCA and Cleveland State University forge Technology Collaboration

The Lakeshore Northeast Ohio Computer Association (LNOCA) and Cleveland State University announced a revolutionary partnership that will bridge the technology gap and benefit students from preschool through grade 12 by providing educational and technology resources that will make their preparation for and entry into college more seamless than ever before.

The partnership between LNOCA and the University, which is unique to Ohio, will bridge many of the gaps that have historically existed between PK-12 schools and higher education and will capitalize on the synergy that exists between many of the support operations among the school districts and the University. It will provide access to information sources currently unavailable to students and parents, will ease the college application process, and facilitate teacher continuing education and accreditation requirements. The new partnership will create information technology synergies in training, courseware and content technology, and student

applications and is designed to improve students' technology experiences from preschool through college.

Initially, LNOCA and CSU will focus on three key initiatives:

- Establishing a high-speed fiber optic network between the two organizations, setting the stage for new software systems, student services, and technology applications.
- Streamlining access for students' participation in post-secondary courses and support for the development, storing, and rapid transfer of student electronic ePortfolios, personalized collections of student papers, presentations, compositions, and images.
- Facilitating teacher continuing education and accreditation requirements enabling Cleveland State students preparing to be teachers to be able to access technology tools available to teachers in Ohio schools,

resulting ultimately in improved student achievement.

"This truly is a win-win-win initiative for Cleveland State, LNOCA, and students," said Mike Doney, Cleveland State's vice president for information services. "We are very pleased to partner with an organization that appreciates the information technology synergies that can be achieved through collaboration."

John Mitchell, LNOCA Executive Director, noted, "We share the same geographic area, management style, and concerns for our students as Cleveland State does. Our combined ability through this new partnership will surpass what either of us could do individually. Cleveland State will be able to provide programs designed specifically for students in the 16 districts and e-learning tools to help those faculty and staff stay current in their fields. This partnership will break the technology wall."

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