VAR Program is now the Technology Services Group of the MCOECN

The Value-Added Reseller Program is a service program for MCOECN members and K-12 educational entities. Started in 1994, the goals of the program have been 1.) to assist in developing technology implementation standards to reduce operational costs for Information Technology Centers (ITCs) and Ohio K-12 schools, 2.) assist in group purchasing of technology-related products and 3.) act as a reseller of technology products and services to obtain competitive pricing, while funding MCOECN activities to benefit Ohio public education. This program was run by Duane Baker with assistance from Sandy Houck for several years, from 1996 through 2005. With Duane's retirement in December 2005, responsibility for VAR program administration was transitioned to David Rhoades at the MCOECN on a part-time consulting basis.

In the summer of 2006, it came to the attention of some ITC Directors that unless this service organization was appropriately staffed to meet the demands of customers with the ability to monitor and actively manage vendor activities, the future of the VAR would be at stake. Therefore, an emergency meeting of the ITC Directors was held on August 9, 2006, to discuss the future of the VAR program. A universal vote of support during the meeting indicated that ITC Directors unanimously wanted to continue the process established by the VAR with additional services. Action needed to be taken, so a subsequent meeting was scheduled for August 23 to craft a vision and a plan. As a result of the meeting, a restructuring committee was tasked with developing by-laws, a business plan, and a governance structure. This group was led by Bill Swartzmiller, North Central Ohio Computer Cooperative (NCOCC), and consisted of the following ITC Directors:

- o Tom Garbarz , NorthEast Ohio Management Information Network (NEOMIN)
- o Stuart Workman, Tri-County Computer Services Association (TCCSA)
- o Bruce Hawkins, CEO of the MCOECN
- o Jim Turk, Lake Geauga Computer Association (LGCA)
- o Greg Spencer, Metropolitan Educational Council (MEC)
- o John Mohler, Northwest Ohio Computer Association (NWOCA)
- o Shawn Clemmons, South Central Ohio Computer Association (SCOCA)
- o Angie Crandall, Miami Valley Educational Computer Association (MVECA)

This group met several times and devoted over 30 hours of meeting time to write the by-laws, executive summary, and business plan. This group renamed the VAR Program the Technology Services Group (TSG) to reflect some of the goals they would like to see achieved. In particular, they thought it critical that the group be self-sustaining and continue to fund MCOECN activities, provide visionary support to address the needs of K-12 educational entities, to respond to requests for technology leadership from ODE, eTech and other key affiliates, to offer or support professional development activities for the MCOECN membership, and to act as a resource in helping to shape technology standards to improve operations and lower operational costs to K-12 schools. In order to accomplish these goals, the group thought it critical to hire a full-time director to build the organization and devote time to these activities. The goal is to have this individual in place by early spring. Discussions are currently underway about future staffing needs of the organization and mechanisms for funding such activities. During the transition time between now and hiring the new director, Greg Spencer has agreed to oversee TSG activities on a consulting basis to handle on-going customer concerns in working with MCOECN-TSG contracted vendors. Duane Baker has also agreed to assist with the transition on a consulting basis to oversee the TSG operation until the new director has been selected.

The ITC Directors, at their meeting on October 27, approved the By-laws and Executive Summary of the TSG, which established the Technology Services Group of the MCOECN Technical Implementation Advisory Board. This Board will have oversight responsibilities for TSG activities. These by-laws were subsequently approved by the MCOECN Board of Trustees on November 14, 2006. The TSG Technical Implementation Advisory Board members, representing the five regions of the state, were nominated at a meeting on December 8 as follows:

Northeast:
- o Tom Garbarz, NorthEast Ohio Management Information Network (NEOMIN), three-year term
- o Stuart Workman, Tri-County Computer Services Association (TCCSA), one-year term
- o Jim Turk, Lake Geauga Computer Association, (LGCA) two-year term

Central:
- o Greg Spencer, Metropolitan Educational Council (MEC), one-year term
- o Bill Swartzmiller, North Central Ohio Computer Cooperative (NCOCC), one-year term

Northwest:
- o John Mohler, Northwest Ohio Computer Association (NWOCA), one-year term
- o Ray Burden, Northwest Ohio Area Computer Services Cooperative (NOACSC), three-year term

Southeast:
- o Shawn Clemmons, South Central Ohio Computer Association (SCOCA), two-year term

Southwest:
- o Al Porter, Hamilton/Clermont Cooperative Association (HCCA), two-year term
- o Angie Crandall, Miami Valley Educational Computer Association (MVECA), three-year term

Ex-officio:
- o Bruce Hawkins, CEO of the MCOECN

The Board held its first meeting on December 27, 2006, where the following officers were elected:
   Chair, Bill Swartzmiller (NCOCC)
   Vice-Chair, Shawn Clemmons (SCOCA)
   Recording Secretary, Angie Crandall (MVECA)

Individuals interested in learning more about the open TSG Director position can find more information at: **http://www.mcoecn.org/announcements/TSG_Executive_Director_Job_Description.pdf**
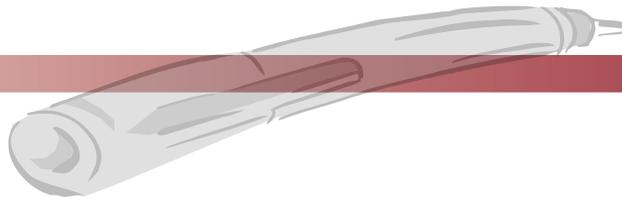
Brief position description:

The Executive Director of the Technology Services Group of the MCOECN will act as the primary administrator for the overall operations of the Technology Services Group of the MCOECN in accordance to the Technology Services Group of the MCOECN By-Laws. In collaboration with other state agencies, the executive director will provide leadership for statewide technology strategies to the educational entities and targeted markets.

eSMOC Update

The Ohio ITCs and independent school districts held the first annual eSMOC eSIS Users' Conference November 17 at the Holiday Inn in Worthington. The conference was attended by more than 200 eSIS users from the 7 ITCs and the 3 independent school districts using eSIS across Ohio.

What did we accomplish with the conference? We were able to share information about eSIS processes and procedures that are being performed throughout Ohio.

The sessions were led by a variety of people using/supporting eSIS. We had principals that are using the system explain how they are utilizing eSIS to manage their schools. We had ITC support staff provide mini training sessions on modules being used in eSIS. We received a demonstration from AAL on the new eSIS Teacher Assistant that is being beta tested throughout the U.S. including Ohio and is expected to rollout in the fall of 2007. Most importantly, we provided an opportunity for Ohio users to talk and learn and share their experiences with one another.

Lloyd Wright and the Ohio Users' Conference Committee did a fantastic job organizing and managing such a large group in Ohio's inaugural attempt to organize an Ohio eSIS Conference. We look forward to more successful statewide eSIS conferences in the future.

Since it is January, it must be the beginning of the scheduling season. The eSIS ITCs and districts across Ohio will be holding scheduling sessions for our schools. Scheduling in eSIS involves 3 functions:

- The first function is Pre-Scheduling; this is the electronic process of preparing your school and students for next school year.
- The next function is Master Timetable Building, commonly known as MTB, which is one of the strengths of eSIS. MTB allows a school to automatically generate a Master Schedule in eSIS based on constraints determined in the Pre-Scheduling process and student course requests. The MTB also allows a school, if they desire, to build the schedule manually or to use a combination of electronic and manually built information.
- The third function of eSIS scheduling is Student Simulations. The simulation process is a complex algorithm that builds student schedules and returns a conflict matrix and other reports that the schools use to maximize student schedules.

The eSIS scheduling process is the backbone of a successful start of the school year for 2007/2008.

For more information on eSMOC or implementing eSIS at your site, please contact John LaPlante, eSMOC chairperson, at laplante@access.k12.oh.us or (330) 270-7474.