



From the CEO...

By Bruce E. Hawkins, CEO

Technology Update in Ohio Schools

Improvements to the Educational Regional Service System Law

The Management Council worked with Representative Setzer and the Ohio Legislature Majority Caucus to “fine tune” some of the language in the Educational Regional Service System law to facilitate the implementation of the sections involving the ITCs (Information Technology Centers). The following three amendments were adopted:

1. Change in the language in Sub. HB 79 to permit the ITC Director to “appoint a designee” to serve on the regional council in the regions “served” by the ITC rather than the location of the ITC. This change clarified the language to reflect the original intent of the regionalization law.
2. In each region, the ITC is permitted to appoint two school district administrators to the information technology subcommittee. This amendment will make this subcommittee a more manageable size and equalize the representation among ITC’s in a region.
3. Change in the name of “data acquisition site” in the original law to “information technology centers” to be consistent with recent language change in the Ohio Administrative Code.

TFN Update

The TFN (Third Frontier Network) will provide a high-speed fiber connection to all 23 ITCs and 7 large urban districts. The original plan was to have all 30 sites connected this fall. Currently, there are 26 sites connected. Contract negotiations and connectivity issues will soon be resolved with the other 4 sites.

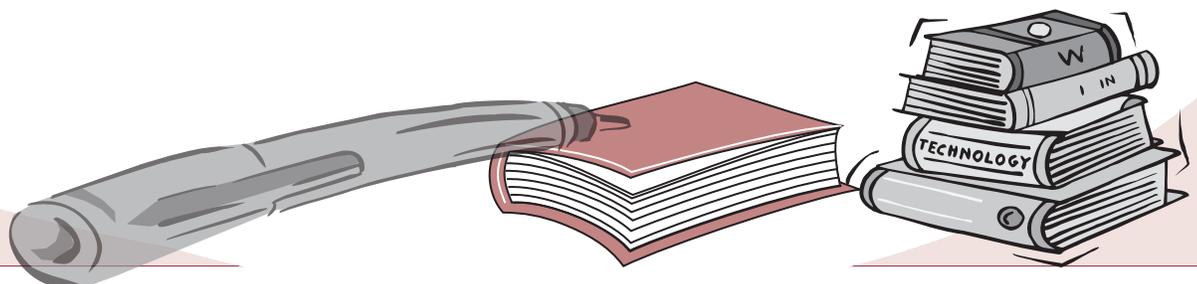
D3A2 Project

The D3A2 (Data Driven Decisions for Academic Achievement) initiative is well underway. Several districts have piloted this program which provides both data analysis and resources to match state standards. The ITCs are working with their districts to schedule the data input necessary to integrate student information in D3A2.

State Technology Conference

eTech Ohio has an outstanding technology conference scheduled for February 12-14, 2007, at the Greater Columbus Convention Center. The Management Council encourages you to visit the conference website at www.etech.ohio.gov.conference/index.jsp and register to attend this conference.

This is one of the largest educational technology conferences in the U.S.A.





SchoolRooms - A New Learning Portal for the K-12 Community

INFOhio transforms teaching and learning in Ohio by connecting educational resources with the power of information technology and creating the link between physical and virtual resources. SchoolRooms is the next generation software for students' information needs. SchoolRooms is a comprehensive and integrated multimedia online discovery portal for K-12 schools that combines teacher-selected, standards-driven content with student-friendly software.

Developed with INFOhio in partnership with its automation vendor, SirsiDynix, and teams of Ohio school librarians and classroom teachers, SchoolRooms will be introduced statewide next year and will revolutionize the way librarians help students learn, teachers teach, and parents share in their students' education.

Stephan Abram, noted educator and author, argues: "We have to stop preparing learners for the world of the past and start focusing them on the world that will be...a world that is significantly different in terms of the way-they will work, live and play and there will be global competition for people with skills that match this new world. Libraries, librarians and information resources and the role they play in continuous learning will be central to their (learners') lives and success."

The Pew Internet and American Live Project reports that students rely on the Internet to help them do their schoolwork and that they want teachers to better coordinate the use of the Internet for classroom activities and out-of-school use of the Internet.

If we want Ohio students to master 21st century learning skills, we must provide the necessary information-rich learning resources they need so that all K-12 students – no matter where they live – can access current, reliable information in all formats – print, digital, video, audio and web-based.

SchoolRooms is a new kind of learning environment that brings together the best content from the following sources into a single portal using federated search capability:

- School library catalogs
- Public library catalogs
- Standards-driven taxonomy with over 22,000 educator-selected Web sites
- INFOhio's core collection of electronic resources
- Interactive and integrated multimedia content from well-known publishers such as Dorling Kindersley and Helicon
- Internet search results from Google

SchoolRooms was built by Ohio teams of teachers and librarians. Theresa M. Fredericka, INFOhio executive director, said, "INFOhio

is pleased that 140 librarians and educators from 70 schools in more than 52 school districts in Ohio worked together to develop content for the SchoolRooms product. The continued joint product development and enhancements planned for SchoolRooms will help make this a winning product for Ohio's schools and will help INFOhio reach its goal to provide reliable and authoritative resources to students, educators and parents through a state-of-the-art electronic environment. It is our hope that students will be able to discover information in a new and more engaging way, teachers and librarians will have access to a variety of high-quality resources from one easy and convenient search entry, and parents will be able to find appropriate resources to improve their child's education."

To ensure a user-friendly design, SirsiDynix partnered with Kent State University's School of Library and Information Science and Information Architecture Knowledge Management to conduct usability testing with students, educators and parents. Insights gained from this testing into the information-seeking patterns of school-age children were incorporated into SchoolRooms.

Of those students tested, 88% said they would use SchoolRooms again for homework and 51% said they preferred it to Google or Yahoo. One student shared, "This is better than Google because in Google you get lots of stuff you don't need."

Two school districts, Kalida Local School District and Shaker Heights City School District, have been selected as part of Phase One Deployment by INFOhio to test and use SchoolRooms for the 2006-2007 school year while INFOhio works to deploy SchoolRooms for the 2007-2008 school year, first to those schools currently automated with INFOhio.



One group of the 140 Ohio teachers and librarians working together to build SchoolRooms.



DASL Implementation

The Data Analysis for Student Learning (DASL) software package continues to grow in usage. As of January 1, 2007, there are 267 school districts, digital academies, and charter schools at 16 Information Technology Centers (ITCs) using this student information system. These schools provide instruction to more than 360,000 students. New releases are distributed to the participating ITCs on a regular basis. Currently, the major version of the software is designated as 1.7 and there are minor releases distributed as needed. The next major version, 1.8, is scheduled for release at the end of January.

Executive Director Position

The DASL Advisory Board is searching for an individual to serve as Executive Director. A position vacancy announcement has been posted on several sites including the BASA web site and monster.com. This individual will provide coordination, leadership, and management in this project. The position is more fully documented at <http://sparc5.sparcc.org/www/vacancy/execdir.html> in a publicly available web page. The DASL Advisory Board members are reviewing the submissions and planning next steps.

Lumigent Software Products Training

Many ITCs have purchased Integra and Log Explorer from Lumigent Technologies to assist them in maintaining their Microsoft SQL Server databases. The two products, Integra and Log Explorer, maintain an audit trail of data modifications and enable the restoration of the data and rollback of transactions. Rather than have every site arrange for training separately, we want to arrange for a group session to lower the cost and build continuity across the state.

We need to complete several steps to accomplish our objective. As there are multiple versions of the software in use throughout our network, the first step is to poll the ITCs to determine the version in use at each site. Next, Lumigent will host a session in which they discuss the features available in the latest version of their software. This would most probably be a 'web-ex' presentation and would provide the ITC staff with the information they need to update to the latest version of the package. Finally, once we are satisfied that every site is on the same version, we will arrange for a common in-service.

MCOECN Technology Special Interest Group

The MCOECN has traditionally hosted meetings for many different groups, but one body that has been somewhat neglected is the ITC technical staff. To correct this deficiency, the Management Council recently established the MCOECN Technology Special Interest Group (MT-SIG). The first meeting of the MT-SIG was held in Columbus this past December. "Techies" representing all MCOECN members as well as the Ohio Department of Education and eTech Ohio were invited to participate in this meeting.

The purpose of the MT-SIG is two-fold. The first goal is to update ITC technical representatives on the current status and future plans regarding various technical issues and initiatives taking place across the state. The second goal is to provide a forum for sharing concerns, ideas, and discoveries with their peers. It is hoped this sharing of information and ideas will help the ITCs to continue to strengthen the services provided to Ohio's schools.

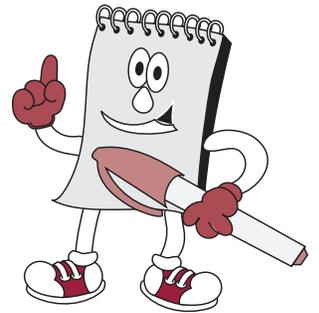
The MT-SIG plans to meet on a quarterly basis. The next meeting will be held in conjunction with the spring OEDSA Conference in April 2007. This meeting will be geared towards information and staff development regarding the transition of the Ohio K-12 Network from H.321 to H.323 video.

New Federal Guidelines Effective December 1, 2006

New federal guidelines regarding record retention for evidence in a civil proceeding became effective December 1, 2006. The rules recognize electronic documents such as electronic mail and instant messaging to be just as important as physical documents in terms of the discovery process. The new guidelines require parties to act quickly to safeguard any materials which may be construed as evidence when involving litigation. Schools are not exempt from these regulations.

From a technical perspective, an organization needs to be able to identify what records are available and how or where they are stored. Furthermore, a policy needs to be established to immediately protect this data from routine destruction if a federal lawsuit is filed.

The need for record retention is not new. Schools have been governed by state and federal retention guidelines regarding any materials of public record. Schools are advised to seek legal council and modify existing record retention policies to ensure compliance with the new regulations. Procedures for the routine handling of data should also be reviewed to remain compliant with these policies.



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