

MCOECN Selects Internet Service Provider

The Management Council of the Ohio Education Computer Network (MCOECN) recently announced that Qwest Communications International Inc. has been selected to be the primary Internet service provider for the Ohio K-12 Network.

The Ohio K-12 Network is a partnership of the MCOECN, the Ohio Department of Education, eTech Ohio, the Ohio Office of Information Technology, and the large urban school districts. On behalf of the network, the MCOECN initiated a request for proposal (RFP) process for Internet access services in December 2005. The response was better than expected, with over ten separate companies providing proposals for service delivery.

The Ohio K-12 Network is one of the largest consumers of Internet bandwidth in Ohio. The network provides Internet access to over 4,000 school buildings serving 1.8 million students. Internet usage has increased dramatically each year since the inception of the network in the 1999-2000 school year. Although they have dropped over the past six years, costs for Internet service still account for a significant portion of the Ohio K-12 Network budget. By leveraging the volume of the network in the competitive RFP process, the MCOECN has achieved a 62% decrease in the cost per megabyte. This will enable the Ohio K-12 Network to control the cost as demand grows in the future.

When combined with the increased bandwidth of the Third Frontier Network, the services from Qwest enable Ohio to retain its leadership position as a premier K-12 educational network.

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From the CEO...

By Bruce E. Hawkins, CEO

Exciting Times for Technology in Ohio's Schools

There are numerous activities currently taking place with technology in Ohio's schools. On February 27, Susan Zelman and members of the Ohio education community lit the Third Frontier Network for the K-12 community. This celebration linked the Toledo public schools with the Scioto Valley local schools in Piketon, Ohio. These were the first two districts connected; however, all 23 Information Technology Centers (ITC's) and seven urban districts will be connected by this fiber network by the end of the summer. The Third Frontier Network was originally created by the Ohio Board of Regents and the Ohio Academic Network (OARnet). It will now provide a high-speed fiber backbone that also links the K-12 educational community.

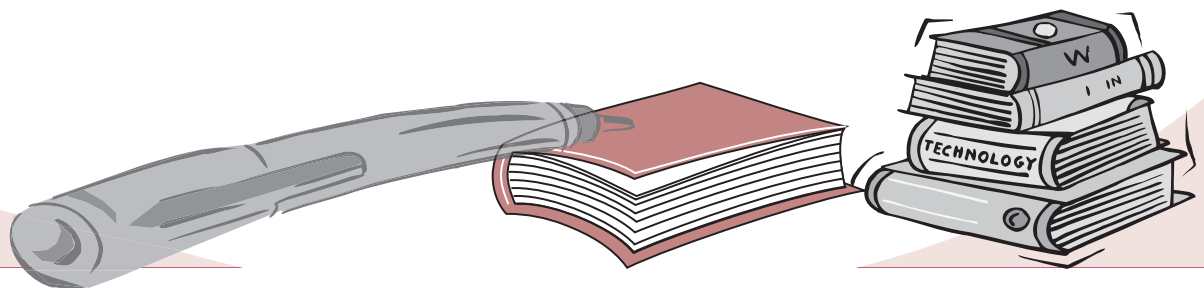
The Management Council of the Ohio Education Computer Network (MCOECN) has recently signed a contract with Qwest Communication Corporation to provide Internet bandwidth at a much lower per megabyte cost to schools. There is an increased amount of demand on bandwidth to provide access to the Internet, videoconferencing, and voice- over IP. This contract will enable the MCOECN to provide significantly more bandwidth for the same cost thus addressing the need for increased internet capacity in Ohio schools.

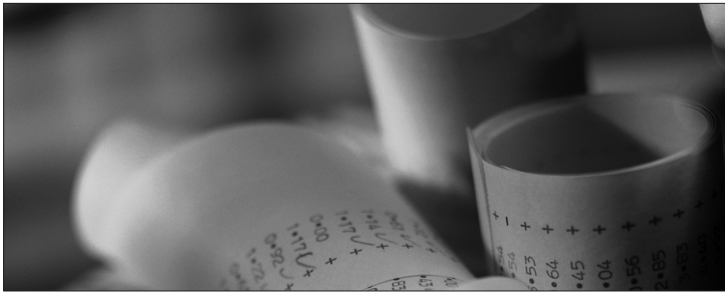
The third initiative is Data Driven Decisions for Academic Achievement (D3A2). This project is a long-term initiative focused on improving instruction and student achievement. D3A2 will provide systemic access to timely data and educational resources aligned with Ohio's academic content standards. The primary goals of D3A2 are these:

- to improve educators' comfort and proficiency in analyzing data in order to inform instruction and practices,
- to contribute to a sustainable infrastructure that promotes and enhances information-based education practices and content alignment across the state,
- to leverage technology user groups to accelerate the integration of existing educational tools in the development of new data systems.

D3A2 is a cooperative effort that is being developed and governed by stakeholder groups rather than any single entity. Numerous school districts and professional education organizations support this initiative. D3A2 will provide teachers with access to item analysis assessment data, tools to interpret areas needing improvement, and links to the aligned educational content resources. The initial phase of this project is scheduled to be operational in December 2006.

Each of these initiatives is intended to enhance technology as a tool for providing instruction and resources in the classroom and to assist in the administrative functions of the Ohio school organizations.





Tell everyone...the INFOhio Username & Password is changing!

The username and password for INFOhio's Core Collection of Electronic Resources will be changing for the 2006-2007 school year. We want to alert you of this change now because some schools are already preparing orientation materials and other handouts for next school year.

The new username and password are now available from your regional ITC provider, <http://www.infohio.org/ABOUT/dasites.html>.

These are the reasons for making the change:

1. For best security, passwords should be changed regularly, and INFOhio has not changed the statewide home access username and password for some time.
2. Despite our best efforts the username and password have been circulated in manners that potentially violate our license agreements. For example, the information has been posted on open websites and thus potentially shared with non-Ohio K-12 users.

INFOhio has already begun testing the new username and password, and it will go live on August 1, 2006. The current username and password will continue to function through September 15, 2006. This transition period will allow our users to continue to reap the wealth of information available through the Core Collection without interruption during the summer months.

As you know, the ability of INFOhio to provide the Core Collection of Electronic Resources depends greatly on funding at both state and federal levels. At this time we do not anticipate any changes to the funding levels and thus the Core Collection made available through INFOhio will remain the same for next school year with no resource additions or deletions.

New username/password bookmark masters and other support materials will be available from www.infohio.org no earlier than July 31. Thank you for your continued utilization of the INFOhio Core Collection of Electronic Resources!


Third Frontier Network Becoming Reality for Ohio Schools

On February 27, 2006 distinguished representatives from the Ohio Department of Education, the Ohio Board of Regents, the eTech Ohio Commission, and the Governor's Office participated in the "Ohio Lights the Way for K-12 Education" ceremony. These officials were on hand to officially "light up" the Ohio K-12 Network's participation in the Third Frontier Network (TFN). On this occasion the group celebrated the first two sites to connect to the K-12 TFN. These sites were the South Central Ohio Computer Association (SCOCA) and Toledo Public Schools.

The Third Frontier Network is an initiative founded by the Ohio Board of Regents and the Ohio Supercomputer Center. The TFN consists of over 1,600 miles of fiber optic cable spanning across the state. This network was originally conceived to promote high-speed connectivity between Ohio colleges, universities, and research facilities to provide academic and economic advantages for Ohio. Through a partnership with the Ohio K-12 Network, the TFN has been extended to directly connect the twenty-three Information Technology Centers (ITC's) and seven large urban school districts. In turn, the ITC's will utilize the TFN to provide high-bandwidth network services to over 4,000 school buildings and 1.4 million students.

All of the ITC's and large urban school districts will be connected to TFN by the end of September 2006. The TFN will allow these sites to transmit data at over 155 megabits per second, which is a three-fold increase over current capacities. Over the next two years the backbone capacity will be increased to provide gigabit (1000 megabits) capacity. The TFN will be utilized to transmit data, voice, two-way video, video streaming, electronic resources, and Internet access at high speed while maintaining low costs for Ohio schools.

More information on the Third Frontier Network can be found on-line at the Ohio Supercomputer web site at <http://www.osc.edu/oarnet/tfn/>.



Printing and the OECN State Software: A Time of Changes

The OECN State Software systems (e.g. – USAS, USPS, EMIS, SAAS/EIS, etc.) are undergoing significant changes. At the request of users statewide, many of the older “green screen” programs for data entry and maintenance are being replaced with web-based programs that permit the user to access the system from anywhere with just an Internet web browser. These changes make the software more user-friendly and don’t require the (separate) purchase of terminal emulator software (e.g. – Reflections, Persona, etc.) to utilize the OECN State Software from a personal computer.

However, the migration to accessing the OECN State Software from an Internet web browser will necessitate a change in printing in the future for users. Currently the software supports printing to text files and Adobe Portable Document Format (PDF) files. Text files can be printed on dot-matrix printers, but for the most part PDF files can only be printed on laser printers. As the OECN State Software becomes more and more tied to access through web browsers, it will become necessary for all users of the software to migrate to printing through laser printers instead of using dot-matrix printers. This is because the change in technology to the use of Internet web browsers makes forms generation and printing for dot-matrix printers more difficult to support.

Currently the OECN State Software supports printing only through the “back-end” OpenVMS mainframe computer systems run by the Information Technology Centers (ITC’s) and large urban school districts. In the future, the State Software Development Team (SSDT) will provide printing support through Internet web browsers. However, when that is done, only printers supported by the Internet web browser(s) utilized will be able to be supported. In general, these printers will only be laser or inkjet printers, and the selection of dot-matrix printers capable of printing forms will be non-existent or severely limited.

The SSDT is bringing this to your attention so that you can plan equipment purchases appropriately to meet your printing needs. Through at least the 2007 calendar year the SSDT plans to support printing through the “back-end” OpenVMS mainframe computer systems. Sometime in calendar year 2006, the SSDT also plans to begin supporting Internet web browser printing for its web-based application programs. The use of the OpenVMS mainframe “back-end” systems may be phased-out as early as calendar year 2008, thus making dot-matrix printers obsolete. However, in the same time frame, the SSDT plans to make electronic vendor payments possible without the need to print physical forms which have to be processed by a financial institution.

Schools utilizing the OECN State Software should keep this in mind as decisions are made to replace printing equipment used with the OECN State Software. Many school districts already utilize supplementary laser printing software for forms generation with the OECN State Software (e.g. – Edge Document Solutions (formerly APSLLC), ABM, etc.). These are ways to begin the necessary transition from dot-matrix printing to laser printing.