



Connections

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From the CEO...

By Bruce E. Hawkins, CEO

There are many exciting things happening with technology in Ohio's schools today. Several of these initiatives will be discussed in more detail in other articles in this newsletter, but just to give an overview, I will highlight some major projects.

D3A2 (Data Driven Decisions for Academic Achievement)

This project continues to move forward. There are currently 65 districts with data fully loaded and another 36 districts that have loaded test data. Users can access over 6,000 resources in the data exchange and we are now approaching nearly a million searches of these resources.

State EMIS Advisory Committee

The committee continues to meet under the leadership of Representative Arlene Setzer. The major topics of discussion revolve around these initiatives:

1. The communication of data entry requirements to the school districts. This is of particular interest this year with a shortened time frame for completing the EMIS reports this coming summer. The spring test results will be made available to the districts by June 15, and the deadline for the reporting of EMIS data will be July 18. The committee is also stressing continual communication with members of the districts who are involved in the EMIS process.
2. The committee is also discussing the functional job responsibilities needed to complete the EMIS information accurately and efficiently. The committee will then address the skill set they believe is necessary to implement these functions
3. Professional Development is always an important aspect of EMIS reporting, and the State Advisory Committee is recommending webcasting programs in downloadable format to deliver consistent professional development services on EMIS.
4. The committee is also trying to determine the actual cost to implement EMIS at the state, ITC, and district levels.

State Technology Conference

eTech Ohio will be hosting their 10th annual Educational Technology Conference on February 4-6 in the Greater Columbus Convention Center. In recent years, this conference has attracted over 7,000 participants and the conference this year again promises to be one of the top statewide conferences in the country.

OECN Oversight Committee

Under the rules in the Ohio Administrative Code, an OECN Oversight Committee has been formed to make recommendations to the Ohio Department of Education. This committee has been very active, and in particular the two subcommittees addressing OECN core services and OECN accountability have been making numerous recommendations to the Oversight Committee which in turn reviews these suggestions and makes recommendations to the Ohio Department of Education.

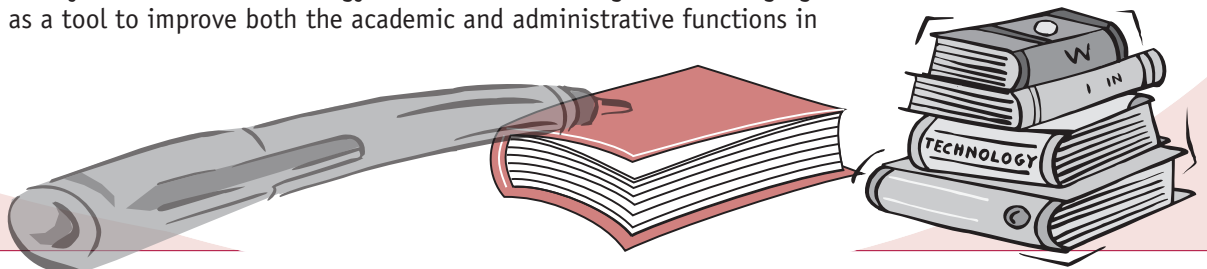
Disaster Recovery Plan

As we become more dependent on technology, it is crucial that connectivity be dependable and that we have emergency plans for any technology disaster. Therefore, the Management Council, in cooperation with the Ohio Department of Education, is implementing a Disaster Recovery Plan to safeguard schools against potential data loss.

E-Clearinghouse Courses

The eTech Ohio Commission is currently finalizing plans for an E-Clearinghouse of educational courses that school districts will be able to use as additional curricular programs for their students. This E-Clearinghouse was initiated by the current budget bill and should be available for school districts in the next school year.

As you can see, there are many initiatives in technology that are both exciting and challenging as we take steps to use technology as a tool to improve both the academic and administrative functions in Ohio schools.





Ohio K-12 Network Update

The partner organizations of the Ohio K-12 Network have been active in supporting network needs of Ohio's K-12 schools. This is a brief update on recent activities in the network.

As previously reported, the first phase of the upgrade to a high-speed fiber backbone is complete. All twenty-three OECN Information Technology Centers and seven large urban school districts are now connected to the new fiber network at OC-3 (155 megabits per second) speed. The second phase of this network build-out has been fully funded and is now in progress. Phase-II will involve a migration of the backbone network from the Asynchronous Transfer Mode (ATM) protocol at OC-3 bandwidth to a Gigabit Ethernet protocol running 1000 megabits per second. Ten sites have been upgraded to Gig-E speeds. It is anticipated that the remaining sites will be converted before the start of the 2008-2009 school year.

Ohio schools are currently consuming approximately 1.9 gigabytes of Internet bandwidth capacity on the Ohio K-12 Network. The MCOECN is working with the K-12 Network partners to increase bandwidth to the Internet. A second connection to the Internet is expected to be on-line by the beginning of March 2008. This new connection will provide an alternate path to the Internet as well as double the existing Internet bandwidth of the network.

The Ohio K-12 Network continues to provide a first-line of defense against unwanted junk email. Over ninety-six percent of electronic mail flowing into the Ohio K-12 Network is junk mail or includes possible malicious content. During the summer of 2007 a new SPAM filtering system was installed. The new system is now capturing between 29 to 40 MILLION junk or dangerous mail messages each day.

Last but not least, the MCOECN is working with the Ohio Department of Education, eTech Ohio, and the Ohio Supercomputer Network to develop a disaster recovery facility. This project is currently in the research/planning phase. Long range goals include creating one or more "hot site" locations and to utilize the network to facilitate remote data backup. These efforts are being engineered to enable nearly real-time recovery of information processing needs.

These are just some of the major improvements that have happened over the past year. Please stay tuned as the Ohio K-12 Network continues to add services and features to maintain our state's status as one of the premier K-12 educational networks in the country.



SchoolRooms™ Basic Announced for Ohio

SchoolRooms Basic is now live on the INFOhio home page! Thanks to the efforts of many Ohio Educators, INFOhio staff, and the cooperation of SirsiDynix Corp., the entire Ohio PreK-12 community has access to this abridged version through the 2007-2008 school year without fees, including home access. For now, ALL users will need to use INFOhio's Core Collection username and password to enter SchoolRooms Basic (SRB).

SchoolRooms Basic is a discovery tool for high quality Web sites. More than 22,000 sites have

been selected by Ohio educators to support Academic Content Standards. In addition, the SRB portal leads to more than 3 million related sites. Over the next few months, INFOhio Tech Support plans to add federated searching for the Core Collection for everyone and OPAC searching for INFOhio automated schools. Stay tuned!

To learn more about INFOhio's version of SchoolRooms™ and read answers to some initial FAQs, click on the *About* link in the SRB main menu at <http://www.infohio.org/schoolroomsbasic.html>. SRB updates and additional resources will be added to these pages as they become available. Password protected documents require the same password used for INFOhio Toolkit items. To receive a password, contact your Instructional Technology Center or e-mail central@infohio.org.

For now, please test *SchoolRooms Basic* and encourage your students, educators and parents to do the same. Report any SRB technical difficulties to your ITC provider in the usual manner. For issues with SRB content, procedures are in place to report broken links, suggest new links and provide feedback; note the *Help Evaluate* section in SRB's right frame.

INFOhio is using the remainder of the 2007-2008 school year to evaluate *SchoolRooms Basic*. Thank you for your help as we review products and services to enhance INFOhio!



eTech Ohio's Tenth Annual Educational Technology Conference Coming Soon

February 4-6, 2008 • Greater Columbus Convention Center

The eTech Ohio Educational Technology Conference is Ohio's premiere educational technology professional development event. The annual, three day event includes keynote and featured speaker sessions, 300 concurrent sessions, teacher and student displays, emerging and assistive technology areas and vendor exhibits.

Conference News Briefs

Registration

The early bird registration deadline has passed for regular registration rates. On-site registration will be available at the conference.

2008 Online Conference Planner

Plan your Conference experience in advance with the new and improved Conference Online Planner! Use the online planner to create a personalized schedule of Conference sessions and events, then import them into your Outlook, Palm or iCal calendar. Also use the Conference online planner to review and print session handouts.

New for 2008: Registration Location and Conference Bags

In an effort to make your registration experience a more efficient one, eTech Ohio has relocated the registration area from the main concourse into Hall C. For attendees who receive their registration materials in advance, bag pick-up will still be available in both the concourse and the connector hall.

Keynote and Featured Speakers

eTech Ohio presents nationally-known keynote and featured speakers who are experts among a variety of topics relevant to Ohio educators. This year's speakers include:

Monday

Keynote: Robert Ballard - Oceanographer
James Hirsch - Associate Superintendent for Academic & Technology Services, Plano Independent School District, TX
Joy Zabala - Assistive Technology Developer

Tuesday

Keynote: Ray Kurzweil - Inventor and Author
Michael Korcuska - Executive Director, The Sakai Foundation
Mark Leon - Manager, Lunar MicroRover Project, NASA Ames Research Center

Data Driven Decisions for Academic Achievement Guides Ohio's Schools in Their Drive Toward Excellence

The Ohio Department of Education (ODE) is leading a comprehensive effort to design a uniform system that enables teachers and administrators statewide to access and use various types of data, as well as content resources that align with state standards and assessments. Developing the Data Driven Decisions for Academic Achievement (D3A2) system has involved a collaborative approach among multiple stakeholder groups that attend to various aspects of the system including its associated professional development. School districts and Information Technology Centers (ITCs) from all across the state, as well as entities such as INFOhio and eTech Ohio are working together to bring D3A2 to Ohio's educators.

Project Goals

The primary goals of D3A2 are: to improve the comfort and proficiency of educators in analyzing data to inform instruction and practices; contribute to a sustainable infrastructure to promote and enhance information-based education practice and content alignment across the state; and leverage technology user groups to accelerate the integration of existing educational tools and the development of new data systems.

Data Tools

D3A2 brings two powerful tools to Ohio's schools: the Data Tools Application and the Resource Exchange. The Data Tools application allows teachers to view and analyze performance data for students sitting right in their classrooms, while the Resource Exchange points them to thousands of academic resources designed to address academic needs identified by the data that are aligned to the Ohio Academic Content Standards.

In a recent survey conducted by Hezel Associates, approximately sixty percent of district and school administrators in Ohio want more student-level and teacher/class-level state assessment data, as well as better access to data at these levels. D3A2's current design meets part of this need by providing administrators with teacher/class level data and the capacity to re-roster students into class groups.

Wednesday

Keynote: Paula Kerger - President and CEO of PBS
Bernie Dodge - Professor of Educational Technology, San Diego University

Technology for Learning Center

eTech Ohio's Technology for Learning Center (TLC) will be located in Hall C and will include:

- New videoconference sessions located adjacent to the content provider displays. This move will allow attendees to easily visit with distance learning providers before and after videoconference sessions.
- The Conference Documentary Team's editing suite and interview stage. Watch students from WOUB Center for Public Media interview attendees and edit their video footage into the conference documentary.
- Assistive Technology will be showcased in TLC in the Ohio Center for Autism and Low Incidence (OCALI) Assistive Technology area. Universal design software and hardware will once again be demonstrated in this area.

Educator Awards Reception - Feb. 4

Make plans to join us in celebrating and honoring the 2008 Technology Teacher, Specialist and Administrator of the Year and finalists. The Educator Awards ceremony will be Mon., Feb. 4, 2008 from 4:00 P.M. - 5:00 P.M. in room C110-111.

Student Video Contest - Feb. 6

Contest winners will be announced live before the Keynote Session on Wed., Feb. 6. Cheer for the finalists in the Grand Ballroom at 9:00 A.M.

Visit the Conference webpage at www.etech.ohio.gov/conference to navigate the online exhibitor floor plan to map what vendors you want to visit, get directions, parking information and lodging locations.

Contact eTech Ohio's Conference Team at 877.383.2406 or via email at convergence@etech.ohio.gov for additional information.

Data Reporting

As it moves forward, D3A2 will provide an efficient and effective system for local education agencies to report state-required data and an automated, streamlined process for reporting federally required data. Data definition and data format standards are utilized. These standards will be based upon School Interoperability Framework (SIF) specifications. This framework will enable the D3A2 data warehouse to seamlessly interact with the EMIS redesign.

Professional Development

Professional development is offered statewide to teach educators how to comfortably and effectively use D3A2 data to make decisions that improve instruction. This training occurs in the form of train-the-trainer opportunities. In addition to training on how to access and navigate within the D3A2 tool, grant funding has been secured to support the creation of extensive professional development materials that support the effective use of item analysis data. Four training modules are scheduled to debut in the spring of 2008. These modules will encompass a range of topics from understanding the state assessment system to analysis and interpretation of results to inform classroom decision-making. Attendees of the train-the-trainer sessions are encouraged to take the information and materials they have received back to their home districts to provide additional training on their own.

Participation

Interest in D3A2 has risen over the past two years as the product has grown. During the 2007-2008 school year, districts have begun to upload their Ohio Achievement and Graduation Test data into the D3A2 data warehouse. The number of participating districts grows daily. In order to participate, districts must work with their local Information Technology Center (ITC) to prepare and load Achievement Test data into the D3A2 Data Warehouse.

Further Information

More information about D3A2 may be obtained by visiting the D3A2 website (www.d3a2.org) or sending email to the D3A2 Operations Group (mail_staff_d3a2@nwoca.org).

EMIS Redesign

The EMIS Redesign Project continues to move forward. We thought we'd tell you a little more about how the EMIS Redesign will impact districts (and other local education agencies), and then bring you up to date with the project status.

Districts will notice first a completely new web system for gathering, reviewing, and submitting your EMIS data. The district tool is called Data Collector. The ITCs and large independent districts will be thoroughly trained on this web interface, and the ITCs in turn will train and assist districts just as they do today.

The data collection process from eSIS, DASL, USAS and USPS will be more automated. Districts that use these applications will find that they spend less time gathering and formatting data for EMIS. Districts with other applications will continue to gather and format data, using approximately the same amount of time and work as today; however, the process and tools will be a bit different. Training will be provided on these aspects.

Because of the automated nature of data collection in the Redesign, the need to correct data errors in the source application will continue to be emphasized. Experience with similar automated systems in other states like Virginia and Wyoming has shown that over time correcting data in the source system reduces the time districts need to complete their reports and improves the accuracy of local district data.

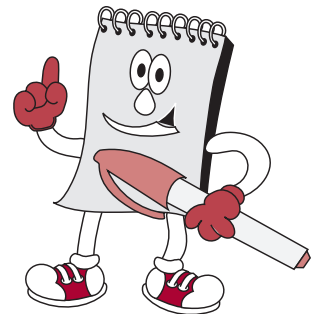
For many types of data validation errors, the error notification and reporting will change. Rather than using the current reports from ODE, some of these errors will be presented in web pages accessible from the Data Collector. Other reports will continue to be generated and sent out by ODE as they are today. Complete details will be provided as part of the project.

The Redesign includes a component that automates the assignment of Statewide Student Identifiers (SSIDs). When a student is newly enrolled (in a DASL or eSIS district), the student's SSID will be automatically retrieved and written back to the DASL or eSIS database with no human intervention required (except in near match and data error situations). A newly enrolled student's SSID will be in the eSIS or DASL database the same day, sometimes even before he or she has time to walk to his first classroom. In near match and error conditions, district users will automatically be notified to resolve them. The current SSID web interface will continue to be available.

The EMIS Redesign project is divided into seven phases. The first phase, Analysis and Requirements Definition, was completed in November. Work is wrapping up on the second phase, Design. ODE personnel and a review team of ITCs and other interested parties are currently reviewing the design documents submitted by the vendor team, and we anticipate acceptance of the final version within the next few weeks. The vendor team has already begun some of the software development, but the full bore Development and Unit Testing phase will begin upon acceptance of the design. The project is on track for pilot testing in the fall at a few ITCs and districts.

Where can I learn more?

Watch this space, as well as the ITC forums and your email inbox, for upcoming information on the EMIS-R project and how it can help you and the schools you serve. If you need additional information, contact Nancy Haefeli at ODE, nancy.haefeli@ode.state.oh.us.



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