Connections

MCOECN Update *by Bruce Hawkins, CEO*

DA Site CIPs

During December, the Ohio Department of Education posted a survey on their website to measure the satisfaction districts have with the services provided by their DA Site in the nine core service areas. The survey was sent to the school district superintendents and other central office staff, the treasurer and other fiscal staff, building principals, EMIS coordinators, library media specialists or library aids, and technology coordinators. The results of this survey are now being tabulated and the information can be used by DA Sites to determine the level of customer satisfaction in each of the nine core service areas.

Many DA Sites provide a wide variety of services beyond these nine core areas that are funded by the Ohio Department of Education. The additional services provided by a DA Site are determined by the governing board of that site. Many DA Sites offer voice and video capabilities, staff development, Data for Student Learning (DSL), student technology academy programs, and many other services. It is always important to remember that the DA Site is owned by the school districts in that organization, and there needs to be a clear channel of communication among the districts, the DA Site governing board, and the administrators of the DA Site. By communicating these needs, the DA Site can address the proper services for their member school districts.

If the DA Site CIP Survey reflects a deficiency in one of the nine core ser-

DA Site Core Services

1. **Education Management Information System (EMIS)**
2. **School Accounting System**
3. **Staff Payroll System**
4. **Equipment Inventory System**
5. **INFOhio Electronic Resources, Media Center/Library Automation and Services**
6. **Student Administration System**
7. **Wide Area Network (WAN) Implementation and Maintenance**
8. **Internet Connectivity and Support**
9. **Email Delivery System**

vice areas, the Ohio Department of Education will work with the DA Site and the member districts to align the services with the schools' needs.

2002 Ohio SchoolNet State Tech Conference

The Ohio SchoolNet Conference will take place on February 4-6 at the Columbus Convention Center. This is an excellent opportunity for teams from school districts to learn about the rapidly changing field of technology in education. This conference attracts thousands of participants including teachers, technology coordinators, superintendents, administrators, students, vendors, and legislators. The theme for this year's conference is *Continuous Improvement through Technology* with sessions de-

signed to assist attendees in technical and educational planning, development and assessment. According to conference program manager Karen Malcolm, "The conference provides professional development opportunities for educators that cannot be experienced in any other format. Keynote speakers, concurrent sessions, hands-on labs, make-take labs, student displays, and an unprecedented number of vendors demonstrating current and cutting-edge technologies will be featured during the 2002 state conference."

SchoolNet Plus Computers for Grade 6

The Ohio SchoolNet Commission has announced that computers will be added to sixth grade classrooms statewide through the fifth round of Ohio's SchoolNet Plus Program. There will be over $37.6 million allocated to this project over the next two years. SchoolNet anticipates that districts will be able to purchase a collective total of 22,000 - 40,000 multimedia computers with Round 5 funds. Since the funding will be distributed over the biennium, some school districts will receive their funds this fiscal year and others will receive it in FY03. The amount of funding a school district receives and the year in which they receive their funding depends upon the number of students in grade 6 and the wealth of the district.

Management Council
Ohio Education Computer Network - http://www.mcoecn.org

What is Web Accessibility?

by Theresa M. Fredericka, Executive Director

Is your school relying on your web site to communicate and instruct? If so, are you aware that up to 20% of your audience may not be able to fully utilize your site? While we accommodate our students that may have disabilities in the classroom, we often do not consider that those same special needs must be accommodated when designing a web site.

Nearly 98% of existing web sites are inaccessible, meaning they are not compatible with the tools the disabled use to navigate the web such as text readers and text-to-braille translators. Web sites that are full of images, image maps, tables, frames and many types of multimedia pose barriers for use to the disabled. For example, screen readers for the blind cannot "read" pictures or images, including PDF files.

Web accessibility affects all resources available electronically, including the state funded Electronic Resources and the resources each school purchases on their own. So how do we make sure all online resources for children are accessible? Many of the problems mentioned above can be fixed, but awareness, knowing that these problems exist, is the first step to creating truly accessible web pages. INFOhio, in conjunction with ORCLISH and MCOECN, hopes to increase awareness of web accessibility is-

sues in Ohio's schools.

INFOhio's Position Statement on Web Accessibility is as follows: "INFOhio is committed to web accessibility for all of Ohio's K-12 environment. INFOhio will act as an advocate by increasing awareness, providing training, and strongly encouraging vendors to address accessibility issues in their electronic resources."

Web accessibility isn't just the nice thing to do, it's also required. Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act establishes requirements for federal agencies and departments. Ohio receives funding through the Assistive Technology Act grant program and is required to comply with Section 508. As for the INFOhio Electronic Resources, SIRS Mandarin Inc. reports that the SIRS databases, including Discoverer, fully adheres to U.S. government and industry guidelines regulating web accessibility for disabled users. In addition, INFOhio Technical Services reports that DRA/MultiLIS, Britannica, bigchalk and Dymaxion are or will soon be compliant with Section 508.

INFOhio, the information network for Ohio schools, is an electronic library and information network that automates school libraries and provides a wide range of electronic databases, instructional resources and training opportunities to all K-12 schools. Our goal is to provide all of Ohio's elementary and secondary school students with the online resources they need. In addition, INFOhio fosters sharing of print and nonprint resources among schools via a single automation system and statewide union catalog.

Ohio Schools Technology Implementation Task Force *By Bruce Hawkins, CEO*

As part of the current biennial budget bill, the legislature created the Ohio Schools Implementation Task Force. This task force shall develop recommendations based upon findings from both of the CELT studies: 1) The Independent Review of Statewide Regional Service Providers, and 2) The Strategic Educational Technology Plan.

The task force shall examine and make long-term recommendations for technology funding for Ohio's primary and secondary schools as well as for the operational cost of the Ohio SchoolNet Commission. The task force shall be composed of six voting members. The three from the Ohio House of Representatives are Kerry Metzger - Chair, Jon Husted, and William Ogg. The representatives from the Ohio Senate are Bill Harris, Ron Amstutz, and Robert Hagan. The task force also includes several ex-officio non-voting members including:

- the Superintendent of Public Instruction or the Superintendent's designee
- the Director of Budget and Management or the Director's designee
- the Executive Director of the Ohio SchoolNet Commission or the Executive Director's designee
- a representative of the OECN, Bruce Hawkins
- the chairperson of the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio
- a representative appointed by the chairperson of the Ohio Educational Telecommunications Network Commission
- William Click who was appointed by the President of the Senate to represent Ohio's business community
- Tom Baker, Superintendent of Lucas County Schools, who was appointed by the Speaker of the House to represent Ohio's Educational Service Centers

The task force plans to begin meeting in January and issue a report no later than December 1, 2002.

ATPSOS: New Name and New Effort

By Andrew Tompkins, CTO

To update you on the effort to establish a professional organization for school district technology staff, we are happy to report that this group is organized and on the move!

The organization has adopted a new name – Association of Technology Professionals Serving Ohio Schools (ATPSOS). It is no coincidence that "SOS" is part of the name. It is a symbol of the purpose this group intends to make which is to provide support to Ohio educational technology professionals and the school districts they serve.

The ATPSOS Steering Committee was recently re-established and reorganized. Congratulations go out to John Schroth (Strongsville City Schools) who was elected to serve as chairperson and Bill Cunningham (Caldwell-Noble County ESC) as vice-chairperson. The group also formed committees to work on areas of constitution, membership, finance, program, public relations, standards, and legislative activity.

These committees are focusing their efforts on the 2002 Ohio SchoolNet Technology Conference February 4-6. You can get more information on ATPSOS at the conference. Joe Rutter from Ohio SchoolNet will facilitate the ATPSOS Luncheon Meeting in Ballroom II on Tuesday, February 5.

Plan to grab your box lunch and drop in for more information on ATPSOS!

OAEP Update
By David Rhoades, Consultant

The first conference of the Ohio Association of EMIS Professionals (OAEP) was held in Columbus on November 8, 2001, with over 225 in attendance. Presenters shared how they entered data into EMIS, worked with error reports, and used data generated by various EMIS reports. Representatives from ODE also discussed various issues, and Data for Student Learning was showcased.

The evaluations of the conference disclosed that attendees enjoyed the day and found it productive. They liked the presentations by their peers about how they worked with EMIS. They wanted a longer program the next time. A committee is at work planning for the next conference in the spring. Details and registration will be announced on OAEP's website *www.oaep.mcoecn.org*.

During the conference, the OAEP constitution was approved by an almost unanimous vote of the membership. Voters endorsed the continuation of the present steering committee until June 30, 2002. In December temporary officers were selected as follows: Chairperson - Jennifer Schmidt, Vice Chairperson – Betsy Franklin, Treasurer – Lois Armeni, Secretary – Becki Miller, and past Chairperson – Guinnia Gonger. You may contact them with your ideas and comments by sending a note to oaep@mcoecn.org. Nominations for officers and the selection of the OAEP Steering Committee for FY 2003 will occur in the spring according to the constitution and by-laws.

Update on Data for Student Learning
by Andrew Tompkins, CTO

With the outstanding support of the 23 DA Sites and the districts they serve, the Data for Student Learning Project continues to move forward.

New to the DSL toolchest is the addition of off-year proficiency data. DSL can now graph performance data for the Stanford-9, OOPT, and ITBS tests which gives schools the ability to study student performance for additional grade levels. DA Site personnel are being trained on loading this off-year data. If you are interested in any of these tests, please contact your DA Site.

The DSL Management Committee is involved in several additional projects. Members of the group are working on service and support standards for DSL. They are also developing improved documentation for the data loading process. A few DA Sites are working with ODE and the Battelle model office to create extraction routines for districts using AAL student data software.

A major effort in recent months has involved working with Microsoft to convert the McSIS scheduling program to DSL. Conversion work should be completed soon. Further testing will be needed to determine the success of this effort. We are excited about the possibility of adding this functionality to our DSL software.

The MCOECN has given several presentations on DSL, including meetings of the ESC Superintendents, Regional Professional Development Centers, and the OSBA Capital Conference.

We are working with service organizations around the state to develop more in-depth documentation, training and support for DSL. Look for more demonstration and training sessions at the upcoming Ohio SchoolNet Technology Conference, February 4-6, 2002.

Did you know...

• School officials can check the amount of funding they will receive and the year in which it will be distributed on the SchoolNet web page at: *http://www.osn.state.oh.us/programs/common/frameset.asp?program-schoolnetplus* under *SchoolNet Plus Program: Details.*

• Continuous Improvement Plans (CIPs) have been prepared and approved by all 23 DA Sites.

• User Satisfaction Surveys reveal that most users are satisfied with the services they receive from their respective DA Site.

• Assistance with Compaq equipment specifications and prices are available at the MCOECN VAR by calling 1-800-214-OECN.

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