From the Desk of the CEO
Bruce E. Hawkins, CEO

On behalf of the Management Council of the Ohio Education Computer Network, I would like to extend our sincere appreciation to Sam Orth for his contributions to technology in Ohio schools as he served as Executive Director for Ohio SchoolNet for the past eight years. When I am at national meetings, I find it enlightening to know how Ohio schools are positioned in relation to technology and education. We are certainly a leader in this country in both networking and computers in the classroom. Ohio has been put in this position by visionary leaders including Representative Mike Fox, Senator Robert Cupp, Governor Voinovich, and Sam Orth. Such leaders worked together to develop a vision of where Ohio schools should be as we enter the twenty-first century.

I can still remember when I heard about the SchoolNet concepts and the wiring for schools. At the time, I was a superintendent dealing with many other issues, and the idea of coaxial cables and category 5 wiring was not even on my radar screen. Fortunately, visionaries like Sam Orth convinced the legislature and governor of the important role that technology would play in the classroom. Now, eight years after Sam became the

Sam Orth

Executive Director of SchoolNet, we have more than 217,000 new computers in our classrooms; training and certification programs for teachers, administrators, and technology coordinators; a sophisticated distance learning network; the ONEnet network serving more than two million educational end users; an extremely successful statewide technology conference; and wiring to individual classrooms throughout this state.

In technology as in any field, there are always differences of opinion; however, I was always able to discuss these differences with Sam in a professional manner and knew that both of us had one goal in common which was to provide the best educational opportunities to all of the students in Ohio schools. Now that Sam Orth has resigned, we need to continue to move forward and build upon the technology foundation that was established under his leadership and vision. As we all work on our jobs, we can only hope that we make a difference. Sam has made a difference in education in the state of Ohio, and the Management Council would like to thank him for his contribution to Ohio schools.

Get Ready to Sail with DASL

By Andrew Tompkins, CTO

The Data Analysis for Student Learning (DASL) student information management module is counting down its last few days in *dry dock*. The first full version will be released to our participating Data Acquisition Sites in September. However, as when constructing a new cruise ship, there is still much work to be done before districts can book *regular excursions* with DASL.
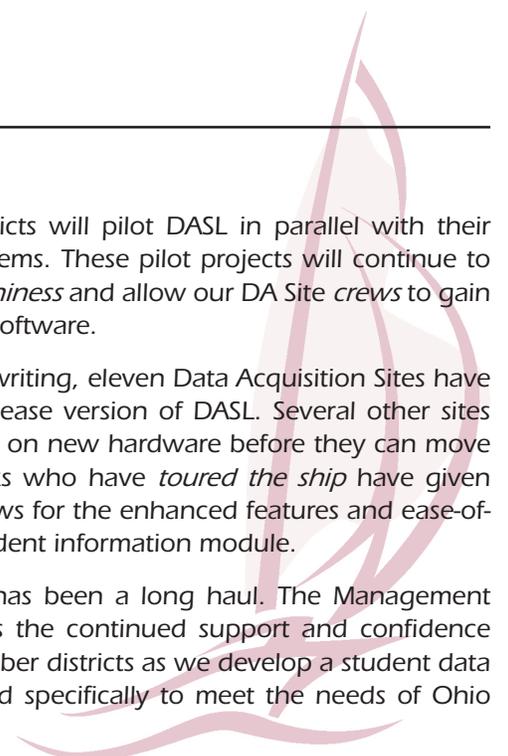
Because this is new software, we have outlined a rigorous testing schedule. Every new ship goes through *sea trials*. The first tests for DASL will involve limited pilots with a few selected districts at the NOACSC development site. These pilots will make sure everything *floats* by testing the basic functionality of each module.

After we work out any initial kinks, DASL will move into a *shakeout cruise* period at participating DA Sites. During this

time, selected districts will pilot DASL in parallel with their legacy student systems. These pilot projects will continue to verify our *sea worthiness* and allow our DA Site *crews* to gain expertise with the software.

At the time of this writing, eleven Data Acquisition Sites have installed the pre-release version of DASL. Several other sites are eagerly waiting on new hardware before they can move forward. Many folks who have *toured the ship* have given DASL positive reviews for the enhanced features and ease-of-use of our new student information module.

Building this ship has been a long haul. The Management Council appreciates the continued support and confidence of our DA Site member districts as we develop a student data package customized specifically to meet the needs of Ohio school districts.

From the CTO… Andrew Tompkins, CTO MCOECN

ONEnet needs bigger pipes.

Its simple – we are flooding our network. Picture for a moment what we all consider to be a well-designed storm drainage system. There is a small drain pipe, probably four inches or so in diameter, running from your house. Other houses nearby have a similar pipe as yours. Somewhere near your neighborhood all of the small pipes feed into a larger pipe. In turn, the pipes from each neighborhood feed into an even bigger branch pipe. And if this is indeed a well-designed system, somewhere down stream there is a huge conduit that collects the branches on into the processing facility. Starting small, each stage growing bigger – hopefully big enough to prevent any backwash – this is what we consider "well-designed."

When ONEnet was first designed, school districts were encouraged to connect each building to their DA Site with a T-1 circuit. In turn, each DA Site routed each building back to Columbus via a DS-3 circuit. From there, traffic was bound across even larger circuits out to the Internet. Each step in the connection was designed around larger "pipes" to accommodate the aggregated traffic. This represented the best "well-designed" network that could be established within our state's financial means at that time.

However, over the past four years the network has experienced the "build it and they will come" phenomenon." ONEnet has experienced considerable growth since the network was originally designed. Schools are using more network resources. Over 20% of schools are now connected via high-speed fiber optic networks, and estimates predict fiber connectivity will grow another 50% over the next two years. We are simply flooding our "branch pipes" between the Data Acquisition Sites and Columbus. ONEnet needs bigger pipes!

The Joint ONEnet Committee has recommended a plan to connect each of the 23 DA Sites and the seven large urban districts to the Third Frontier Network (TFN). By upgrading our backbone "pipes" to run across the TFN, we can increase our network capacity threefold and lower our operating costs at the same time. This ONEnet TFN connection is expected to handle K-12 bandwidth growth for the next decade.

The MCOECN feels that TFN represents ONEnet's best chance to upgrade to a new, well-designed network. We are asking school districts to contact their State School Board members and legislative officials in support of the ONEnet Third Frontier Network plan. Just tell them, "We need bigger pipes!"

ProgressBook Classroom Software

The MCOECN VAR has entered into a volume purchase agreement with Software Answers for their ProgressBook software. We recently caught up with Software Answers President Paul Chaffee and asked him some questions about this exciting product.

"Describe ProgressBook. It is more than a grade book. Just what is it exactly?"

"ProgressBook is a web-based application that extends a traditional Student Information System (SIS) to the teacher. While ProgressBook is an electronic grade book, it also allows teachers to electronically take attendance, enter lesson plans, create standards- based report cards, complete lunch counts, grant parent access, track indicators, and record special education plans plus maintains tight integration with the existing student information systems."

"What seems to be the favorite feature of the software?"

"That is a tough question; we receive a lot of compliments on the Grid View that allows teachers to work with their grade book data in a spreadsheet view. However, we have received quite a few letters explaining how Parent Access has positively impacted a student's performance. So I might have to give the award to Parent Access since it is a popular feature, and these letters give us the most pride and lift our spirits the most."

"How do you feel about this partnership with the MCOECN?"

"I feel that the partnership between the DA-Sites/MCOECN and Software Answers has been very successful. Working together with professionals who appreciate how technology can improve Ohio schools has been an exciting opportunity for Software Answers. I feel we work well together because communication, knowledge, work commitment and the overall goal of benefiting the schools are important to both Software Answers and the DA-Sites. The feedback and cooperation we receive from the DA-Sites is extremely valuable and has significantly influenced the direction of ProgressBook."

"What advantages does this bring to DA Sites and Ohio Schools?"

"Every step from design to testing of ProgressBook has been completed with input from both the DA Sites and Ohio teachers. Having an excellent partnership between Software Answers and MCOECN, provides the opportunity to reach larger numbers of educators to ensure ProgressBook will continue to meet the needs of the DA-Sites and Ohio Schools. An example of this was the identification of needs in special education and led to the Special Education Team which consists of both Software Answers and OECN people who developed a good version 1.0 product. With all of the enhancements that the team is planning for this year, I feel everyone will think this product will move from being a good one to a great one!"

Going Back to School with INFOhio

In these difficult times of budget cuts and resource constraints, INFOhio is proving to be a key core service that offers students, teachers, library media specialists and even parents the access to electronic resources needed to improve student learning. All Ohio schools have access to 13 online databases that are relevant to curricular objectives and classroom instruction. Our resource collection includes comprehensive online reference resources, encyclopedias, full-text newspapers and periodicals, biographies, science and technology resources, foreign language resources and much more.

So what does this cost Ohio schools? Absolutely nothing. All public and nonpublic K-12 schools, educators, students and their parents across Ohio have unlimited use of these resources free of charge. The State of Ohio funds INFOhio to purchase these online resources for Ohio schools.

To access the resources, point your Web browser to **www.infohio.org** and select one of the Core Collection resource buttons. Access within schools will be automatic if IP addresses have been registered with INFOhio. From home or schools where IP addresses have not been registered, a one-

One sample from the 13 INFOhio
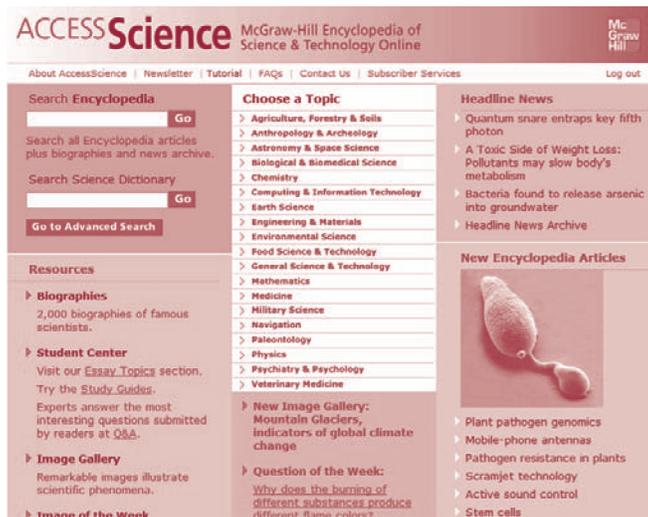Electronic Resources available to all schools.

time entry of a username and password is required.

For the 2004/05 school year, INFOhio is implementing a new statewide username and password to access the Core Collection of Electronic Resources. Contact your school library media specialist, the DASite that serves your region, or INFOhio Central via email **central@infohio.org** or phone 614-752-2941 for the new username/password and any additional information.

All educators are welcome to attend, for free, any one of 32 INFOhio Fall Update sessions held across the state. Attendees will learn how to get the best use of resource special features as well as curricular applications. For locations, registration and more information go to **www. infohio.org**, select **About INFOhio**, then **Meetings**, and then select the **Fall Update Sessions** link.

Funds for the INFOhio Electronic Resources are provided by the Ohio General Assembly through the Ohio Department of Education and SchoolNet. Support comes through INFOhio and the DASites of the Ohio Education Computer Network (OECN).

State Budget Cuts Hit OECN DA Sites

The Ohio Department of Education has informed the DA Sites of a mandatory 6% reduction in budget line items 200-426 and 200-446. These cuts impact the OECN support and EMIS support subsidy for this fiscal year. Our DA Sites understand the difficult economic times facing our state legislature and Ohio school districts. Although this funding cut is unfortunate, our DA Sites will continue to provide quality services to their member districts.

SchoolNet Fall Technology Training Academy (TTA)

This fall, SchoolNet in conjunction with the MCOECN will offer professional development training for district technology coordinators at various locations across the state between October 18 – 29. Some of the course offerings will include Linux, MacOSX, Windows XP, Network Security, and Wireless Networks. Registration and course information will be available mid-September on the SchoolNet website at www.osn.state.oh.us. You may also contact Barb Bloxam at OSN toll-free at 1-888-644-6761.

Two New Opportunities for Special Education Software

Ohio school districts have two new choices in software targeted towards special education reporting requirement needs. These two new solutions are the AAL/eSIS Special Education Module and the DASL/Progress Book Special Education Module. Both are designed to meet all state and federal reporting requirements, both are designed to reduce the financial burden to school districts, and both are available now from OECN Data Acquisition Sites.

ODE recently announced the availability of the AAL/eSIS Special Education Module for use this school year. AAL provided the department with specific enhancements designed to handle EMIS reporting requirements. The AAL/eSIS Special Education Module was tested in several pilot programs during the 2003-2004 school year. Satisfied with this testing, the department's Office of Exceptional Children used federal funds to purchase a block of licenses and has made this software available for use by Ohio schools.

The DASL/Progress Book Special Education Module was developed under a partnership between the MCOECN and Software Answers, the developers of the Progress Book

"…meet federal and state requirements…"

student gradebook program. This module is included with Progress Book, but it will run independently of that program for schools that are not Progress Book sites. This module will also be integrated into the DASL Student Management system once that system is released. The strength of the DASL/Progress Book Special Education Module is in its ability to handle IEP forms in a "what you see is what you get" fashion. This module has also been designed to handle state EMIS reporting needs. Initial development and software enhancements for this special education module were a part of the DASL project.

Both of these packages are available to meet district needs for federal and state special education documentation and reporting requirements. MCOECN DA Sites have been jointly working with representatives from the Ohio Department of Education, and the Office of Exceptional Children, to insure that these packages remain current for all data reporting needs. If you are interested in learning more about the AAL/eSIS or DASL/Progress Book Special Education Modules, please contact your DA Site.