Connections

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From the CEO

The Ohio Department of Education has contracted with Battelle to provide a new statewide student software package for Ohio's schools. Battelle has subcontracted with Administrative Assistants Limited (AAL) out of Toronto, Canada to write the new student software package. Currently, this project is being piloted at five Data Acquisition Sites throughout Ohio. The pilot will now be extended through the rest of this school year in order for the Ohio Department of Education and school districts to see the effects of this new software package through a complete school year cycle including EMIS reporting, scheduling, grade cards, progress reports, attendance, discipline and fees. The program also includes a special education component, which will be expanded once the Ohio Department of Education has approved the new special education standards. Eventually this software will be made available to each classroom so teachers can directly input information such as student attendance and grades.

The Ohio Department of Education will pay for the Oracle relational database as well as the student software program for school districts. There is currently a study to determine the total cost of ownership (TCO) for using this new software. At the district level, the program will work on Intel/Windows PC or Macintosh computers. There is a minimum bandwidth requirement of 56 KB to each building, but T1 bandwidth is desirable. The forms must be printed on laser printers and districts should consider the expense of staff resources for training and substitutes.

At the DA Site level, the total cost of operations would include a review of the computer resources such as storage, database, application and network laser printing as well as network support, data conversion and staff resources. There will need to be training on the new application and database. The DA Sites will provide training and technical/user support to their member districts.

The Ohio Department of Education is developing the criteria to determine which districts and DA Sites will be eligible to implement the software during the next school year. Schools will schedule on the legacy system and convert their data during the summer of 2000 to be operational for the 2000/2001 school year. Schools interested in using this software should talk with your DA Site now to determine an implementation plan, training, and conversion strategy. Meetings with pilot sites can be arranged as well.
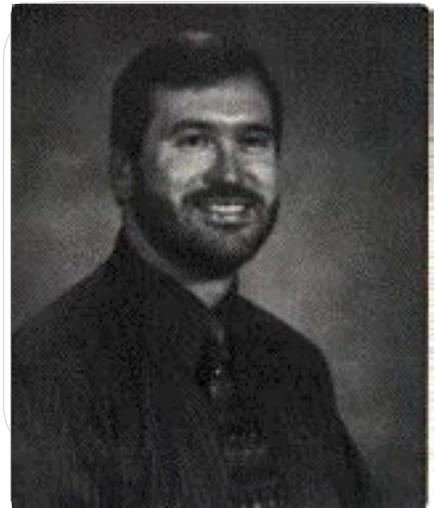
ONEnet Ohio

Staff of the Ohio SchoolNet Commission, the Ohio Department of Education (ODE), Department of Administrative Services (DAS), Legislative Office of Education Oversight (LOEO), Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO), and the Ohio Education Computer Network (OECN) met on September 21, 1999 to improve communications among these organizations related to the implementation of voice, video, and data connectivity to Ohio's school districts. As a result of this meeting, a representative group of 12 to 15 individuals representing SchoolNet, ODE, DAS, OECN, independent school districts (B-Sites), and non-public schools began meeting on October 1 to discuss the disbursement of fiscal year 2000 connectivity funds and to turn the ONEnet framework into a plan. This plan will include input from school district technology coordinators, administrators, end-users and others.

The ONEnet Collaborative Planning Committee is scheduled to meet about every two weeks for the remainder of this calendar year. Meeting dates beyond that time will be scheduled as needed. A major responsibility of this committee is to design an implementation

Chief Technology Officer for MCOECN Employed

At the meeting of the Board of Trustees for the Management Council of the Ohio Education Computer Network on November 9, the trustees employed Andrew Tompkins as the Chief Technology Officer for the MCOECN. Andrew has had experience working at both a DA Site and a local school district. Andrew worked for eleven years at SPARCC in various capacities including Programmer/Analyst, Programmer II and Systems Manager. During the last 4 years, he has been employed by Jackson Local School District in Stark County as the Director of Technology and Network Administrator. He has a technical background and will assist the MCOECN staff on working with issues which require technical expertise.

Andrew will officially begin working for the Management Council on January 3; however, he may provide some days of service to the MCOECN on a limited basis before this date. In order for Andrew to have an understanding of the operations of each of the DA Sites and gain a perspective of the types of services you are providing to your customers, he will be visiting each data acquisition site to learn more about the operations. His new Management Council e-mail address will be tompkins@mcoecn.org.

There are many things in the CTO job description, but two of the highest priorities in this position are: 1) work with the DA Sites at their request to provide technical assistance, recommendations or support. (this could include researching a particular technology or simply providing recommendations) and 2) work with the MCOECN staff as they meet with SchoolNet, ODE, DAS, legislators and others to express the interest of the Management Council from a technological perspective.

Just as the job of the DA Sites is to service their customer school districts, the job of the Management Council is to serve the data acquisition sites. The CTO position is a part of our reorganization/strategic plan to help provide additional services to your organization. Please join me in welcoming Andrew Tompkins to our staff.

Tech Budget for the New Biennium

The Ohio Legislature committed significant funding to the expansion of technology in the new budget bill (HB 282).

Among the areas addressed in this budget bill are $2.5 million for the development and testing of EMIS school administration software and another $250,000 for the construction/redesign plans for EMIS. There is also significant funding to upgrade the new student software package to a much friendlier graphical user interface (point and click).

The funding to the Ohio Education Computer Network was increased to $10,460,000 in the first year of the biennium and to $11,510,000 in the second year.

A major item in the new budget is the connectivity of all school buildings in Ohio at a minimum T1 level. The legislature committed $10,240,000 in the first year and $19 million in the second year of the biennium.

The legislature continued its funding to INFOhio for the automation of school libraries and other library services. The legislature also committed $1 million to INFOhio for the purchase of electronic resources.

$28.6 million was allocated to purchase network telecommunications equipment for each public school building in the state and to provide access to existing and potential statewide voice, video, and telecommunication services.

SchoolNet will provide $53.3 million to continue the installation of classroom computers in the fifth grade.

$1 million was allocated to pay for the cost of an independent review of all agencies in the state to deliver educational technology and another $1.5 million to fund the cost of a statewide Educational Technology Strategic Plan.

Up to $4.6 million in the first year of the biennium and $10 million in the second year will be used to expand the Interactive Video Distance Learning Program (IVDL) according to the new Educational Technology Strategic Plan.

These are just some of the programs the legislature has funded in this new biennium. It is obvious they have made the financial commitment to increase the use of technology in Ohio's public schools. It is now incumbent upon school leaders and other technology providers to make sure this funding is used to improve technology in Ohio's classrooms and provide educators with additional tools to improve student learning.
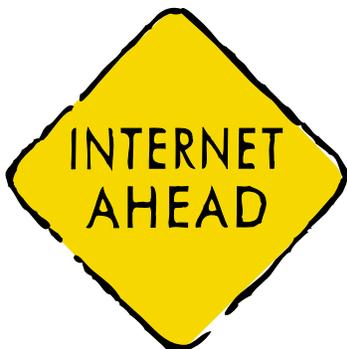
Safety on the Net

by Andy Qualtire, Executive Director
MCOECN

As the use of the Internet by students and staff grows, so does the concern for its appropriate use. Experts predict usage of the Internet will explode in the very near future.

At a recent summit on Internet Usage sponsored by Cisco Systems, leaders from major corporations such as BP-AMOCO, AT&T Solutions, and Merrill Lynch predicted that e-commerce use of the Internet will be more than doubled by the year 2001. With this expansion will come more opportunities for access to many more sites that hopefully will be useful tools for our students and teachers to increase their skills. Unfortunately, the expansion of access to inappropriate sites will also grow.

No school district, parent, or guardian can be 100% sure their students will never be able to access these inappropriate sites, but some precautions and basic safeguards are recommended. These recommendations should be considered by the district as adoptive policies.

Consider the adoption of an "AUP," Acceptable Use Policy. It is a document that clearly spells out the acceptable use of the Internet by students and staff. It promotes the useage of the Internet, but makes it very clear what is acceptable and what consequences can come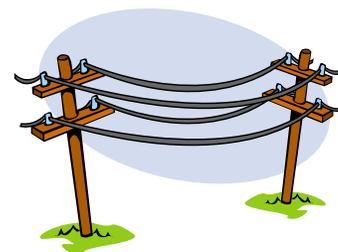 from inapporriate use of the district resources. The AUP document should have a place for the student and parent's signatures. The policy should be in the student and staff handbook as well as adopted by the Board of Education. This policy should be one of the topics addressed at student orientation sessions, and should cover the use of privately owned PCs brought to school by students and/or staff.

The net is a goldmine of information and resources, and it appears that it will get even richer. School districts will need to continually review their Internet policies. Adoption of Internet filtering software may be one solution that a district should consider. There are a number of filtering products available, and the MCOECN and DA Sites can assist districts in this decision.

Preparing for Video Implementation

This summer 89 participants received training from First Virtual and VTEL to prepare for the implementation of video connectivity in Ohio schools. The participants were from the Ohio Education Computer Network (OECN), SchoolNet, and the Department of Admininstrative Services (DAS). The new state biennial budget will provide funding to wire each school building in Ohio with voice, video, and data connectivity with at least a 1.5 MB (T1) connection. There is increased funding in the first year of the biennium for the recurring charges schools pay for T1 connectivity. In the second year of the biennium there will be an additional funding increase to pay for the line charges for a T1 to every public school building in Ohio.

In order to prepare for this infusion of voice, video, and data connectivity in the schools, the staffs of OECN, SchoolNet, and DAS believe it is necessary to receive training to assist schools in the implementation of this exciting technology.

plan for Recommendation #3 of the Ohio School Technology Implementation Task Force, which was chaired by Senator Robert Cupp. This task force recommendation states, "The State of Ohio should consider funding a state educational network which provides schools with universal access to low-cost, high-performance network capacity (1.5 megabytes). The state educational network would be a simple, uniform, reliable, standards-based system that provides both basic and comprehensive services."

This recommendation was funded in the Education Budget and an allocation of $28.6 million dollars was established to purchase network telecommunication equipment for each public school building in the state and to provide classroom and building access to existing and potential statewide voice, video, and telecommunication services.

The budget also increased the connectivity funding to $10,240,000 in the current fiscal year and to $19 million in 2001. Nineteen million dollars is the approximate phone line cost of providing a 1.5 megabyte (also known as T1) connectivity to each school building in the State of Ohio.

After the ONEnet Collaborative Planning Committee has developed a proposed plan, there will be opportunities for input and recommendations from users in the school districts. The Management Council is pleased with this cooperative planning effort and the opportunity for input from school districts. The dedication of Governor Taft and the Ohio Legislature in the funding of educational technology is greatly appreciated, as it will help to continue to establish Ohio as an educational leader in technology.

INFOhio

THE INFORMATION NETWORK FOR OHIO SCHOOLS

by Theresa M. Fredericka, Executive Director
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INFOhio has been allocated $1,000,000 of additional funding to renew and expand the electronic resources available at every Internet-capable system in all Ohio public and non-public schools. The additional funding has been approved by the Ohio General Assembly and is included in the 2000–2001 biennial budget.

INFOhio is pleased Ohio's decision-makers have assigned INFOhio the responsibility to provide access to quality information, free of charge, to every student and teacher in every public and non-public school in Ohio. We will use our existing partnership with the Ohio Education Computer Network and DA Sites, as well as our growing cadre of librarians and technology coordinators throughout Ohio, to successfully manage the additional funds entrusted to us. INFOhio wishes to express our appreciation to the leadership of the OECN, DA Site staff, and all those in the field who supported INFOhio's efforts to obtain additional dollars to fulfill our mission to Ohio's students and teachers.

The additional state funding ensures the renewal of INFOhio's Internet Encyclopedia, Encyclopaedia Britannica Online for FY2001. Electronic Resources for Social Studies, a database of 126 full-text magazine and newspaper articles from Bell & Howell ProQuest, will also be renewed, and will increase by 18 titles, selected primarily for elementary schools.

INFOhio's Electronic Resources Task Force selected SIRS Discoverer Deluxe Edition to add as a new elementary product. SIRS Discoverer Deluxe Edition contains articles from more than 1,200 sources and includes three reading and comprehension levels. SIRS Discoverer provides access to articles and graphics from magazines, newspapers, and government documents, a 26,000 article encyclopedia, The World Almanac for Kids, Country Facts, Presidential Biographies, a thesaurus, and much more.

INFOhio held a series of ten regional user meetings during the week of September 27 – October 1, 1999 in five locations around the state. A portion of each meeting featured the content and scope of INFOhio's Electronic Resources, access methods, and how to integrate each resource into the curriculum. For all schools using the DA Sites as Internet providers the three resources can be accessed at the top of the page from INFOhio's website at http://www.infohio.org. Other schools should contact the INFOhio Provider at their respective data acquisition site for additional information on how to access these electronic resources for both school and home use.

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