

NSW CEG Newsletter

Term III, 2007

nswceg.org.au Ph 1-800 002 083

Fax 1-800 002 085

From the Laptop of the President

Hi! All,

Term 4 is always a hectic term. Hopefully everyone is making it through successfully.

The SIMERR Summit was a great experience. Future planning will come from this Summit so look out for future directions. The CD's are being created and will be posted to participants. Thanks for your support and enjoy. Again, BIG thank you to CSTA for their support in this project.

A study tour has been arranged for the NECC conference being held in June next year. Further details are being obtained and are available from the ACCE website. (www.acce.org.au)

The 2008 NSWCEG State Conference is being held on Sunday and Monday (July 6th & 7th 2008) at Newcastle Panthers. The theme is Seed IT, Feed IT, Lead IT, ICT in education. We are looking for presenters and have organised some Keynotes from a variety of different sectors. Watch the website for these details. We are also looking for presenters. Please contact me directly (cuddlycj@optusnet.com.au) if you would like to present. We are also looking for Web 2.0 presenters for this conference. Let me know if you would like to present in this area.

Our training course in conjunction with D-link went very well and we hope to repeat these courses over the next few months including at the next conference. Look out for further details.

The recent CSA10 test occurred with some issues being raised. We are happy to raise these issues with the Board of Studies directly. Members can contact me directly about these concerns and I will contact the Board on behalf of the members of the NSWCEG. If you have any suggestions of how we could assist you, please feel free to email me, cuddlycj@optusnet.com.au.

The Board would like to wish all members and their families a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Tah!
Cathie Webber
President NSWCEG



Participants at the D-Link WiFi course

Letting Social Networking into Schools

Creating & Connecting Research and Guidelines on Online Social - and Educational - Networking
National School Boards Association September, 2007

School districts may want to re-examine their policies and practices in order to use social networking for educational purposes, says this report. Time spent using social networking services and Web sites now nearly equals television viewing among youth. A remarkable 96 percent of students with online access report that they have used social networking technologies, such as chatting, text messaging, blogging and visiting online communities, such as Facebook, MySpace and services designed specifically for younger children, such as Webkins and the chat sections of Nick.com. Yet the vast majority of school districts have stringent rules against nearly all forms of social networking during the school day - even though students and parents report few problem behaviours online.

Both district leaders and parents, says the report, believe that social networking could play a positive role in students' lives and they recognize opportunities for using it in education - at a time when teachers now routinely assign homework that requires Internet use to complete.

What do students do online?

- * 41% post messages
- * 32% download music
- * 30% download videos
- * 29% upload music
- * 25% update personal Web sites or online profiles
- * 24% post photos
- * 17% blog
- * 16% create and share virtual objects
- * 14% create new characters
- * 10% participate in collaborative projects
- * 10% send suggestions or ideas to Web sites
- * 9% submit articles to Web sites
- * 9% create polls, quizzes or surveys

The report recommends that school boards:

- * Explore social networking sites.
- * Consider using social networking for staff communications and professional development
- * Find ways to harness the educational value of social networking.
- * Ensure equitable access
- * Pay attention to the nonconformists (defined in the report as skilled online but lukewarm about school)
- * Re-examine social networking policies.
- * Encourage social networking companies to increase educational value.

The 12-page report is available online. Grunwald Associates LLC formulated and directed the study, and a more detailed research report based on this survey is available commercially at that site.



The WiFi course was quite successful. More course with D-Link in 2008

Running a Virtual School: Holly Sagues

Holly Sagues With the motto “Any Time, Any Place, Any Path, Any Pace,” the Florida Virtual School has become a national model for online education.

Florida Virtual School (FLVS) serves 31,000 students each year with more than 90 course offerings, including Advanced Placement instruction for students who don’t have access to AP courses elsewhere. Last year, nearly 60 percent of FLVS’s AP courses were taken by students at schools labeled “high priority,” that is, rural, low-income, and high-minority.

Here FLVS CIO Holly Sagues answers questions about the challenges of administering a virtual school and the equalizing power of online education.

Q. Was the FLVS started in response to a particular need?

A. We started out as a state “Break the Mold” grant back in 1997. The focus was to level the playing field so students in rural and high-minority districts could have access to the same level of courses as students in other districts.

Q. What advantages do you think a virtual school has over a traditional face-to-face environment?

A. Our students say the biggest advantages are that they have control over the amount of time needed to master material, they have a more one-on-one relationship with their teachers, and they have control over when they want to work on their course. Some students will learn better online, others will learn better in a traditional format. The beauty is that the student can make that choice.

Q. What are the biggest disadvantages, or challenges, to online learning?

A. From an infrastructure standpoint, our biggest challenge is keeping up with growth. We are currently going through an analysis to make sure we have adequate systems in place to meet the needs [of our students] for the next three to five years. We will serve approximately 78,000 half credits this year within the school, but [we] are also seeing growth in other virtual schools utilizing our courses and in Virtual School Administrator (our student information system).

Q. Can you talk about your infrastructure?

A. We supply a complete office setup (phone, Internet, computer, and so on) to all of our teachers. They work from their home offices. We do not supply equipment or Internet access to our students. We have agreements with all the districts in Florida that the schools will provide access to students if they don’t have it themselves. Occasionally we will have a student who cannot be served through his or her public school and we work with our foundation [the Florida Virtual School Foundation, which helps ensure that all students have access to the school] to get equipment donated to the school for the student to use.

Q. Who are your teachers?

A. We hire excellent Florida-certified teachers. Most come from our public schools, but we have a handful of teachers who are Florida certified but live in other states. They take a combination of both online and face-to-face training when they’re hired. We also pair up new teachers with experienced teacher/mentors for their whole first year for “just in time” one-on-one training when they need it.

Q. Who creates your online courses?

A. Originally, our teachers worked in a team environment and developed our first courses. They were pretty dry-text and graphics, mostly. Through better technology and research, we have added much more interaction with the help of more advanced programmers. However, our teachers are still our subject-matter experts. We rely on their feedback as well as our students to determine best practices. We also have curriculum specialists who work with teachers in identifying areas where students struggle and developing the proper solution.

Q. I’ve read that FLVS is the only school where funding is tied directly to student performance. A critic might be concerned that means teachers feel pressure to pass students. What does funding tied to performance mean practically?

A. We are funded on successfully completed students, primarily. We have developed administrative technologies and reports within our student information system to make sure that

teachers and students are doing what is expected of them. [For example], we have an instructional leader (similar to a principal) in each of our 12 school houses [virtual houses that break down the FLVS population into manageable pieces]. Each instructional leader can go into a teacher’s online classroom to review student work, grades, phone calls, e-mails, etc. They can see how much of the course students have completed on a particular day and have access to over 20 different types of reports to make sure what they think is happening in a classroom is really happening. They also talk to their teachers on a very regular basis.

Q. Do you have any thoughts for someone starting a virtual school?

A. A couple of lessons learned: make sure you have legislative support for your virtual school. We see many virtual schools struggling to get funded each year as they still don’t have a funding model in place. And communication is key—communication between students, parents, and teachers. Technology should provide the vehicle to provide that communication. It’s all about learning through a new means of communication, and having the data to support what you’re doing.

To learn more about FLVS, visit www.flvs.net. You can view a demo course at www.flvs.net/products_services/p_s_course_demos.php.

By Susie Meserve

Adapted from SchoolCIO

US Voters Want Schools to Teach 21st Century Skills

Eighty percent of voters say that today's students need different skills than twenty years ago, and a majority want schools to do a better job of keeping up with changing educational needs.

A national poll conducted by Public Opinion Strategies and Peter D. Hart Research Associates on behalf of the Partnership for 21st Century Skills shows that voters want to see schools teach new skills for the 21st Century. Among the key findings:

Eighty-eight percent of voters say they believe that schools can and should incorporate 21st century skills such as critical thinking and problem-solving skills, computer and technology skills, and communication and self-direction skills into their curriculum.

Sixty-six percent of voters say they believe that students need more than just the basics of reading, writing and math; schools also need to incorporate a broader range of skills.

Fifty-three percent say they believe schools should place an equal emphasis on 21st century skills and basic skills.

"This is a powerful set of data from American voters that we need to expand what our schools are teaching to keep pace with the demands of our modern workforce," said Bill McInturff, Public Opinion Strategies, in a press release for the poll. "This poll also reveals the strong connection Americans make between our future economic success and our education system, a conversation that currently is not happening among our elected officials."

"We now know that employers and the public are united in their understanding of what it takes to compete today," said Partnership President Ken Kay, pointing to similar results from a corporate survey titled "Are They Really Ready to Work." "These new polling results provide education leaders and policymakers the tremendous opportunity to make our education system more aligned with the needs of the 21st century workforce. The public strongly supports more rigorous expectations for students that integrate

21st century skills into core academic subjects. Educators want to equip students with these skills, but they need the public policy, professional development, assessment and curricular tools to accomplish this."

The release also points out the poll's relevance to the re-authorization of No Child Left Behind.

"For years U.S. education policy has been focused on the important task of narrowing the achievement gap for economically disadvantaged and minority students, and improving under performing schools," reads the release. "But stopping the conversation there denies U.S. students the expanded skills set they now need for success in the globally interconnected society and workforce of the 21st century, according to the Partnership. Providing all students with 21st century skills and making education relevant to today's world are critical to closing both the achievement gap and the global competition gap."

The Partnership for 21st Skills is designed to help states implement a framework for teaching 21st century skills. Massachusetts, Maine, North Carolina, South Dakota, West Virginia and Wisconsin have committed to the initiative. Funding for the poll was provided by Blackboard Inc., KnowledgeWorks Foundation, National Education Association, Pearson and SAP, all of which are Partnership for 21st Century Skills' board member companies.

Source: *U.S. Students Need 21st Century Skills to Compete in a Global Economy*

**State Conference
Panthers: Newcastle
Sunday 6th July to
Monday 7th July 2008
Mark your diaries!**

PDQ (Professional Development QuickTips)

Online Projects

Tip: Technology should not duplicate what can already be done without technology. It is a waste to use a computer as a textbook. Often PowerPoint projects are no more than a replacement for the report that the students used to do on paper. In some cases the watered-down version in the completed PowerPoint leaves you wondering if the student really learned anything.

Technology can open the windows of the classroom to the world in ways that no textbook could. Connections to people and places far from the classroom are possible and compelling. Through this type of a project students can learn reading, writing, and even math while expanding their ability to think and communicate.

So, how does a teacher go about finding an online project in which to participate? First, start with curriculum. What do the students need to learn? This summer I traveled in Greece to various archaeological sites and wrote a blog. There are classes that read my blog and learned about Greek history and archaeology. They wrote comments to the blog to guide me in what questions to ask the archaeologists that I met or to give me ideas of what pictures to post. Because it is a blog the pictures will stay up on the web available for other classes. This is not something that matches the curriculum for every class, but there are some classes that can directly connect to it.

After you have chosen what standards you would like to address with a project choose one that will work for you. If it is your first time doing a project you may want to choose something simple and short. There are several places online that list projects.

Here are some of them:

- * Global Schoolhouse
- * NickNack Telecollaborate
- * Apple Learning Exchange
- * iEARN

Clickers Rule!

Susan Bush and Susan McLester
from Technology & Learning

Rapid responders are the new classroom essential.

Walk the exhibit hall of any education technology conference today and you're sure to see more rapid response systems than you can count.



Yes, "clickers" have caught fire in the education space as tools that truly enable interactive, personalized learning in both classroom and professional development settings.

Clickers are individual handheld transmitters that collect learner input and pair with a host software system that electronically collects and tabulates that data for instant display on a computer monitor. For large group viewing, an LCD projector can be hooked up to the computer.

The three basic categories of clickers are Wi-Fi wireless, radio frequency, and infrared (see sidebar "Clicker Basics," this page), with operating systems and feature options varying.

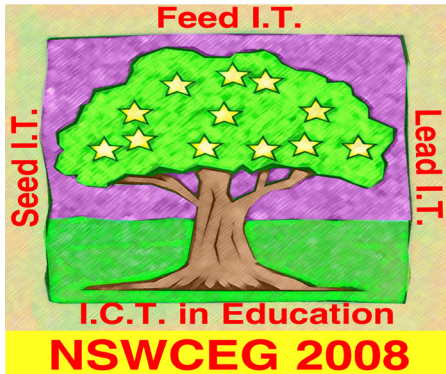
Educators tout clickers for their ability to engage whole classes of students via ongoing question and answer activities, collect data in real time to assess the effectiveness of instruction, facilitate self-paced testing, collect large amounts of data on student performance, and to generate reports in a range of viewing options.

Clicker Basics

IR—infrared systems require an unobstructed line of sight between transmitter and receiver. The more receivers in use, the more potential for signal interference. Be sure to research the classroom infrastructure before purchase, as integrating IR hardware might face challenges. Receiver wiring is simpler in small rooms with existing conduit runs available.

RF—radio frequency systems are not dependent on line-of-sight transmission, and single receivers may now work with more than 500 transmitters. Infrastructure issues are normally not major, and portable receiver units may be used. Be sure to check out nearby rooms and continue to monitor them for possible mutual frequency interference.

Wi-Fi—wireless systems can include everything from student PDAs to laptops to tablets, with individual Web browsers interacting with the host hardware. Management software may reside on the instructor's computer or a network server. Wi-Fi is a good choice if you're looking for interoperability with Web-enabled cell phones down the line.



10 Clicker Options



Quizdom

The Q2 is Quizdom's newest remote and uses revolutionary E-ink display technology and can be customized to a school's mascot or colors. Like the Q4, the Q2 uses standards-based radio-frequency communication. It features seven different answer choices: multiple choice, true/false, yes/no, numeric, multiple-mark multiple choice, rating scale, and sequencing. Students can input fractions, decimals, and negative numbers, and they receive instant right/wrong feedback on each device. Quizdom provides a unique instructor remote that allows teachers to control the presentation, play/pause media, view graphs, call on students at random, and create on-the-fly questions from anywhere in the room. www.quizdom.com



AlphaSmart NEO 2

Renaissance Learning New features of the AlphaSmart NEO 2 allow students to take Accelerated Reader quizzes right at their desks. NEO 2 costs a fraction of standard laptops, and its battery life will last up to 700 hours. Extra features include wireless printing, a large LCD screen, full-size keyboard, two-way communication, and instant on/off with built-in autosave. www.alphasmart.com

H-ITT IR



Both the H-ITT IR and RF two-way remote units are fast. The RF system can record up to 1,000 responses in one second, and the IR system can record up to 100 responses in one second, and this rate can be increased by adding extra base units to the classroom. Publishers say the IR system is 10 times faster than conventional IR remotes and other IR audience response systems. Clickers come in fun neon colors: orange, yellow, and green. www.h-itt.com



Senteo

SMART Technologies The Senteo interactive response system is fully integrated with SMART's Notebook collaborative learning software, linking teachers to numerous education resources. Teachers can incorporate any of 6,000 learning objects into their quizzes, or use them to animate corresponding lesson plans created with Notebook. www.smarttech.com/senteo



CPS IR

eInstruction CPS IR combines durable hardware with the powerful CPS software to create an interactive learning environment

in any classroom. The CPS RF offers rich feedback, and teachers can ask multiple choice and numeric questions in classes of up to 1,000 students. Each response pad has a three-line LCD screen that allows students to view the questions and the answers they have entered. The symbol button makes it easy to answer higher-level math and science questions. www.elnstruction.com

Activeexpression

Promethean

The new Activeexpression learner response system allows students to express themselves through words, phrases, symbols, and numbers—and instantly share with the entire class. The Activote is a wireless, handheld voting device designed to work with the company's Activboard. Promethean is the only company that produces interactive whiteboards with a built-in receiver for the student response system. www.prometheanworld.com/us

TurningPoint 2008

Turning Technologies The new TurningPoint 2008 is sophisticated in both capabilities and use. The new ResponseCard XR keypad features a multi-line LCD display, two-way response verification and alphanumeric entry. A unique feature is the inclusion of educational standards from academic services company Academic Benchmarks, enabling K-12 schools to poll students on key educational metrics for all U.S. states and certain other countries. It also includes plug-and-play hardware setup. www.turningtechnologies.com

Indigo Learning System

LearningSoft

The Indigo Learning System is a powerful combination of student response system and handheld computer. Key features include 320x40 grayscale display, QWERTY alphanumeric keyboard, MP3 Audio capability, Wi-Fi, a 10-hour rechargeable battery, and 10,000 built-in

assessment items aligned to state standards. www.learningsoft.net

Interwrite Cricket



Interwrite Learning The Interwrite Cricket is the newest Interwrite assessment tool. It is a powerful yet simple to use and affordable student response system that can be used in the smallest of classrooms or lecture halls with 2,000 students. It uses robust RF technology with a friendly look and feel. Cricket was designed to simplify assessment for both teacher and students. It provides a PowerPoint plug-in and offers a mode allowing any material that you display on your computer to become a Cricket compatible question. www.interwritelearning.com

iRespond-Lite

Wireless eSystems, Inc. The iRespond-Lite is a low-cost, radio frequency remote featuring Teacher's Dashboard software for real-time feedback and results. It has a two-line, eight-character display. The iRespond-Touch includes all features of the Lite, and a touch-screen graphics-capable display. A new Web-based version, called iRespond AnyPlace, offers the same powerful assessment tools as the other iRespond products, without the need for remotes. <http://irespond.com>

