

SPRING EDITION

BEST PRACTICES

in School Technology

**K-20 Success
Stories and
Case Studies**

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BEST PRACTICES in School Technology

Best Practices in School Technology is a publication of eSchool News and is dedicated to providing K-20 educators real-world solutions to school technology challenges.

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Century Consultants Offers Convenience And Savings For School Districts While Reducing Its Carbon Footprint

We believe that we all can play a part in reducing our carbon footprint.

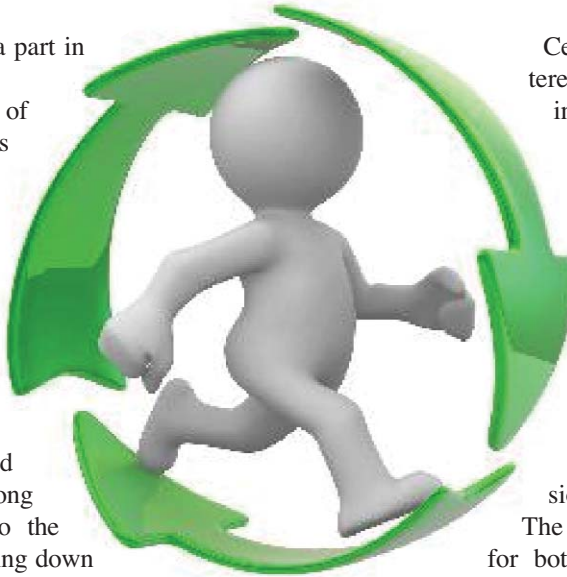
A carbon footprint is “the total set of GHG (greenhouse gas) emissions caused directly and indirectly by an individual, organization, event or product”. Global warming is a term we have all become familiar with in the past few years. There exists a delicate balance of greenhouse gases which naturally insulate the earth, absorbing sunlight assuring that Earth can support life. In the last few decades, humans have released large quantities of carbon dioxide, along with other heat-trapping gases into the atmosphere by burning fuel and cutting down trees. This causes more heat to be trapped in the atmosphere than is healthy. The result is global warming, disrupting agriculture and the threat of flooding in the world.

Companies can benefit both themselves and their customers by joining the planet-wide movement toward becoming more aware of conduct which can reduce the use of

non-renewable natural resources. Much of the attention is focused on the big corporations, housing large numbers of employees in oversize structures, or huge manufacturing facilities both of which consume mega watts of electricity or use tons of fossil fuels to produce products and operate their business. We would like to describe some of the ways our midsize software company has found to reduce its consumption of resources, directly and indirectly on behalf of our planet.

For many years Century Consultants, a provider of K-12 student information systems sent its employees around the country to perform onsite software installations and customer trainings. The process involved transport such as airplane or auto trips, hotel stays and meals away from home; all costly items which contribute to greenhouse gas emissions (GHG). During the installation, a knowledgeable school district staff member was required to be available for the entire installation process. The practice took school employees away from their daily tasks and Century employees were out of the office for days at a time.

Working with our customers, who wanted to reduce time and financial costs, coupled with our need to improve business practices and increase productivity, the Century staff surveyed ways we could achieve results that would satisfy all these requirements. Management decided the utilization of the internet could satisfy the issues for the company and the customer.



Century Consultants technicians mastered the art of the “remote software installation” for its product, Star_Base School Suite™. Instead of traveling by air or car to a district, the installation is performed remotely, from its Lakewood, New Jersey office. School district staff is not required to be tied up monitoring the server installation and can be productive in their daily duties.

Additionally, Century has adapted many of its training methods to include sessions with training professionals via webinars on the internet.

The courses feature a range of topics ideal for both new subject training, as well as “refreshers” on the Star_Base™ system. The refresher trainings are conducted throughout the year and are usually matched to the production schedule of district work flow. Personalized training on specific features is also available via the internet for our customers. Natural resources required to support the travel process are totally eliminated while productivity is greatly enhanced. The monetary cost for the school district is reduced, as time and expense are decreased. The process has become more efficient, has reduced stress on the environment, produced lower costs, and improved productivity for the school district and Century! A winning solution for all!

Our team also worked together to make additional internal changes, such as employee telecommuting, and an employee -sponsored recycling program, where items from their home and office are taken to the recycling center by employees. We also established paper reduction procedures such as duplexing and copying multiple pages per sheet for cost proposals and RFP’s. Electronic help manuals and an extended “Users Only” section of the Century web site, centralized company-wide electronic document files and calendar all contribute to the reduction of natural resource consumption. Altogether, these modifications add up to an environmentally responsible company. And best of all, our customers save money while we help save our planet.



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ELMO USA

DOCUMENT CAMERA APPLICATION HIGHLIGHT

TT-02s “Teacher’s Tool”

Elementary schools nationwide have increasingly moved from “grouping” children with similar abilities in one classroom to classrooms filled with children of diverse abilities—and diverse learning styles. With so many different types of children together in one class, one of the biggest challenges for teachers is how to differentiate and present lessons in ways that are engaging and effective.

Star Rosario, a teacher in South Florida, faced this dilemma with her fifth-grade gifted/high-achieving math class. Among the gifted children in this group were some with special needs, including one student with a severe hearing impairment, whom relied solely on “reading lips” as his predominant method of learning. It was clearly evident that visual learning technologies were one of Mrs. Rosario’s most effective methods of delivering instruction. Unfortunately, traditional overhead projectors had been problematic. The poor image quality and limited capabilities of the overhead projector provided little in the way of flexibility, versatility, or effectiveness to Mrs. Rosario’s lessons; instead, it actually hindered the quality of “instructional time”, which was already limited.

Document cameras, however, proved to be the leap in technology that Mrs. Rosario and her students needed. First, the image quality was excellent—sharp, clear, and vibrant in color. The ability to enhance the projection, focus, size and color, including 3D objects, was especially useful for teaching geometry and spatial learning. Through the daily use of a document camera, her students are now better able to grasp other mathematical concepts, such as place value systems, and they have a better understanding of how to apply theories related to numbers. Her hearing impaired student also seemed to appreciate the visual clarity and learning benefits provided by a document camera.

Secondly, the document camera’s user-friendly interface along with her laptop computer provides Mrs. Rosario with virtually unlimited images to enhance her lessons. The particular model used by Mrs. Rosario is the TT-02s “Teacher’s Tool” from ELMO USA, which is lightweight and allows her to share even small 3D objects with students in a variety of learning environments. According to Mrs. Rosario, “When I use the TT-02s document camera in class, it really captures my students’ attention and motivates them to become active participants in my lessons. They seem to



ELMO USA’s TT-02s “TEACHER’S TOOL”

focus better on the material and definitely demonstrate a higher level of “on-task” performance. Plus, they not only seem to understand the material faster but they appear to retain the information longer.”

Mrs. Rosario is looking forward to expanding her use of technology in the classroom by acquiring an Interactive White Board. “By connecting my TT-02s to the IWB, I hope to make my lessons even more dynamic, engaging, and spontaneous than before. My ultimate goal is to always make learning fun and meaningful for my students. The ELMO TT-02s allows me to teach my students in the manner that helps them learn best.”

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Chicago Public Schools Used SAFARI Montage System to Deliver Live Presidential Inauguration

What do you do when one of your U.S. Senators is being sworn in as the first African-American President of the United States, your school district superintendent is becoming the U.S. Secretary of Education, and you need over 408,000 students in your district to view the inauguration? You call on SAFARI Montage.

The IT department at Chicago Public Schools (CPS) was faced with precisely that challenge. While cable TV is provided in 95% of CPS schools, typically there is only one cable drop per school with no means to distribute that feed throughout the building. Using SAFARI Montage Selective Video Streaming (SVS) – CPS’ On Demand system – schools were able to view CNN’s live Cable TV broadcast of



Students at CPS host a program containing student interviews just prior to viewing the live Obama inauguration also delivered through SAFARI Montage.

Barack Obama’s inauguration, while also participating in the first-ever district-wide assembly. SVS allowed for the successful re-distribution of cable feeds over the CPS network. SAFARI Transcoders effectively transcoded the feed (with permission from CNN) and multicast the live CNN broadcast of the inauguration across the district’s data network.

“SAFARI Montage has helped us create an opportunity to bring the experience of a truly historic moment to our students and faculty in a consistent, cost effective and manageable way. Moreover, we can repeat this again and again for anyone who missed the live broadcast or desires to use it as part of an instructional lesson,” said Bob Runcie, CPS Chief Information Officer.

In addition to viewing the live broadcast via SVS, CPS students also conducted interviews, viewed an inauguration video created by students for the students, observed reactions surrounding the events of the inauguration, presented art,

choir and band performances that not only showcased their artistic abilities, but also provided historical context for the event. Viewing of this content was made possible through SAFARI Montage CreationStation®, the easy-to-use software tool that enables schools and districts to upload and share user-created digital media.

CPS knew that Internet streaming was not a viable option to deliver live simultaneous streams, especially to all of its 655 schools trying to witness the inauguration at the same time. With SVS, IT administrators were able to manage which video-based resources were accessible to teachers and students, as well as to ensure that bandwidth consumption was controlled.

Delivery of Cable TV to the classroom is also becoming increasingly more difficult. With the 2009 switch to Digital TV, many schools that use the traditional RF coax model of cabling – trunk-based configuration with a series of taps where cables drop off for each display device – will require major costly updating to run digital broadcasting content.

CPS has installed a high-speed network to many of its schools for all visual resources because they recognize the benefits of running DTV over the data network as a means to provide a better approach to managing TV and visual instruction. The events surrounding the inauguration were proof of that.

The ITS eLearning Digital Media Team from CPS, along with the SVS system, produced the assembly and implemented the required solution, infrastructure and video engineering for the broadcast.

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For multi-media presentations, it helps to have an onboard processor and built-in Windows CE to provide you with the ultimate presentation station.

Teachers and students have discovered the value of multi-media teaching tools where all of one's senses are engaged. Today's dynamic instructors engage their students with multi-media presentations that combine power-point, video and Internet content with real-time live problem solving.

In this world of multi-tasking, the Samsung UF-130DX packs new technology and exclusive features into a convenient and easy-to-use document camera that can turn a one-dimensional lecture into an engaging multi-media show.

As the first system to deliver embedded Windows CE, the UF-130DX allows users to access internet and office applications without the need of the PC. The built-in AMD processor running Windows CE enables users to upload their presentations directly to the digital presenter. It allows guest presenters to walk in with a memory stick and present with virtually no down time. The UF-130DX digital presenter can connect to standard USB peripherals such as a mouse, keyboard and thumb drives through a USB interface as well as connection to various memory devices such as CF, SD, MMC, and MC through a multi-card reader.

Visualization is vital to many presentations these days and image clarity is key. And nothing delivers clarity like dazzling high-definition images of documents, photos and other interesting content. The UF-130DX includes a 1.3 Mega pixel digital camera with 14X optical zoom that delivers the highest image quality and resolution available today at an impressive 30 frames per second.

Accessing the Internet is an excellent way to bring immediate relevance to any presentation, so the UF-130DX is net-



work ready allowing users to easily connect to the Internet for web browsing. During the middle of a lecture the instructor can quickly go online without the need for a separate computer. An Internet connection is all that is needed.

For many subjects, it helps when you can present two views at one time. With the UF-130DX you can display totally different information from two sources at once.

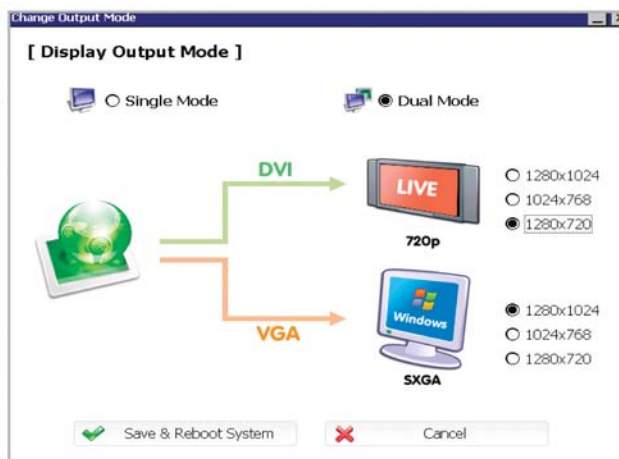
That's right! You can display live subjects on one screen and your computer output on another simultaneously.... all driven by the UF-130DX. It helps to simplify complex topics and keeps students and audiences totally engaged.

For those situations where a classroom deserves the ultra high quality of the Samsung UF-130DX, but without the onboard processor and Windows CE, Samsung has introduced the UF-130ST.

For more information about Samsung's full line of affordable and innovative document cameras, call 877-213-1222, Ext. 3306 or go to www.SamsungUF-130.com.



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One of these is all you need.

With a built-in AMD® processor and Windows® CE on board, Samsung's new 16:9 widescreen format UF-130DX, is not just a digital presenter – it's a complete presentation station. You won't need a computer to display PowerPoint®, Excel®, movies or get on the internet.

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Connecting Parents and Education

Challenge: Improving communication among teachers, staff, parents and students to strengthen academic progress.

The Stevens Point School District is one of the largest districts in Wisconsin in both area and number of students served, and it includes nine elementary schools, two junior high schools, a high school and an alternative school. Included among its schools is P. J. Jacobs Junior High School (grades 7-9), built in 1936 and located in central Stevens Point. The school serves about 1,000 students and offers a diverse range of academic experiences that include music, computers, art, athletics, drama and technology education.

Like many schools, the teachers and staff at P. J. Jacobs Junior High School relied on a traditional paper-based system in communicating academic and other school information among themselves, district staff, parents and students. Over time, though, the shortcomings of this method of communication became readily apparent as the school attempted to maintain this system while taking on such challenges as the demands of a larger student population, No Child Left Behind, increasingly rigorous state standards and higher parent expectations for academic progress.

Faced with these diverse challenges, the shortcomings of the school's paper-based communication system manifested themselves in a variety of ways, most notably in the form of extensive teacher and staff time to maintain the system, delays in getting information to parents, and significant printing, paper and mailing costs. In recent years it became increasingly evident to administrators, teachers and staff at P.J. Jacobs Junior High School that a more efficient, cost-effective and timely communication solution was needed.

Solution: Skyward's GradeBook and Family Access programs

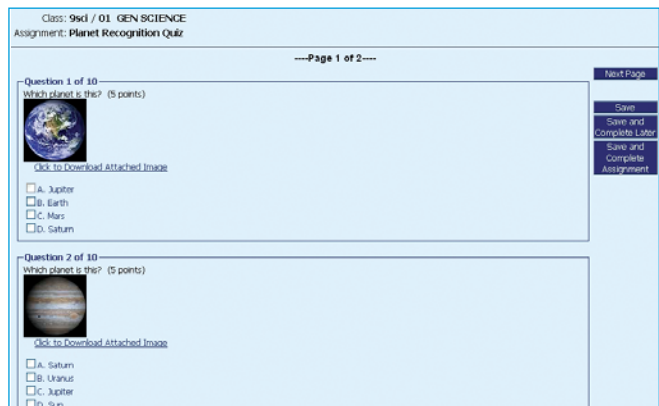
The implementation of Skyward's GradeBook and Family Access programs was approved for the 2003-2004 school year. By implementing these two complementary programs, the school has provided a secure web portal for improved communication that is offering administrators, teachers, staff, parents and students a wide range of benefits.

GradeBook

With GradeBook, teachers have access to a web-based tool that makes it easier and more efficient for them to set up online assignments, tests, quizzes and other classroom work. Using just an internet connection, the school's teachers can now enter student grades and other information from anywhere.

Family Access

Family Access is a web-based communication center that gives parents and guardians of students immediate, secure,



24/7 access to the information they need. Specifically, the program allows them to find out about a wide variety of areas including grades, daily assignments, discipline incidents and attendance records without having to call the school. Because this information is immediately available, parents can respond more effectively to concerns and questions they may have.

A parent's perspective: Better communication between parents and children about school

Lori Courtney, a parent of two children in the Stevens Point public schools, greatly appreciates the improved communication that has resulted from Family Access. "I think this is a great tool, and it's very easy to use. I can log-in and see how my kids are doing, and if they get a low score or grade we can talk about it and find out what is going on. I like the way it helps to keep you in better communication with your children," Courtney says.

Courtney adds that she logs into the program several times a week and that her two children frequently use the program to check on how they are doing with their classes. "For example, my daughter will log-in and check her grade on a test. And then she'll click on the test and the program will tell her the entire range of scores, from the lowest to the highest," Courtney says.

In assessing Family Access overall, Courtney says she wouldn't change a thing. "I definitely think we have more communication about school in our family because of Family Access. We are more aware now of what is going on," she says.

By functioning as two complementary programs and comprising a secure web portal, GradeBook and Family Access are enhancing student achievement and improving communication between home and school.



Success on Saywire Tells How Social Learning Works in Schools

All-in-one Web 2.0 tools and privacy controls improve learning, productivity, and accountability

Web 2.0 has enhanced learning in today's classroom. The problem many schools face is that with so many different web sites and tools being used, it becomes nearly impossible to manage the students involved for each activity, let alone collectively as a school. Teachers at Manchester-Essex High School know this from experience having used blogs at one site, word processing at another, and wikis from a third provider - all requiring separate IDs and passwords. In many cases, each time they created a new assignment, they were forced to re-roster their students because the tools didn't offer group distribution lists.

"Teachers don't have time to do that over and over again," said James Moriarty, Ed.D., the Technical Integration Specialist at Manchester-Essex. He turned to Saywire to solve the problem. "Its access settings are better. We can create a group list of the students in a class once, and use it for any access setting on Saywire."

Saywire provides private social learning networks that include Web 2.0 tools – wikis, blogs, multimedia, word processing and more. These features share data, which enables the Saywire platform to keep activities focused on learning and collaboration. The tools also allow teachers to provide personalized instruction. They make it easy to improve both student and teacher performance and productivity, according to educators using Saywire.

Participation within Saywire is determined by each school and is not available to the general public. Each user is represented by their first and last names, which enforces accountability. This strict membership coupled with a permission-based approach to each feature keeps the platform safe and secure.

Kari Stubbs, Ed.D., an education technology specialist, has compared many social networks and stand-alone Web 2.0 tools for their use in education. The right combination for schools, she says, is: Web 2.0 tools in one place; flexible monitoring or controlling; and an environment that focuses student attention on participating in a community of purpose and practice.

"Many kids get confused logging into multiple separate sites for different tools and purposes," said Stubbs, who writes professional development curriculum for Web 2.0.

Participation, Peer-to-Peer and Differentiated Learning

In Saywire, students gather with teachers in communities that are created for classrooms, clubs, events, and other aspects of school life. Both teachers and students create and lead these communities. Discussions and work started in school can continue after school on Saywire and vice versa.

Carl Stamey, a Social Studies Teacher at the Scavo Alternative High School (Des Moines, IA), displays Saywire blogs on his smartboard.

"They read each other's blogs, wiki edits, and assignments, and then we all talk about them," said Stamey, who is also Scavo's Technology Director. "The students see each other's thought processes at work. It's deep learning going on inside of Saywire. There's nothing superficial about it."

Students aren't the only ones learning from peers. Gloria Tanner, an English teacher and drama director at Manchester-Essex, didn't use social networks before Saywire. She needed to see it being used to understand how to apply it herself. She turned to a colleague for help through Saywire's Activity Wire. It relays news of what colleagues and students are doing on the school's network and mirrors good learning and teaching behaviors.

"I watch how he handles his classroom (Saywire) pages, and how he gives kids links and also how he uses blogs," she said. "I pick up a lot this way."

Differentiated Learning and Going Green

A year ago, Eve Shonts was lucky if 25 hand-written assignments occupied the inbox on her desk. Scavo students are often not in school for a variety of reasons. Her Saywire dropbox recently contained 180 completed assignments. The dropbox has also made it easy for her to provide differentiated instruction. She delivers resources and activities based on learning needs to the dropboxes of students.

"The number of assignments in my dropbox is a milestone," Shonts said. "It has also made it easy to go green. My classes are nearly paperless now."



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Whiteboard 3.0: Transforming Teaching and Learning

PolyVision's revolutionary new ēno™ interactive whiteboard combines the simplicity and ease of a traditional whiteboard surface with interactive performance—equipping teachers and students for success.

Today's students are wired to learn. By the time they begin school, they are already astute users of technology, from channel surfing to websites to digital cameras, mp3 players and cell phones. Today's classrooms need to meet students where they are—as savvy, high-tech learners.

Studies consistently show that when teachers teach with interactive tools, today's wired students learn better. Their test scores improve. But many of today's teachers are most comfortable with traditional classroom tools, such as dry-erase markerboards. They are open to integrating new technology-based resources to improve student achievement, but cannot simply abandon familiar and successful teaching methods. Teachers need technology that's seamless and easy to use.

Enter ēno—the most innovative interactive whiteboard in education combines the simplicity and ease of a traditional ceramic-steel surface with interactive performance – all without cords, cables or costly installation. A wireless, classroom-friendly stylus and a simple projector allow teachers to transition from ink to internet, from markers to multimedia, without missing a beat.

Better teaching

Ypsilanti Public School District (YPS) experienced first hand how integrating ēno provides a better teaching and learning experience. YPS is a dynamic learning community, educating over 4,000 students in Ypsilanti, Michigan. The district provides a rigorous curriculum and student achievement is at the core of every program.

Teachers using ēno at YPS were most impressed that ēno allowed them to write on the board with dry erase markers, said Gretchen Reist, the district's technology director. "It sounds like such a simple thing, but it's really huge from a classroom management standpoint – you need to write," she said. "A couple of the teachers that have used other manufacturers' boards have a fear that the kids won't be able to write on it with a marker, so in a school environment, it's important."

Another advantage for Julia Bryant, a teacher at West Middle School in Ypsilanti, is the educational software included with ēno, which allows her to create line graphs and tables for her math classes. "The students have enjoyed seeing clear, colorful, polished graphs," she said. "In addition, if students are absent, Ms. Bryant can save or print her class notes from the board so they're ready for students the next day.

ēno is always ready for whatever instructional mode the teacher wants to use, and never has to be plugged in. Teachers are always equipped. The whiteboard surface never fails.

Better learning

Today's students learn more successfully with interactive content designed to spark interest, engage attention and foster learning. ēno is the first three-in-one interactive whiteboard solution giving teachers a flexible, versatile tool that keeps pace with the demands of today's students. It delivers true interactive performance, engaging today's students with high-tech multimedia, multisensory, multidimensional lessons.

ēno can grow with students. As new educational software, games and tools evolve, ēno will evolve too. Students will never be stuck with outdated information and resources. Years from now, ēno software and tech tools will change; however, with a lifetime warranty on the surface, ēno will still be in the classroom, improving student learning for the next generation.

Lean and green

School budgets can now go farther due to ēno's lower total cost of ownership. First, there's only one board to buy for each classroom. Second, no cords or cables mean no costly installation labor for power and data outlets. Third, ēno runs on an open platform that works with existing software and operating systems, so schools' previous investments in programs and teacher training still pay off. ēno's lifetime warranty on the surface eliminates the need to replace worn out boards, saving money long-term for districts, as well.

"In addition to the warranty, I think the technology – the fact that it can be a whiteboard or an interactive board is pretty exciting from the budgeting standpoint because we don't have an infinite amount of money," Ms. Reist said. "To have one product that provides our teachers both benefits is positive."

Perhaps just as important, is the fact that ēno helps support a green classroom and preserves the Earth. ēno is the only environmentally-certified writing surface in the world with Cradle-to-CradleSM Silver certification. Made from all recyclable materials, ēno is certified to improve indoor air quality. "Being green in the school environment is important," Ms. Reist adds. "You want to teach the kids to be responsible, so it's a good idea that we model that behavior."

The foreseeable long-term impacts of ēno are good: "We are hoping that by incorporating interactive technology, we engage our students," Ms. Reist said. "The overall goal is to improve student achievement, so that's going to be the test when everything is in place – what we can do for our student achievement."

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one whiteboard...



...infinite possibilities

1

traditional dry-erase

Write on ēno all day long. Erase it with ease (and you can't damage the surface).



2

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Give students manipulatives for time-tested problem-solving. It's OK—ēno is tougher than magnets (and kids).



3

interactive performance

Add a stylus, computer and projector. Fire up your favorite software or browser. And ēno is instantly interactive (shazam).



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Got leaner budgets? Get three boards for the price of ēno... and save hundreds more with super-simple installation. Need cleaner classrooms? Experience ēno interactivity *without* cords or cables. Want a greener world? Learn more about the only environmentally certified writing surface on the planet. ēno.



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Making the Grade with mimio

Daniel Lynch is a Special Education teacher at the Lake Braddock Secondary School in Burke, VA. He teaches three Self-Contained Math 8 classes as well as two Team Taught Math 8 classes. Admittedly not a technophile, Dan has found that interactive teaching with mimio interactive white boards has been re-motivating and that the technological aspects of using mimio are easily mastered. As he says “Unlike some technology tools, using mimio never keeps me from paying attention to my students. In fact, mimio advances their learning, and that’s what teaching is all about – learning.”

Goals and Challenges

Daniel’s overarching goal is always to provide a successful learning environment for special education students. This is particularly difficult in his classroom since many students have poor attention spans and poor auditory processing skills, but their learning disabilities take many forms. In addition, augmenting the learning experience for students with disabilities can be difficult: too much stimulation and the students’ inability to focus may be heightened; too little involvement and interactivity leaves the student where he has so often been – left out. Nonetheless, Daniel must find ways to facilitate learning for his students and meet the demands of 18 benchmark standards tests over three quarters of the year, which, as he says “...is a lot in a short amount of time.”

Meeting the Challenge

As many teachers do, Daniel has built his mimio arsenal over a period of time and is constantly building on past successes. Starting with a mostly visual support approach, he has added more interactive lessons, multi-media tools and various forms of repetition and review elements that are not only instructional but engaging for his students.

The trick is to use mimio to introduce concepts, explain the salient points and then repeatedly review the material in interesting yet non-confusing ways. Since repetition is critical to his students’ ability to retain material, Daniel often uses the Transparency feature to add an image as a watermark for a slide. This keeps the students focused on what the topic is all about in a fun way. For example, Dan added an image of Mr. Burns of **The Simpsons** on a slide about finding the *mean* and added a visual of water being poured in a glass to show what *volume* is. He also finds using the reveal tool to be particularly helpful since it can be used to uncover content gradually and reward the student for progressing from one step to the next.

Daniel uses notebook pages to create custom lessons and



to edit and build on successful lessons from year to year. Mimio allows him to import files and to draw, write, type, add visuals and color his own materials as he needs them. In one simple yet effective example, he relates that simply changing the color of a rectangle in an illustration can sometimes stimulate a student to recognize a past learning experience and apply it to a current lesson. And being able to do that virtually instantly makes mimio that much more valuable to him and his students.

Outcome

Today, Daniel is happy to report that his 8th grade students have a 95% pass rate for their benchmark standards tests. That’s a result that he attributes directly to using mimio in his classroom, or as he says “It would be almost impossible without mimio. As an example, Stem and Leaf/Box and Whiskers diagrams have been particularly difficult for my kids and to a person they have not understood either of them. However, since I have taught it with mimio, they understand both completely and all students in my self-contained classes have received 100% in all tests and quizzes. They ‘came to life’ and this part of the curriculum is no longer the dread it once was, for both student and teacher. On the contrary, it has opened a window to success for other graphs and statistics topics.”

But even more important to Daniel is the effect of mimio on his students’ ability to succeed. To quote one student who suddenly “got it” during a lesson using mimio, “I can do this!” That’s a comment Daniel is hearing more and more often these days.



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How does the reading performance of Pearson's My Sidewalks treatment students compare to control students?

Study findings suggest that the gains experienced by *My Sidewalks* students, overall, were comparable to those experienced by students in other reading intervention programs.

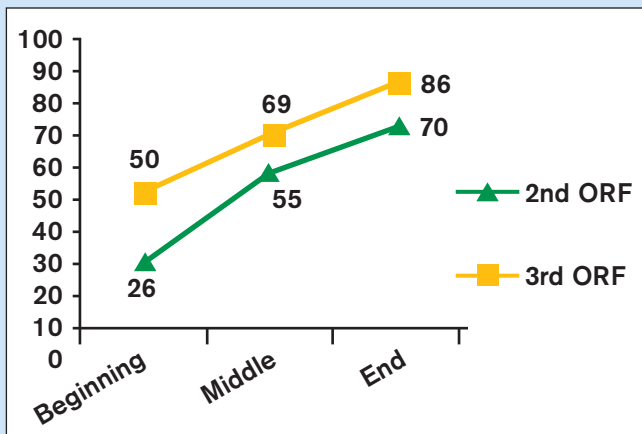
In the second grade, students performed comparably, overall, with no significant differences.

However, treatment students demonstrated greater gains in word reading with almost 2 percentile points, word meaning with 1 percentile point, passage comprehension with 5 percentile points, and listening comprehension with 6 percentile points. Control students had greater, yet non-significant, gains in sentence comprehension with 8 percentile points.

In the third grade, *My Sidewalks* students demonstrated greater gains in word reading with 6 percentile points, passage comprehension with 5 percentile points, and listening comprehension with 11 percentile points, whereas the groups showed no differences in sentence comprehension and control students exhibited greater gains in vocabulary with 1 percentile point. None of the differences between treatment and control students was statistically significant.

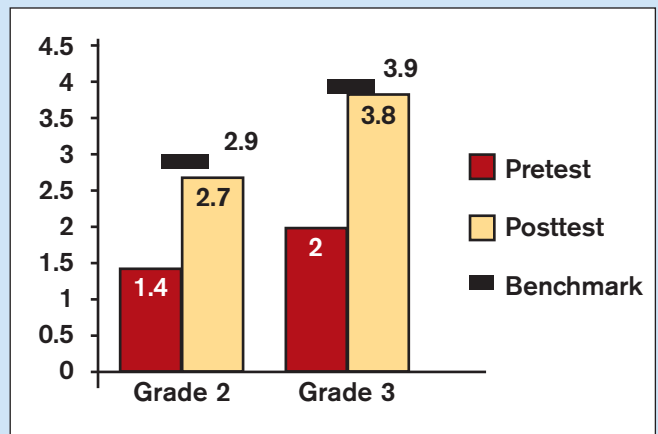
(*My Sidewalks Study Final Report, Prepared by Magnolia Consulting (2008), 35, 40, 49*)

Figure A: Treatment Group—
DIBELS Oral Reading Fluency



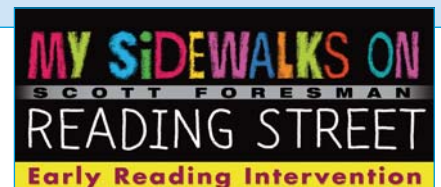
"Students who participated in the *My Sidewalks* program, demonstrated significant learning gains during the study period. Students' fluency gains in the second and third grades were significant by mid-year, and by the end of the year, the gains were large and reflected a combined effect size of 2.38." (citation, p. ii)

Figure B: Treatment Group –
Grade pretest/posttest grade equivalent scores



Second-grade students who participated in the *My Sidewalks* Program "improved in reading by 1.3 grade levels on average during the school year, and third-grade students improved by 1.8 grade levels on average during the school year on the GRADE assessment... (citation, p. 39)"

<http://tinyurl.com/MySidewalks>



EduPlatform: A Tool for the Job of Teaching

Introducing EduPlatform

Veteran English teacher Angela McIntyre readily admits she “does not love a computer.” Steve Gurganus, contracted by N-RM Schools for ECHS technical support, explains Mrs. McIntyre’s concerns, “The faculty was frustrated by their yearlong struggle with client/server classroom management software.

The experience described by Mrs. McIntyre, who teaches at Early College High, a One-to-One Laptop Initiative school in Rocky Mount, North Carolina was shared by other members of the faculty. Last fall ECHS implemented EduPlatform on its wireless network. Based on previous experiences she understandably viewed EduPlatform with keen skepticism and apprehension. However, Mrs. McIntyre left a one-day seminar comfortable with the software.

EduPlatform contains Lesson Builder, which supports easy planning of lessons that engage students by integrating Internet, student software, and digital resources; and Classroom Manager, which connects student computers peer-to-peer with teacher computers.

Steve Gurganus added, “After the seminar, teachers could monitor their students and send them original lessons”. Mrs. McIntyre said, “For a year, we coped with very user-unfriendly software. After one day, I can use EduPlatform.”

Integrating Digital Resources

Through Lesson Builder, Steven McCracken’s students experience United States history virtually. In his lesson on the Industrial Revolution, students “traveled virtually to New York City to investigate the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire. My kids viewed actual pictures and news articles of the fire. They just gasped out loud at the horrific deaths of those young women. Students then reinterpreted the history as editorials, obituaries, and diaries for a class newspaper.”

Mr. McCracken values Lesson Builder’s easy and private differentiation, “I differentiated a lesson on analyzing editorial cartoons for persuasive techniques and symbolism. I taught collaborative groups the same skills but differentiated the difficulty and number of cartoons analyzed. All students created an original cartoon, but gifted students drew opposing views of one issue.”

In Alison Baker’s Biology course, students use no textbook and yet make excellent End-of-Course test scores. Tech-savvy Mrs. Baker is adapting her challenging, student-centered curriculum into Lesson Builder.

“Lesson Builder is revolutionary for organizing and delivering my digital lessons,” Mrs. Baker says, “For my week-long Darwinian evolution project, I sent a PowerPoint on evolution, six Internet sites, and directions and a rubric for a comprehensive obituary of Darwin that students design in Publisher.”



Classroom Management

In Ann Malia’s English II class, students work daily on research essays. “They log-in immediately; then I send them Internet and word processing privileges. With Classroom Manager, I monitor supervised access to the resources on the Internet and our school-system network.”

Mrs. Malia uses the chat feature to individualize instruction, explaining, “While I’m monitoring, I’m also checking their progress. If a student is struggling, I “chat” her a private suggestion – I can give one-on-one writing instruction to five students in 15 minutes. Incredible.”

Classroom Manager keeps George Bischoff’s science students from distractions. “During the first weeks of EduPlatform,” he recalls, “I used PrintScreen to get snapshots of the few students who used Internet privileges to open web-based email. That off-task behavior ceased – students respect the technology safety parameters.”

The Teachers and the Tool: Success

The ECHS faculty grins broadly when asked about their overall EduPlatform experience. From around their common worktable, teachers toss comments. “User-friendly at last!” English teacher Kristyn O’Malley says gratefully.

“EduPlatform’s a great tool,” asserts Mr. McCracken, “It keeps my students from taking wrong turns on the Information Superhighway.”

Mr. Gurganus stresses the excellent software support, “EduPlatform’s tech support is phenomenal! I get answers to my questions every time I call. They have followed up question to make sure the problem is resolved. They really set the bar high for other software vendors!”

Six months later, Mrs. McIntyre declares, “I use EduPlatform all day, every day, every class period. My students do not use their computers without signing in to EduPlatform. I especially like Lesson Builder. I use it for writing, literature, and grammar lessons. It’s a wonderful product.”

866.314.0110 • www.eduplatform.net

Virtual office hours boost student, faculty interaction

The era of brief, face-to-face meetings between college students and their professors is coming to an end, higher-education officials say. Instead, colleges and universities are embracing a new forum for student-teacher conferences—virtual office hours, which extend class discussions into cyberspace.

Rather than forcing students to adjust their schedules to meet with professors during the relatively small window of opportunity afforded by weekly office hours, virtual meetings allow for much greater flexibility—which, in turn, means more students can benefit.

Virtual meetings are gaining popularity in higher education for a number of reasons, officials said. Off-campus students can have their questions answered without having to drive to campus, meeting times are more flexible, and professors can sit down with many students simultaneously, instead of penciling in students for 15 minutes of individual help before the next appointment begins.

“[Students] can be sitting at home in their pajamas and get an answer they need without having to travel to our building,” said Robert Evans, director of information technology at Purdue University, where educators have conducted online office hours since fall 2007, when the school began using the Purdue Adobe Acrobat Connect system.

Some virtual office-hours platforms allow students to see and hear their professors expound on issues they touched on in their latest lecture. Evans said Purdue instructors receive written questions in the online forum, then answer through a camera and microphone attached to their computer.

“Since most people have eyes and ears, it makes sense that seeing and hearing are important ways for people to process a certain depth or quality of information,” he said, adding that students who need additional help after the online session are encouraged to call the professor.

Bonnie Willy, an assistant professor in the IT department at Ivy Tech Community College in Indiana, said her school’s online office-hour program has bolstered the frequency and length of teacher-student conversations over the last two years. Willy said she still requires freshmen to meet with her face to face for long-term course scheduling, but during the semester, Q&A sessions attract dozens of students to office hours via the web.

When students gather online, she said, peers bring their various approaches to problem-solving to the forum, and they sometimes answer student questions before the professor responds.

But I can always take them through click by click wherever they’re stuck,” said Willy, whose college uses Wimba’s Pronto program to host virtual office hours. “Sometimes, students help each other through chat rooms ... and they’re able to solve these problems without me clicking at all.”

Virtual meetings were more popular than ever when gas prices topped \$4 earlier this year, Willy said. With gas dipping to near \$2 a gallon, the prospect of a 30-mile round trip



for a short meeting with a professor is not quite as daunting—but most students still prefer computer-based meetings, she said.

Findings published in the 2007 Community College Survey of Student Engagement showed students were either unwilling or unable to meet with professors after class time. The study showed that only 15 percent of college students discussed lessons from class readings or lectures “often or very often” outside the classroom.

Forty-seven percent of students said they “never” met with college faculty outside the lecture hall, according to the report. Only 8 percent of students surveyed said they met with instructors “often or very often” after class.

Higher-education officials said online office hours could help change that. With students accustomed to communicating with friends and family via online chat and web-based messaging, professors are more likely to draw students to office hours if those sessions are hosted online, advocates of the practice say.

Willy said internet platforms where students and professors can meet has created a more close-knit campus atmosphere, even for online students who rarely, if ever, come to one of the more than 20 Ivy Tech campuses.

“I think it develops camaraderie between students and faculty,” she said. “It’s nice to know you’re not the only one hammering something out [online] at 3 a.m. on a Saturday.”

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Tuesday, February 17, 2009

Breaking News | Most Popular | Funding News | Technologies

Education snags \$100B in stimulus package
3 hours and 8 minutes ago
The final \$787 billion stimulus bill that President Obama is expected to sign today contains \$100 billion for education, including \$650 million for the federal Enhancing Education Through Technology (EETT) program. Key words: ed-tech funding, federal ed-tech funding, economic stimulus package, education funding, EETT [READ MORE](#)

This Week's Top Stories for Educators
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Editorial: Morning in America
8 hours and 8 minutes ago Primary Topic Channel: Funding
Default Lines for eSchool News, print edition, March 1, 2009--After a year-long slumber, it's time to stretch, yawn, and notice a rise day dawning all around us. In the dim morning light, it appears we've been transported to a place not quite like anywhere we've visited before.

Internships help prepare future online teachers
Feb 16, 2009 Primary Topic Channel: Distance Learning
As virtual schooling continues to surge in popularity, there is a growing need for new K-12 teachers who understand how to teach in an online environment successfully. To help meet this need, the Florida Virtual School (FLVS) is teaming up with area colleges to pair teachers-in-training with its online instructors in a first-of-its-kind internship program. Key words: Florida Virtual School, online teaching, University of Central Florida

Big district dumps grade levels -- for starters
Feb 13, 2009 Primary Topic Channel: Instruction
School districts across the United States are trying to improve student performance. But few have taken as radical an approach as Adams 50 in Colorado. Key words: Adams 50, student performance, gaming and education, k-12 instruction, 21st century school

New site aims to market free online lectures
Feb 13, 2009 Primary Topic Channel: Open Courseware
A for-profit web site bases its business model on mining the internet for and then posting publicly available lectures from prestigious universities--and officials from at least one campus are reviewing the arrangement and reserving judgment. Key words: creative commons, yale university, educational technology, online lecture, MIT, stanford, open courseware

Stimulus deal addresses school modernization
Feb 12, 2009 Primary Topic Channel: Funding
Senate and House negotiators agreed Feb. 11 on a compromise, \$789 billion economic stimulus bill that includes some funding for school modernization, a priority item for President Obama and House Democrats. Exactly how much funding schools and colleges might get to renovate their buildings and make

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Stimulus to kick start cash-strapped higher ed
3 hours and 40 minutes ago Primary Topic Channel: Federal Policy
Higher education officials are awaiting an injection of \$32 billion in federal money after Congress passed the economic stimulus bill last week, aiming to jumpstart a slumbering economy in part by making college more affordable and funding campus projects that have run out of state funds in recent months. Key words: stimulus package, texas a&m, ACUTA, education funding.

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New 'sensory tech' could help teach piano
Feb 13, 2009 Primary Topic Channel: Music
Talk about a helping hand: Researchers at Georgia Tech's Center for Music Technology are trying to reinvent how students learn to play the piano by developing a special glove that vibrates to cue a budding musician which finger needs to strike a key at a given moment. Key words: Georgia Tech, music technology, vibrating glove, music education

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Community involvement in education is a no-brainer; research overwhelmingly suggests the profound impact that families and the community have on student safety and success. And, thanks to dramatic improvements in internet-based communications in recent years, establishing an effective school and community communication system is now easier than ever.

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Ocean explorer brings undersea science to life
Mon, Feb 09, 2009 Primary Topic Channel: TCEA
Famed ocean explorer Robert Ballard says he's just a few months from the culmination of a 25-year dream--and he'll be taking students along with him virtually as he achieves it. Key concepts: Robert Ballard, Internet2, TCEA, oceanography, the JASON Project | [Read More](#)

On Darwin's 200th, a theory still in controversy
Mon, Feb 09, 2009 Primary Topic Channel: Science
It's well known that Charles Darwin's groundbreaking theory of evolution made many people furious because it seemed to contradict the Biblical view of creation. But few know that it also created problems for Darwin at home with his deeply religious wife, Emma. Key concepts: Charles Darwin, theory of evolution, On the Origin of Species, Ruth Padell | [Read More](#)

Web 2.0: What does the future hold for schools?
Fri, Feb 06, 2009 Primary Topic Channel: TCEA
In Web 2.0 technologies, schools finally have the optimum tools for learning, said speakers at the 29th annual Texas Computer Education Association (TCEA) conference in Austin Feb. 5--but educators must learn to change their approach to instruction to take full advantage of these tools. | [Read More](#)

Free lessons offer cyber-bullying prevention
Fri, Feb 06, 2009 Primary Topic Channel: Safety & Security
As cyber bullying becomes more prevalent among students, educators are looking for help in teaching their students about appropriate online behavior. To meet this need, New Jersey-based CyberSmart Education has released a free

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