Welcome

Welcome to the second edition of NCREL’s Educational Technology News, a biannual newsletter published by the Center for Technology at NCREL. As one of ten regional educational laboratories funded by the U.S. Department of Education, NCREL is a leading research laboratory, helping hundreds of schools integrate technology effectively since the mid-1990s.

This issue highlights the outcomes of our second annual National Educational Technology Conference (NETC) held on June 14, 2002, in Lisle, Illinois. You will also learn about interesting discussions at the NCREL Blue Ribbon Panel on Educational Technology and at the Symposium on the No Child Left Behind Act, both held on June 13. Look for content-related updates to our NETC Web site, which will feature summary content taken from all three of these events.

Thank you for your continued interest in our work. NCREL invites you to learn more about the Center for Technology by visiting our home page (http://www.ncrel.org/tech).

National Educational Technology Conference

Over 150 policymakers, researchers, and educators from 19 states attended our second annual National Educational Technology Conference, which tackled a timely topic: “The Key Opportunities and Challenges of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act for Educational Technology in the Nation’s Public Schools.” The central aim of the event was to bring meaning to the application of this legislation and help define tools for its successful application.

The conference opened with a keynote speech from Dr. Chris Dede, Chair of the Learning and Teaching Area in the Graduate School of Education at Harvard University. Dr. Dede addressed some of the challenges educators may face in attempting to accomplish substantial improvements in student outcomes while working to satisfy the objectives of NCLB. He also discussed the role that newly developed learning technologies will play in educational improvement, illustrating his points through the use of practical examples from virtual learning spaces he has recently created. Additionally, he provided several conditions for success in technological innovation that may help educators meet the objectives of NCLB more successfully.

Following Dr. Dede’s speech, attendees were invited to participate in two mini-panel sessions with members of the Symposium and Blue Ribbon panels. These panels focused on the application and implementation of technology into the assessment and accountability
aspects of the NCLB legislation. Each was followed by lively question-and-answer discussions that allowed participants to interact with the panelists. Topics of discussion included the impact of online learning for students and teachers, the role of information systems in accountability, the role of technology in transforming education, and the impact of NCLB on technology use in schools and districts.

Dr. Gilbert Valdez, deputy director of NCREL, presented a luncheon address entitled “Does Technology Work?” Dr. Valdez summarized research conducted on the impact of technology in schools over the past 15 years. He highlighted the improvements that technology implementation efforts have made in learning outcomes and discussed areas that will need to be investigated further in the future. Dr. Valdez also pointed out continuing need for schools, districts, and states to pursue the investigation of technology’s impact on student achievement and to invest in continued efforts to implement technology into educational environments.

During the afternoon session, participants formed work groups and discussed specific solutions for dealing with the challenging aspects of blending the NCLB legislation and technology implementation efforts at the state, district, and school levels. Through these work groups, participants were able to share their own experiences with one another and work “hands on” with the NCLB regulations. The central themes and ideas discussed by the groups were then presented in a panel discussion that closed the day’s events.

All in all, the conference offered participants a vehicle for exploring the new legislation and for discussing practical ways to implement the legislation via the use of technology in their daily work. We were able to provide participants with an environment that helped facilitate this discussion, and we hope to present policymakers, researchers, and practitioners with additional opportunities like this in the future.

Blue Ribbon Panel on Educational Technology

For the second year in a row, NCREL gathered some of the finest thinkers from education, business, and government and asked them to spend a day discussing one of the most pressing questions facing education today: How will education be affected by the No Child Left Behind Act?

This year’s Blue Ribbon Panel comprised the following members: Tim Best, Ohio Board of Regents; Milton Chen, George Lucas Education Foundation; Marla Davenport, TIES Minnesota; Chris Dede, Graduate School of Education at Harvard University; Kathleen Fulton, Reinventing Schools for the 21st Century; Katie Harper-Wright, St. Louis Argus; Wayne Hodgkins, Learnativity Inc.; Larry Lipsitz, Educational Technology Publications; Neah Lohr, Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction; Javed Mostafa, Indiana University; Pam Pfizenmaier, Iowa Public Television; Charles Reigluth, Indiana University; Margaret Reil, Pepperdine University; Ray Rose, Concord Virtual High School; Mark Schlager, SRI; and Jim Schnitz, IBM. These sixteen extraordinary people brainstormed and discussed—sometimes with admirable passion—an impressive array of opinions. It was this diversity of perspective that strengthened the experience of the participants and the resulting ideas.

As discussions about NCLB and its implications developed, the panel marveled at the “maturational” (according to one panelist) of the education field regarding educational technologies. Because of the financial structure of the new act, technology planning is no longer about “getting money for boxes and wires.” It is about molding technology and its strengths into areas that can be used to actively promote education, like reading, teacher training, and 21st century skills.

In the first half of the day, the panelists brainstormed key critical issues in education—issues that are of the utmost importance for NCREL to address. They eventually boiled down hours of active thought and dialogue into three core issues: We must build powerful learning environments; we must advocate systemic change in education; and we must focus on teacher quality.

One belief undergirding these challenges is that NCLB be viewed as an opportunity, not a barrier. So, Blue Ribbon panelists asked themselves key questions: What would support these issues? How can technology help? The afternoon sessions brought eye-opening results.

The panelists realized that technology seamlessly embedded into the curriculum is the way to support and integrate effective learning with effective technologies. And the three most important ways that technology can support learning are through the customization of instruction; anytime, anywhere access to learning opportunities; and systemic change at the educator level through training, administrative support, and materials.

NCREL is continuing the work of this year’s Blue Ribbon Panel through asynchronous online discussion forums and activity development. The work of the panel will continue for at least three more years and will intel-
ligently, thoughtfully, and dramati-
cally influence our understanding of
complex education issues—and
education opportunities.  

Preconference
Symposium on No Child Left Behind

The 2002 NETC Preconference
Symposium consisted of two sessions
dealing with issues pertinent to the
NCLB legislation: assessment/
accountability (morning session) and
student instruction (afternoon
session). The symposium was
attended by about 80 invited partici-
pants, including policymakers, practi-
tioners, and researchers from 19
states. It was facilitated by Arie van
der Ploeg, a senior research associate
from NCREL. The symposium
featured the following panel of
specialists: Vic Bunderson, Brigham
Young University; Barbara Clements,
Evaluation Software Publishing, Inc;
Dennis Doyle, SchoolNet; Derek
Mitchell, Oakland Unified School
District; Stephan Sanders, Wisconsin
Department of Public Instruction;
and Jay Bryant, Educational Testing
Service (ETS).

Each session was divided into two
parts. The first part of the morning
session dealt with how schools can use
data-driven decision making and their
current data-collection tools to provide
more support for assessment and
accountability. Dr. Derek Mitchell
presented a practical case study of how
the Oakland Unified School District
has taken a data-driven approach to
determine the areas in which it meets
and exceeds NCLB requirements and
the areas in which it still faces
challenges. Also, Denis Doyle demon-
strated how SchoolNet can be used as
a practical data-collection and analysis
tool to help educators better under-
stand their data and use it to assess
how the NCLB legislation will affect
their schools.

Part Two of the morning session was
an investigation into technology tools
and data-driven assessment methods
that will help educators analyze and
collect data in the future. Dr. Vic
Bunderson framed this conversation
by presenting a brief history of
technology-based assessment
methods used by educators over the
past 20 years, and then by illus-
trating these methods through
eamples. At the end of the morning
session, participants joined the
conversation via a question-and-
answer session with the panelists.

The first part of the afternoon session
dealt with how technology can be used
to help educators make connections
between student instruction and
standards. Jay Bryant led a discussion
on computer-based testing and
assessment tools that can be used to
make this connection. Mr. Bryant
presented a look at several tools ETS
currently uses to approach this issue,
followed by an interesting discussion
with audience members about the pros
and cons of using this type of approach.

During the second part of the
afternoon session, Stephan Sanders
offered a different approach for
making these connections by demon-
strating how the Wisconsin
Department of Public Instruction has
dealt with this issue. Mr. Sanders
presented Wisconsin’s Standards of
the Heart, which foster creative
expression as an educational
outcome, and showed how they are
used in schools throughout
Wisconsin. The afternoon session also
concluded with an interesting
question-and-answer exchange.

At the end of the day, panelists and
participants agreed that a number of
interesting and exciting topics had
been explored during the course of
the symposium. Several said they felt
the sessions had helped them under-
stand how to better approach the
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Sneak Preview:
Content-Related
Updates Coming
Soon to the NETC
Web Site

We are pleased to announce the
release of new content on our NETC
Web site. It includes summaries of
the following: the 2002 Blue Ribbon
Panel, the 2002 No Child Left
Behind Symposium, the 2002
National Educational Technology
Conference, and a revised version of
Chris Dede’s keynote address. All
these documents will be available as
a series of HTML pages and as
downloadable PDF files later this
fall at the following URL:
http://www.ncrel.org/tech/netc/
2002/present.htm

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