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Open Source Applications in the K12 World

by Meghan McPhaul
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With more and more school districts turning to open source computer applications to meet at least some of their technology needs, technology coordinators looking to jump on the bandwagon may wonder what it takes to join the world of open source. The answer, according to open source guru David Trask, is – not much.

“It’s really quite simple,” Trask says of making the transition to open source. “There’s really not much difference at all [between open source and proprietary applications]. Installing an open source program is just like installing a Windows program. It’s a piece of cake. Sometimes it’s actually a lot simpler.”

Trask introduced open source, via Linux, to his Vassalboro, Maine, school district several years ago. He and other open source converts say the applications, which are generally free to users, translate to both considerable financial savings and increased access to technology for school districts.

“One of the great things that I love about open source is that many of the applications cross platforms,” he says. “It makes it very easy to standardize on a particular application regardless of what kind of computers you’re running.”

Trask says open source applications generally don’t require any special computer equipment or training. For the most part, SAU 61 Technology Director Joshua Olstad agrees with that conviction. “It depends on what you’re running,” Olstad says.

Transitioning to, say, Open Office, the open source equivalent of Microsoft Office, involves minimal change, according to Olstad. “You can run it on Windows, Linux, Mac OS,” he says. “As far as the learning curve to it, it has the same functionality minus one or two things... The functionality’s there, it just might be in different places.”

Changing servers over to open source, for example the Linux Terminal Server Project (LTSP), which is used in many school districts, can be more involved, says Olstad, who worked

in the Exeter district before coming to SAU 61 at the beginning of this school year. “There’s a little bit of a learning curve there. You’ve got to be willing to dive in and make some changes to configure files,” he says. “I dove right in. It was just kind of trial and error.”

One aspect of open source that can ease the transition is the community of users and advice available online and in other school districts.

“Usually when I have a problem I just throw it out to the [open source] community, and someone will come back with [an answer] fairly quickly,” Olstad says. “Other schools and other people have probably collaborated and built the pieces that you need. So you can borrow from other people,” he adds. “That makes a huge difference – talking with somebody who has already done it.”

While Olstad said making a change entirely to open source in his district “would take some work,” he is using open source applications for certain tasks, like trouble shooting the network to learn what is already available in the system. He said SAU 61 has several older computers, but even those could be used to access open source applications. “I can set those to boot off the network, and if I have the LTSP server running, it would just grab the operating system off the server and just boot that up,” he says. “That would be fairly quick and easy. I just have to make sure I have a server big enough to handle 100-plus clients.”

Probably the biggest challenge to making a more complete switch to open source would be getting other staff members on board. “I think that would be the hardest part for me, just because it’s going to be something different, and that generally scares people,” Olstad says. “It’s not going to say Microsoft. It’s not going to have things where they’re used to having things, although that can change. You can customize.”

James Tremblay, technology coordinator for the Newmarket School District, says people new to open source applications may become proficient with little specific training. “All levels of the staff and IT infrastructure team need exposure and training to the skills and tools needed to manage, install and use the

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Letter from the President

My New Thing—Digital Storytelling

Each time I think I'm done exploring new areas of technology, mostly because I haven't mastered what I just discovered, there is something else out there to capture my imagination and time. Last year I spent a considerable number of hours online exploring uses for a variety of Web2.0 tools like Writely (now Google Docs), Gizmo Project and Skype, cMaps, Imagination Cubed, and online sharing spaces like Worldbridges and "Personal Learning Space." A year later with a trail of online accounts I don't even remember I created, my time is spent exploring digital storytelling and understanding how it advances written, oral, art, and media literacies. In my search I came across Dr. Jason Ohler's website. His site is not one of the better-known digital storytelling sites. I found him unexpectedly by following links that lead to "the 4th R" in education. His contention that aRt must become the fourth "R" resonated with me as I'd been listening to Daniel Pink's pod cast *A Whole New Mind*, which contends that right-brain thinkers will rule the future. Between the two resources and the bestseller, *The World is Flat*, I can now say that promoting digital storytelling is not just a fad, but a must, if our students are to compete in the global economy of the 21st century.

Stories have been told since the beginning of time. These are how we pass down experiences and history. In the words of David Warlick, students today must be able to "express ideas compellingly – We will be writing for a long time to come. But if our ideas are to compete with the ideas of others, then we must be able to use images, animation, sound, music, and video along with our words in order to be heard." Jason Ohler states, "Because of the emergence of multimedia technology, the 3Rs are becoming the 4Rs: Reading, wRiting, aRithmetic, and aRt. Thanks to the struggle to use multimedia effectively, the language of art is taking center stage." According to Daniel Pink, businesses are seeking graduates who are able to think of and design products that will give them a competitive edge. They send promising employees to storytelling camps and hire consultants who will help them design and create a story that will resonant with consumers. To that end, businesses are hiring more MFA graduates than MBA's.

As I stated at the beginning, I spend considerable time online reading and subscribing to a variety of resources. I must have subscribed to Jason Ohler's newsletter, as one day I got an email from him notifying subscribers of his latest online posting. I replied asking for permission to use his materials. He responded in such a way that I asked if I could videoconference with him so my "tech mentors," who are making digital stories, could learn from an expert in the field. One thing led to another and we went from having an online conference to scheduling an actual visit to CACES on June 28th from 10am to 12noon. Reserve this date and register for his visit by downloading the form found at <http://www.caces.org/pd.html>.

In the meantime, explore Jason's website and become familiar with Daniel Pink. Pink's book, *A Whole New Mind*, supports and expands on Thomas Friedman's bestseller, *The World is Flat*. Both authors raise awareness of how technology is transforming how we live and work and why students of today must be educated using 21st century tools if they are to succeed in today's world.

References:

Jason Ohler: <http://www.jasonohler.com>

Daniel Pink: <http://www.danpink.com>

Thomas Friedman: <http://www.thomasfriedman.com/worldisflat.htm>

David Warlick: <http://www.edtechnot.com>

For Middle School teachers: Join a safe online community at <http://personallearningspace.com/login/index.php>

Join me on June 28th to learn more about my new thing—Digital Storytelling.

Kathy Malsbenden
NHSTE President

Outstanding Educators Receive Awards

by Andrea O'Neil
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The NHSTE Awards Committee selected two outstanding educators to receive the 2006 awards during the annual Christa McAuliffe Technology Conference. NHSTE's Technology-using Educator Award was named for Pat Keyes, who was the technology coordinator at Keene High School in the 1980s-90s and the 1991-92 president of NHSTE. The Technology Impact Award was named for Susan Janosz, the outstanding technology integrator in the Manchester Schools where she collaborated with teachers to enhance their teaching potential. Both women were active in numerous statewide technology initiatives and were a positive presence in everything they did. Both of these early technology pioneers lost their battles with cancer.



When David Remillard, Technology Education Teacher at Hampstead Middle School, was nominated for the 2006 NHSTE Pat Keyes Technology-using Educator Award, he was described as a "true educational technology innovator."

From spearheading "The Bells," Hampstead Middle School's FIRST Girls Robotic Team, to developing a visual literacy curriculum where students use computers, digital video cameras and audio equipment to create student-produced anti-drug commercials. David is, in the words of Patricia Grassbaugh, Principal of Hampstead Middle School, "a vital part of Hampstead's vibrant and ever-evolving Unified Arts program. Classroom teachers depend on David for his creativity and willingness to aid them in the comfortable implementation of technology in their everyday teaching."

His colleagues, students, administrators know him as an energizer, a mentor, an experimenter, a team player, and an entrepreneurial risk-taker. Judy Graham, the individual who nominated David for this award writes, "When the School Board was unable to fund a costly AutoCAD lab, David agreed to try a less expensive Linux version using QCAD at a savings of approximately \$25,000." Thanks to David instituting a program called "Tech Kids," students are eager to spend time in his classroom – even during their lunch periods – to take part in activities such as cleaning hardware, testing software, and experimenting with Lego Robotics.

David's commitment to education extends beyond the classroom. This is evident in the countless hours that he spends coaching the award winning Hampstead Middle School FIRST Lego League team for their annual competitions.

David is praised for the great skill he has in connecting his students to their real-life experiences. He guides his students into seeing the use of technology in every aspect of their lives, encourages students to dream and creatively experiment with those dreams. It is no wonder that NHSTE selected David Remillard for the 2006 Technology-using Educator of the Year Award. He is a role model to us all! Congratulations David!

Her colleagues describe Deborah Couture, the recipient of the NHSTE 2006 Susan Janosz Technology Impact Award, as the champion of technology in the SAU 29 schools.



From providing quality professional development opportunities to writing and managing grants, Phillip McCormack, SAU 29 Assistant Superintendent writes, "This dedicated educator has given so much to improve learning opportunities for staff and students in SAU 29 and surrounding regional districts." She is an outstanding leader with strong commitment and vision of excellence.

When Deborah Couture, Director of the Keene School District Center for Instructional Resources - Technology and Training, was nominated for this award, it was quite clear that this outstanding individual has impacted hundreds of individuals throughout her professional years of service for SAU 29. "For decades, Ms. Couture has supported the educators within the SAU in their search for better and more curriculum-related technology integration. She is a planner and collaborator who develops a goal, a clear plan, and recruit's a willing team that works together to achieve that goal," wrote Mr. McCormack. In 2005 Deborah was instrumental in sending personnel to the National School Boards Association (NSBA) Technology & Learning Conference to present innovations she helped to develop and champion. This is a great example of how Deborah supports a team approach to furthering technology and its proper usage.

One of Deborah's most outstanding accomplishments has been her involvement in the formation of the Southwestern Educational Support Center, one of New Hampshire's six educational support centers. Her vision and commitment to excellence has provided hundreds of training opportunities in the use and integration of technology to school district staff members as well as making a wealth of vital technology resources available for use at the Center. In the words of Michele Munson, SAU 29 Superintendent, "Ms. Couture is knowledgeable regarding the most up-to-date advances and her ideas demonstrate a powerful and compelling vision for the future."

The many colleagues who recommended her for this award stated that Deb has spent her career bringing the extraordinary vision for technology integration into reality

for the community of school districts that comprise SAU 29. Because of her determination no problem or task is ever too difficult, too costly, or too complicated for Deb to seek a solution. She has worked tirelessly to overcome the 'digital divide.'

NHSTE acknowledged Deborah Couture, not only for the influence she has had on education in SAU 29, but the impact she has had throughout the state as an educational leader in the area of technology. Congratulations Deborah!

was the following year that I got a bigger room with at least 25 computers. They each only had one floppy drive, BUT we acquired ONE Corvus hard disk drive that held the programs and was shared by all the computers. It was a whopping 80 MB!

(I also remember Cyndi Dunlap as my computer instructor, who always had great nails! That's a nice touch when you have to assist students at the keyboards. I'm sorry to say that I haven't ever been able to maintain nice nails. I hope no one remembers mine!!)

We've Come a Long Way

Ed Stokel, a former NHACES president, recognizes technology-using students for how far they've come since the early 1980's when he first introduced computers to his students in Portsmouth. He refers us to Jim Devine's article that appeared October 16th in the Manchester Union Leader titled "Pinkerton students honored for Web prowess." The article begins,

DERRY -- Although American students are under constant scrutiny for how they'll stack up against global competitors in future years, several Pinkerton Academy students have shown they can compete and cooperate in an international arena of students. Two Pinkerton Academy teams placed first and second in the most recent round of the Oracle Education Foundation's ThinkQuest competition. ...

You Can Make a Difference: Act Now! Advocate for Enhancing Education Through Technology (EET) Funding.

*by Kathleen McClaskey, NHSTE Advocacy Chair
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This year, NHSTE added an advocacy position to the Board and I was asked to become the first Advocacy Chair. I have been a member of NHSTE since 1985 and I am honored that I have this opportunity to spread the word about advocacy and to develop an advocacy plan for New Hampshire. As with anything else, advocacy is not done by one person. As a first step, I would like for you to understand how advocacy works in the world of educational technology and how you can make a difference.

NHSTE is an affiliate of ISTE (International Society for Technology in Education) who joined forces with CoSN (Consortium of School Networking) three years ago to develop ETAN (EdTech Advocacy Network). As noted from their website "ETAN provides a forum for educators and others to engage in the political process and project a unified voice in support of a common cause – improving teaching and learning through the systemic use of technology. ETAN's mission is to influence public policy-makers at the federal, state and local levels and to

Remember When

This column serves as an opportunity for teachers and technology coordinators to share stories and memories about using technology in schools. Most stories will be reflections about what it was like to bring the early computers into schools and others may be more recent anecdotes about using technology with students. Hopefully it will be a way for NHSTE members to appreciate what technology they have in schools today, and to laugh a little about funny things that have happened in the past 25 years. Anyone who wishes to contribute a story can send it to the current newsletter editor, Anne Knight (ahknight@comcast.net) for future publication.

A New Library Computer

*by Barbara Boucher
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I remember buying a Gateway computer for the Hollis-Brookline High School Library in about 1995. We had a lot of old Apples in the building and some generic machine for our circulation, but no one had seen many Gateways at that time. There was a constant stream of visitors to look at that computer. They didn't necessarily want to use it; they just wanted to look at it!

Computer Literacy 101

*by Dianne Grube
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I remember teaching my first computer literacy class in 1986. I had about 28 eighth graders in a small room with 12 Apple IIe computers. There were two (or three) students at each computer, and the setup, with all the extension cords, would surely fail any inspection by the fire department. Some of the computers had two floppy disk drives, which was great! Hopefully, many of you recall that personal computers didn't have hard drives, so the program had to be booted from a floppy disk, sometimes a pair of disks. When it was time to save the work, you had to leave the program disk in the drive until prompted for the data disk; then put that one in; then switch back to the program disk in order to continue working. Sometimes, depending on what you were saving, the disks had to be switched several times to complete the save! I called it the "disk dance." I think it

increase public investment in the competitiveness of America's classrooms and students." As Advocacy Chair, I will on occasion ask you to join me in advocating for funding and for policies that would support the common cause clearly stated above.

My first request is to have you contact our New Hampshire Senators and Representatives regarding the Enhancing Education Through Technology (EETT) funding for FY08. This funding is very important for all US schools but especially in New Hampshire where it is the only funding we receive for technology outside of E-Rate. After reading the message below from ETAN, take just a few minutes of your time to send a message to our New Hampshire Senators and Representatives.

The Administration recently released its proposed FY08 Budget which calls for the total elimination of critical education technology funding. Specifically, the Administration's Proposed FY08 Budget would zero out the Enhancing Education Through Technology (EETT) program. Combined, the proposed FY08 budget cuts education technology by \$290 million alone.

These proposed cuts come at the same time that the Administration and Congress are concerned that America's students lack sufficient academic background in math and science, imperiling their personal and the nation's competitiveness in the global economy. Denying education technology knowledge and tools to America's k12 students and teachers not only does not advance that agenda, but undermines it.

With the House and the Senate working on a budget resolution this spring, now is the time for members of Congress to hear from you that education technology funding must be restored. Now is the time to make your voice heard in support of the EETT program.

Go to the ETAN site www.edtechactionnetwork.org/index.html. Now to enter your zip code to send your letter to the House and Senate asking to save EETT and to fund it at \$700 million.

Every letter generated during this crucial time will make a difference. Even if you already took action a few months ago, please send another letter and spread the word to your friends, family and coworkers. Your voice matters! Tell Congress to KEEP AMERICA COMPETITIVE and save funding for EETT!

This national write-in effort made a difference in the FY07 funding where EETT was level funded after being zeroed out by the current administration. This year we want to get back to the full funding level that was originally proposed; \$700 million.

YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE! ACT NOW!

Open Source-continued from page1

new software," he says. "We really are just talking about a language transition, not anything huge like the difference between learning to drive a car and learning to pilot an intergalactical spacecraft."

Trask says the timing of introducing open source in a school district is critical. "It's not something you do right in the middle of the year. Generally people are much more open to change when they arrive in the fall. It should be something that you prepare people for. Don't make a big deal out of it," he says. "In this day and age, almost anybody should be able to sit down and figure it out pretty easily... There may be a few things that you have to spend a few minutes to figure out, but, for the most part, it's nothing new."

Trask, Olstad and others who have introduced open source applications in their districts laud the improved access to technology for faculty and students, who don't need to pay to have the same open source programs they use at school installed on home computers.

Perhaps the biggest selling point, however, is the cost savings tied to open source. "If a school district were to hand me a brand new elementary school, I could save them \$200 on each desktop and easily build a fully functional network at anywhere from one-half to at most two-thirds the cost of a traditional network," Tremblay says. And using refurbished IBM or Dell computers could lower costs even more without diminishing performance, says Tremblay, who buys mainly two-year-old refurbished PCs for his district.

With the rising costs of education, open source applications have become something of a financial boon for many districts. "I think with the way budgets are going, you've got to think differently. That's kind of what I'm up against. We have a lot of old computers... my costs right now are tied up in software," says Olstad. "Even if I just used one program like Open Office, it'd save a lot of money. If I went all Linux, that would save a lot of money, too. But that's a big step."

See list of open source resources and professional development sessions later in this issue of *Connections*.

Four Words for Implementation of Every ePortfolio

by Royce Roberson

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I must admit that I am not a wordsmith. Writing is not my greatest skill. I have a tendency to use ten words instead of three. I often think that if I truly wanted to be a more effective writer, I would become a more efficient writer with a larger vocabulary. Instead of writing the following: “Effective ePortfolio implementations should allow students to assess their current state of learning, the work that they have done to arrive at that state, and how that work can be juxtaposed within the context of their most immediate learning and what they anticipate learning next,” I could easily write: “Effective ePortfolio implementations encourage students to reflect on where they were, are, and are going in their learning.” I think this perceived weakness comes from my belief that I am a “less is more” type of teacher. Logically, if I teach from a “less is more” approach, then I should be able to write from the same approach. Or, maybe it is because I have chosen a life in academia where big words and long sentences get bonus points.

With ePortfolio implementations being uncharted territory for many schools, maybe it makes sense to be wordy when it comes to the initial discourse. Maybe a longer explanation is a better explanation. Maybe a more thorough explanation will help technology staff, administrators, and teachers better understand the intricacies of ePortfolios as a technology tool or assessment instrument. Once all ideas are vetted, the school could then opt for more concise verbiage to describe the planning and implementation.

Alas, the best of both worlds is ideal. Here are four words – with four wordy explanations – to help you plan your ePortfolio implementation.

Purposeful: If you have heard me speak on ePortfolios, you have heard me say “purpose is paramount; audience is tantamount.” In short, purpose and audience are distinctly related because specific audiences desire specific portfolios. For example, a potential employer is not the audience for a growth-oriented portfolio with dozens of revisions to a paper. Likewise, a teacher or advisor who wants to understand the growth or change a student has experienced is less likely to want to see a portfolio of solely best work. With all of this in mind, school committees making decisions about the ePortfolio need to specifically consider:

- What is the purpose of the portfolio? The most common core purposes are achievement, reflection (growth or change), or marketability.
- How narrow or broad will the scope of the ePortfolio be? Many NH schools may interpret the ePortfolio as

merely a way of documenting ICT skills; however, some schools are thinking more broadly about how the ePortfolio can be used to document achievement of school goals including ICT and other core curricula.

- Who is the audience? The natural answer to this question is teachers. Also consider advisors, counselors, parents, coaches, and mentors. If anyone could be invited to the child’s MySpace page, the same should be true for their ePortfolio.
- Will the audience be satisfied by the purpose? This is subtly connected to the design of the ePortfolio. The ePortfolio can be similar to a large essay because the reader of the essay is looking at not only the organization (design) of the essay but also the facts and opinions (content) used to support the thesis (purpose). A well organized essay is the first step to a convincing essay.

Coherent: When talking about curriculum, coherence is usually achieved through having a lucid and logical sequence with a grade level or subject, from one grade level or subject to the next, and across a whole academic program. The ePortfolio is no different. But what makes an ePortfolio coherent?

A coherent ePortfolio implementation should have:

- A sequence of artifacts that can be added to the ePortfolio based on the grade level, course, or desired competency. The artifacts based on grade level may answer the question: “What should every fifth grader be able to do (for example) scientifically?” The artifacts based on a course may answer the question: “What did the student learn or master through this learning experience?” The artifacts used for a portfolio demonstrating competency would answer the question: “What knowledge and skills has the student mastered?”
- Stay committed to a central purpose with minor variations based on age and specialization. Over the past year, since the realization of the ePortfolio and ICT requirements in NH, I have participated in literally hundreds of discussions at elementary, middle, and high schools (as well as colleges) where the discussion of purpose begins with great focus; then predictably erodes to a grocery list of all the things the ePortfolio could do. Academics? Yes. Advising? Sure. Growth? We could do that, too. Marketability? That’d be great. Admissions? That makes sense. The “Kitchen Sink” ePortfolio is not a coherent portfolio. Multiple purposes beget multiple designs; multiple designs deviate from the idea of a central purpose.

Thoughtful: In his definition of the teaching portfolio, Peter Seldin defines the teaching portfolio as, “a well rounded picture of one’s effectiveness” that is “not exhaustive,” exhibiting a “broad range of skills, abilities, attitudes, and values.” Carol Leibman, University of Iowa Professor and portfolio author, describes the portfolio as a limited selection taken from one’s body of work that supports a particular theme or message that transcends one’s goals, beliefs, and actions and behaviors. With those two perspectives in mind, I think it is safe to assume that an ePortfolio does not need to be a comprehensive museum of every piece of work a student has ever created. Put your fears aside. Hold those purchase orders for multiple Terabyte hard drive arrays to store the ePortfolio works. A thoughtful portfolio is not comprehensive. It answers a question. Ideally, that question relates to the purpose or the audience. Or, perhaps the thoughtfulness of the ePortfolio is revealed through the reflections within it.

Consider these questions:

- How is the ePortfolio thoughtful? Thoughtfulness could be achieved by the owner choosing artifacts based on a focused theme or message, which would ideally align with the purpose or appeal to the audience. Thoughtfulness could also be achieved through reflection.
- How does reflection relate to thoughtfulness within the context of the ePortfolio? Directing ePortfolio owners to reflect on particular (thoughtful) questions adds a dimension to the purpose of the portfolio. The audience can be exposed to the individual’s thought process while engaging in the work. For example, some simple questions for reflection may include: What were you thinking about while you were completing this work? What other systems or processes that you have learned about work like the system or process you used to complete this project? Where does this assignment fit in the greater context of your learning?

Sensible: My friend, colleague, and heroine-of-all-things-assessment, Katharine Cummings, often quips, “If the only tool in your toolbox is a hammer, then every problem becomes a nail.” My Cummingsesque hypothesis: If the ePortfolio becomes your school’s hammer, assessment in general will become the nail – and a bent nail at that. The sensible thing to do with ePortfolios is to adopt them as a part of the whole. Take the time to discuss the adoption rationale and process so that teachers, students, administrators, and parents can make sense of the ePortfolio and its role in the assessment process. Diluting a difficult conversation about what goes into the ePortfolio by defaulting to the “everything and anything can go in to it” approach only achieves two things: (1) it frustrates teachers who are trying to be mindful of the described purpose of the ePortfolio, and (2) it makes the ePortfolio appear to be this be-all-and-do-all “uber”assessment. It’s not. It has a

specific purpose, similar to a wrench, hammer, ruler, or screwdriver in the toolbox. The school must decide how to make sense of the ePortfolio within the overall context of assessment at the school.

Consider the following questions:

- How is the ePortfolio used for assessment? The ePortfolio should provide a venue for students to add a sequence of work that is assessed in the ePortfolio using checklists, rubrics, or other instruments. This implies that there are tasks completed for the ePortfolio in order to achieve the purpose of it. For example, if the purpose of the ePortfolio was growth-oriented, then multiple drafts of a paper could be added to the ePortfolio with a reflection on the writing process. The reviewer would grade the quality of the writing (using a valid and reliable rubric) in the portfolio itself, thus documenting the feedback in the ePortfolio.
- How is the portfolio used as a collection of assessments? If students are not performing tasks specifically for the ePortfolio, then the natural alternative is to use the ePortfolio as a venue to collect and organize work that has been already assessed or graded outside of the ePortfolio. This implies that the reviewer is not reassessing the quality of work, which was already assessed outside of the ePortfolio, and within the context of the normal classroom routine. Thus, since the work has already been graded, something else needs to be assessed — possibly reflection; possibly the placement of the artifact against specific standards; possibly the technological consideration and skills used in creating the artifact. One would assume the purpose influences this.
- Within the context of your school, where does the ePortfolio fit in the general scheme of assessment? With today’s climate of excessive testing, it is no wonder assessment is getting a bad name in the trenches of the classroom. Standardized testing has become the hammer; students and teachers are the nail. Test, test, test; pound, pound, pound. Maybe if we swing hard enough and straight enough, we will sink every nail perfectly and identically on one swing every time. Instead, the sensible approach would be to look at the existing regulations on assessment and craft assessment plans that are balanced with various types of assessments: formative and summative, formal and informal, high stakes and low stakes, behavioral and cognitive, etc. The ePortfolio can, as mentioned, be one of the various assessments in that plan.

If more technology staff, administrators, and teachers grasp the meaning of the four words — purposeful, coherent, thoughtful, sensible — and apply them to guide the implementation of every ePortfolio, maybe everyone will better understand the intricacies of ePortfolios as a technology tool or assessment instrument.

Technology Integration Across the Curriculum Series

by Kita Maciolek
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The final workshop of the technology integration three-session series focused on adaptive and assistive technology. With over 90 participants, the day was a great success. The day opened with a demonstration by Cyndy Currier from SERESC who showed Clicker 5[®], designed to help struggling writers, ClozePro[®], WordBar[®] and Paint[®]. Clicker 5 is a very popular program, but the “Ahs” came with the new Paint program that works as a stand-alone program or integrates right into Clicker 5. Although demonstration copies for Paint are not yet available, they can be obtained soon from Crick Software and requesting one. Most of Crick’s software is switch-accessible, and they also have an Assistive Technology Bundle that includes software and a switch. All products can be ordered through SERESC (www.seresc.net), which has reduced pricing for schools in New Hampshire.

After the opening demonstrations, workshop participants had the opportunity to view nine different vendor presentations throughout the day using a rotation schedule allowing everyone to gather as much information as possible. The day concluded with drawings for a wonderful assortment of prizes, including a copy of Kurzweill 300 and an AlphaSmart Neo, donated by the very generous vendors listed below.

- DynaVox Technologies
- HumanWare
- Assistive Technology, Inc.
- ATECH Services
- AlphaSmart
- WizCom Technologies
- Kurzweill
- RFB & D
- Adaptive Technology
- Crick Software

The day’s participants commented that they were pleased with the presentations, the opportunities to learn more about a variety of products and the information that they will be able to share with colleagues to help their students. Future sessions, like those in the past year, will be open to all teachers seeking to learn more about integrating technology into their classrooms.

The NHSTE Technology Teachers/Integration SIG committee has begun investigating exciting opportunities for next year. Contact Kita Maciolek if you wish to make suggestions or join the committee.

Successful ICT #2 Workshop

by Royce Robertson
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Approximately twenty-three professionals attended the second of three NHSTE Technology Coordinators SIG meetings held on Friday, March 16, in Concord. The

topic of the meeting was technical decisions related to ePortfolios. After overcoming some technical difficulties, the group was briefed on two specific open source tools: Moofolio and Sakai-OSP. First, Steve Kossakoski from Seacoast Professional Development Center (SPDC) in Exeter described the Moofolio Moodle Portfolio extension, and then answered questions about its design and installation. Second, Nathan Wood, Database Administrator for RINET and the RIEPS Project, described the technical underpinnings of the Sakai-OSP-based Rhode Island Electronic Portfolio System, including databases, backups, and maintenance routines. Also, during the meeting, participants discussed: local server settings and configurations, concepts related to LDAP, and an open source evaluation rubric found in "Open Source for the Enterprise" by Wood and Guiliani.

Discussions about the technical aspects of open source have continued on the NHSTE Tech Coordinators listserv. The next meeting of the Tech Coordinators is in Concord on May 18 and will focus on administrative considerations of ePortfolios, including policies and other issues.

Tech Edge ~ Wikis

by Cyndi Dunlap
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*The purpose of Tech Edge is to provide an overview of an emerging technology with respect to education (one which might not be so new in the business/social sectors, but new in schools and the classroom). Some topics might be new to classroom teachers and not tech coordinators, and others might be relatively new to all. What’s new will vary over time. To maintain this new feature column in Connections, the editor will rely on ideas and input from the technology coordinators and teachers for topics to cover. The topic covered in this issue is **wikis**. Potential topics to be covered in future issues of Connections include: podcasts and social network sites. If you have a request or wish to make a comment, send an email to Cyndi Dunlap, who prepares this column.*

The March 26, 2007 issue of the *Boston Globe* (page D3) featured the headline, “Wikipedia competitor seeks to cut out errors.” The article notes the enormous success of Wikipedia — over 1.7 million articles posted in English alone in just six years — but also points out the downside — “errors, juvenile vandalism, and arcane writing” at times. Larry Sanger (a co-founder of Wikipedia ~ although even this is disputed) is launching a Wikipedia alternative, called Citizendium. He seeks to capture the “best of breed” and eliminate some of the existing challenges that face Wikipedia. The race is now on. As educators, we had best learn how to harness this new resource; it is not going away. If you are not thinking about integrating wikis into your instructional projects and activities, now is the time!

What is a wiki?

In layman's terms, a wiki is a user-friendly, web-based environment for posting, organizing, sharing, editing, and linking information that is accessible to a group. The source for information posted and edited is tracked by the software environment, so if an initial posting is revised, the name and date of the revision are available for all with access to the wiki. Wikis can be posted publicly for all to see, such as in Wikipedia, or can be password protected in a wiki site for limiting the intended audience.

Technical components required to support a wiki:

Similar to an Internet Service Provider (ISP), a wiki site needs to be hosted, since most are moderated and managed to some degree. Many ISPs offer this service for free to subscribers who ask. The hosting can be done locally or remotely through a subscription service. There are some websites that offer free wiki services, others charge a service fee. The following list is a small sample of the wiki host services and not an endorsement of any specific service.

Wikispaces: www.wikispaces.com/
(free for public, fee-based for private)

SiteGround: www.siteground.com/wiki-hosting.htm
(\$4.95/month)

eTouch SamePage:
www.etch.net/products/collaboration/ (free trial)

For more detailed information about wiki providers and a comparison of them, see the following sites:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Web_hosting_service
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comparison_of_wiki_farms

Popular wiki resources:

The following list of some of the most popular wiki resources identifies the categories of information in the different ones.

Wikipedia ~ probably the largest and most famous online encyclopedia: www.wikipedia.org

Wiktionary ~ a wiki dictionary:
http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Wiktionary:Main_Page

Wikibooks ~ free text books and manuals:
http://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Main_Page

Wikiversity ~ free learning materials and activities:
http://en.wikiversity.org/wiki/Wikiversity:Main_Page

Wikinews ~ free-content news:
http://en.wikinews.org/wiki/Main_Page

Wikiquote ~ collection of quotations:
http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Main_Page

Examples of wiki usage in New Hampshire schools:

When the technology coordinators were asked recently, via the NHSTE Tech Coordinators listserv, how wikis are used in their schools, they responded promptly with some examples. Sincere thanks to Russ Harland at the Lin-Wood

Public Schools and Maureen Sheehan and Amy MacDonald from Sanborn Regional High School (SAU #17) for replying promptly and sharing their wiki experiences!

Plymouth Regional High School Library:

Pam Harland (wife of Russ) has created a wiki as the a go-to resource for integration of research projects across the curriculum via their high school library. Having a centralized, easily-updated information source for all library and research initiatives has proved invaluable. Moving forward in 2007-08, students will be given the ability to make limited changes; currently, librarians and faculty are the sole editors of content. The web address for this resource is: <http://prhslibrary.pbwiki.com/>. Plymouth is using PBwiki (<http://pbwiki.com/about.html>) to host their service. A quick review of the PBwiki site reveals that they cater to Education, Business, and Individuals.

Sanborn Regional High School:

Maureen Sheehan shared that one of the ninth grade teachers at Sanborn Regional High School (SAU #17), Amy MacDonald, uses the wiki module in Moodle extensively in her Citizens in a Global Society course. When asked to explain how she uses it, Amy replied with the following scenario.

"In our interdisciplinary classroom, a new wiki dedicated to class notes is posted each week on our Moodle site. Students voluntarily access the wiki and add their own class notes and information from the week. Other students add and edit accordingly. The structure of the wiki is perfect for allowing students who are absent the opportunity to see exactly what they missed on any given day. It has also been a huge help for me to be able to look back and see what we covered - or didn't - and how well students grasped the info. We now have over 25 weekly wikis! Students really appreciate these running logs of class notes when midterms rolled around!"

We are also beginning to use wikis more creatively. At the 2005 MoodleMoot, I "borrowed" the idea of creating a class poem using wiki. Every student enters one line, based on the theme given. One or two students usually take it upon themselves to be the designated editors, and they check back throughout the course of the assignment to tweak the poem and make certain it "works."

We started the year not knowing what a wiki was, and now it is an indispensable part of our class structure."

Additional examples and ideas about ways to use a wiki in your school and district are available at: <http://www.wikispaces.com/examples>.

Telecommunication Tidbits

by Brewster Bartlett
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The following websites are a collection of interesting places to visit and apply to various parts of the school curricula. Have fun exploring them!

Periodic Table of Elements

<http://www.popsci.com/popsci/periodictable/>

This cool site presents the Periodic Table in a unique way. Clicking on an element's square brings up a brief summary and a link to lots more information, including some great photos.

Do Bugs Need Drugs?

<http://www.dobugsneeddrugs.org/index.html>

This community education project addresses the problem of antibiotic resistance. Antibiotic resistance has resulted from the overuse of antibiotics, mostly for respiratory tract infections. Guidelines for managing respiratory tract infections, including colds, flu, sore throat, cough, ear aches, sinus infections, chest colds (bronchitis) and pneumonia can be found in the Parent/Teacher sections of this site.

Tox Mystery

<http://toxmystery.nlm.nih.gov/>

This site offers an interesting way to introduce students to environmental household hazards. "Toxie," the talking-cat, leads the way on a tour of its house of seven rooms and garage to discover the various health hazards (paint-thinner, lead-based paint) hidden in every-day objects.

Roz's Math-a-Rama

<http://www.eduplace.com/kids/hmm>

The site, part of Houghton Mifflin's "Education Place," provides mathematics drill and instruction for Grades K-6 in a "Carnival" format, with lots of "games" designed to teach/reinforce/test various skills.

Figure This!

<http://www.figurethis.org/index.html>

This website demonstrates challenging middle school mathematics and emphasizes the importance of high-quality math education for all students. Funding for Figure This! was provided by the National Science Foundation (NSF) and the U.S. Department of Education.

Welcome Educators

<http://www.rif.org/art/timeline.msp>

This website is designed for K-8 teachers, librarians, and other professionals to help get children to become lifelong readers. - The site has lots of downloadable PDF lesson plans and hands on activities for all!

Dutch Dollhouse

<http://www.nga.gov/kids/zone/zone.htm>

This site requires Shockwave on your computer and challenges your students to be creative and explore Dutch paintings of the 17th and 18th century in this art activity. Students can also try out the collage machine, Pixelface, 3-d Twirler and other interactive art adventures.

The Street

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio3/world/onyourstreet/thestreet/>

The Street has five houses, each belonging to a family from a different country: Brazil, India, Ireland, Nigeria, and Turkey. Clicking on a house brings up a youth-oriented room with

clickable links to "Instruments," "Food," "Religion," and "Listen" which allows users to hear the music of that particular country.

Website Tips

<http://websitetips.com/>

WebsiteTips.com is an educational website design and development resource especially for website owners, designers, professionals, teachers and educators, students and anyone wanting to learn about websites

Open Source Resources

The Seacoast Professional Development Center (SPDC) in Exeter offers extensive resources that support open source. Its K12 Open Source website states simply that "open source software is computer software whose source code is available under a copyright license that permits users to study, change, and improve the software, and to freely distribute it to potential users. If you've never heard of open source software, you're not alone. Commercial, or proprietary, software has dominated the computer industry for many years. Most school personnel have understandably assumed that commercial software was the only option available."

A link from the SPDC to the k12opensource.org website leads to the following list of software. To learn more about each piece of software, one can follow a "view more" link on the website.

Title & Link to Website	Functionality
7-Zip	File archiver with high compression ratio
Audacity	Audio recorder and editor
AVG	Anti-virus protection tool
Blender	3D modeling, animation, rendering, playback
ClamWin	Anti-virus protection tool for Windows
Cmap Tools	Concept Mapping
Firefox	Web browser
FireFTP	FTP file transfer - add-on to FireFox
Freemind	Concept Mapping
Gimp	Graphics editing
Gizmo	Internet phone
Inkscape	Vector graphics editor
Irfanview	Graphic viewer, editor and converted - Windows only
K12LTSP Server	Linux server operating system
Moodle	Online Course Management System
NeoOffice	Office Suite designed to have Mac-like interface
Nvu	Web page editor
Open Office	Office Suite
PDFCreator	Create PDF files from any other software package
SeaMonkey	Web browser, email and newsgroup client, IRC chat and web page editor
SME Server	Linux server operating system
Skype	Internet phone
TuxPaint	Drawing program

Open Source Professional Development Options

Numerous professional sessions for New Hampshire teachers and administrators are offered throughout the spring and summer. At the SPDC, these sessions, many for credit, enable one to learn a great deal about open source for the K12 world. See www.eventkeeper.com/code/events.cfm?curOrg=SPDC.

David Trask and Matt Quist are organizing a FOSSSED conference at University of New Hampshire in Durham, NH, from July 8-11, 2007. FOSSSED stands for Free Open Source Software in Education. Both David and Matt are excited about the possibilities for education with this conference, and hope that this will encourage more participation from classrooms teachers in addition to the tech staff. They'll be dealing with open source software for all platforms as well as the Linux operating system. Go to <http://www.fossed.com> to more information and to register.

Feedback About Open Source K12 Applications

Two items related to open source applications appeared recently on the NHSTE membership listserv.

* Charlotte Greenhalgh (c.greenhalgh@sau47.k12.nh.us) from Jaffrey Rindge Cooperative School District responded to an inquiry about an open source version of Inspiration© saying that KDissert is a Linux-based version of Inspiration and Freemind is Windows-based.

* James Tremblay (JT@newmarket.k12.nh.us) from the Newmarket School District posted that he is creating a list of currently popular software for educating students that could be replaced with open source applications. Because he is searching for ways to make his Linux system in Newmarket more usable in the classroom, he started a project with Novell's Opensuse group to collect titles of popular software such as Reader Rabbit. Novell's education marketing team has agreed to work with the producers of these applications to make them portable to Linux systems or identify replacement applications. You may add to Tremblay's list by going to http://en.opensuse.org/Wishlist_Education. Ask your colleagues to do the same.



NECC 2007 ~ Learning and Leading with Technology ~ June 24-27

Join ISTE members and more than 18,000 education professionals — teachers, technology coordinators, library media specialists, teacher educators, administrators, policy makers, industry representatives, and students from all over the world—who'll gather in Atlanta, Georgia, June 24–27, 2007, for the 28th annual National Educational Computing Conference (NECC).

NHSTE has once again signed a co-marketing agreement with ISTE that allows us to reserve a “NHSTE block” of rooms until early April and guarantees NHSTE members the “early-bird” registration fee regardless of when you register for the conference. Remember, these are two separate tasks: 1) reserve your rooms and 2) register for the conference.

NHSTE Housing Block

Until April 20th, NHSTE has a block of rooms reserved at the Hampton Inn & Suites Downtown and the Atlanta Marriott Downtown, both just a few blocks from the convention center. If you want to reserve one of the NHSTE block rooms, download the Registration Form for NHSTE Housing Block and MAIL or FAX to the NECC Housing Bureau. You cannot access this special block of NHSTE rooms through the online housing registration process. You are responsible for booking your own hotel even if you are staying in the NHSTE block. After April 20th, all rooms will go back into the general housing pool!

Conference Registration Information

You must register for the general conference in addition to making your hotel arrangements. NHSTE members will receive the "early bird" registration rates through April 27, 2007. This is a change from previous years! The early bird rates are \$225 for general public or \$155 for ISTE members. Just remember to identify that you are a member of an ISTE Affiliate. To ensure this, be sure to click on NHSTE in the pull-down list of affiliate organizations. You can register online at the NECC 2007 website (www.iste.org/necc).

ISTE Membership/NECC Registration Special

Extend this “Ed Tech” event into year-round professional development - and save on conference fees - by becoming a new or renewing ISTE member! One-year ISTE All-Inclusive Membership is \$195: Standard Membership is \$79. Add membership to your NECC registration or join online via ISTE at www.iste.org/join.

NHSTE Professional Development Winds Down for 2006/2007

It is hard to believe that April and spring 2007 are upon us. The 2006-2007 school year will soon be coming to a close. To date, NHSTE has conducted the NHSTE Annual Meeting, three Technology Teacher Integration workshops (science, social studies, and adaptive/assistive technologies), two of three Technology Coordinators ICT workshops, and two Linux workshops. These sessions have collectively served over 400 New Hampshire educators!

Although the year is winding down, two professional development events are ahead. The third Technology Coordinators ICT workshop will be held Friday, May 18th and an Alan November Learning Communities Summer Institute will be held July 24-25.

Registration and complete information on these two events is available on the NHSTE website at <http://www.nhste.org>.

NHSTE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CALENDAR 2007 SCHOOL YEAR

ICT #3 ~ Long Term Functional, Legal, & Technical Strategies

Date & Time: Friday, May 18, 2007 ~
9 am to 12 pm

Location: Plymouth State University Graduate Site
Concord, 2 Pillsbury Street, Concord, NH
Registration Deadline: Thursday, May 3, 2007

Alan November Learning Communities Summer Institute

Date & Time: Tuesday and Wednesday,
July 24 & 25, 2007 ~ 8 am to 4 pm

Location:
SERESC, 29 Commerce Drive, Bedford, NH
Registration Deadline: Monday, June 25, 2007

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Information and descriptions of events
can be found at: www.nhste.org

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