CECA Newsletter

Connecticut Educators Computer Association Vol. XVII No. 1

Message From the President

Welcome to "Imagine the Possibilities!" CECA 2002. This is always a very exciting day for me. I look forward to seeing many enthusiastic educators from around the state sharing innovative and powerful ways they are integrating technology across their curricula. We are pleased to announce that CECA 2002 will be an all-digital conference. Every conference attendee will receive their own Palm handheld, loaded with the conference program and a variety of educational software. Again this year SNET/SBC is acknowledging your importance by serving as CECA 2002 sponsor.

Technology is a powerful tool for transforming teaching and learning. It should be part of every school's plan to move all students toward high academic standards, Your knowledge and ability to use these tools makes you a key person in your school to foster innovative uses of technology in the classroom. CECA is eager to find ways to extend today's sharing throughout the school year. Our newsletter and website (www.ceca-ct.org) will help us carry this mission forward.

I hope you will find exciting ideas at CECA 2002 to spark your "Imagination. You will learn from the experiences of your peers who share their classrooms with you. Examine new products and applications form our vendors. Exchange ideas with other educators who, like you, are working to make technology a vital part of their classes.

We welcome back again this year Theodore S. Sergi, Commissioner of Education, State Department of Education, who will address us briefly on the status of technology in the schools in Connecticut.

I want to extend a special welcome to Elliot Soloway, educator, technology pioneer, author, and software developer. Learning and teaching have been driving forces in Elliot's research, teaching and service activities for over 30 years. He will be available for informal conservation at various times during the day.

I want to specially thank the Conference Chairs – Ted Roth, David Devon and Debbie Miller. They and all the other dedicated members of the CECA Board of Directors have volunteered countless hours to make this conference a success for you. Take time to meet them and share your thoughts for making CECA the best technology conference for you.

One of the greatest benefits of CECA is providing educational professionals with an annual forum to learn, exchange, and survey the leaps and bounds being made in the field of education technology. Through hands-on workshops,"short" sessions, discussions with other educators and the largest vendor exhibition of its kind, participants have the unique opportunity to discover and share what they need to developthe appropriate use of technology in their classrooms or districts. Join us on October 28th for "Imagine the Possibilites."

Howard D. Gunther
President
Connecticut Educators Computer Association
Technology Education Specialist,
Area Cooperative Educational Services (ACES)

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Palm-Sized Devices Are the Personal Computers of Choice for K-12

Elliot Soloway

University of Michigan
Ann Arbor, Michigan

For the past 25 years, technology-focused educators have claimed that computational technologies would change K-12 education. However, at least in the U.S., to a first-order approximation, the impact of computers and the Internet on K12 has been zero. By and large what goes on the in the classroom has been indifferent to the introduction of computers and Internet. For example, using our Snapshot Survey, approximately 45% of 5,000 teachers in the U.S. surveyed report that they use a computer with their students less than 15 minutes a week! 65% say they use an Internet-connected computer with their students for less than 15 minutes a week

Given the above, why should anyone believe that palm-sized computers would have an impact on K12? What is different about palm-sized computers that will lead to these devices having an impact on K-12 education? Here are four suggestions:

(1) given that a palm-sized computer costs approximately what a pair of tennis shoes costs, it is totally imaginable that each and every child could have their own palm-sized computer to use whenever they wish,

(2) children using palm-sized computers integrate comfortably into the ebb and flow of activities in a K-12 classroom,

(3) today's children see a palm-sized device more as a media gadget than as a computer and as such find palm-sized devices fun,

(4) teachers are seeing palm-sized computers as accessible and usable in the K-12 classrooms.

Thus, while there is prima facie evidence that this time technology will significantly impact K12, it's still too early to really call.

My team has utilized palm-sized devices with over 2,000 students in K-12 classrooms throughout the U.S. In my keynote I hope to provide a vision of how you might well use palm-sized computers in your classroom not someday, but Monday.

That Thing Above Your Head is a Light Bulb

Bard Williams Ed.D.

Do you remember the first time you saw a PrintShop(r) banner a fellow teacher had printed for the classroom wall? Or when you heard about this new thing called a "gradebook program" that let you zip through a screen-full of student names and grades and edit, average, save, and print with a simple click of a mouse? How about the first trade show where you heard your students could learn some geography by chasing "Carmen SanDiego?" I'm talking about moments like these when brain circuits fired to tell you that this computer thing you saw was a sensible, stunningly interesting new idea that could make your life easier and potentially transform your classroom into a more effective learning environment.

Well, don't look now, but there's another light bulb above your head -this time it's a flashing light that bears the message "it's little, and it's more than a PDA"! I'm talking about handheld computers - like the ones you buy from Palm. Way more than just a calendar or address book, they are incredibly powerful tools for your classroom because you can load programs on them—just like you do on your desktop computer. You can plug in science-worthy probes and sensors and go mobile. They are efficient because students can "beam" lessons magically across a classroom and a charge easily lasts more than a day. Best of all, handheld computers may be the most logical and exciting idea for ensuring everyone in your school has equal access to technology. Because you're already (probably) a computer user, adding handhelds to your repertoire is far easier than you think, too. Like any classroom tool, this one can't solve all your problems, but handheld computers are certainly worth a look by every teacher and administrator.

If you're ready to grab a glimpse at the potential of handheld computers in your classroom or district — or just want some teacher-tested ideas for using handhelds with your students-check out a new book called "Palm(tm) Handheld Computers—A Complete Resource for Classroom Teachers" by Michael Curtis, Bard Williams, Cathleen Norris, David O'Leary, and Elliot Soloway (Published October, 2002 by ISTE (www.iste.org). It will be available at the conference from the folks at CECA. "Imagine the Possibilities!"

CECA and Palm Offering Early Bird Training

Planning to attend CECA 2002? Looking forward to receiving your hand held, but not quite sure how to use it? The CECA conference committee, anticipating a need for additional training, has worked with Palm to offer our "Early Bird" training sessions. From 7:00 - 8 AM, before the conference officially starts, a group of Palm trainers will be on hand to provide user friendly training for novice Palm users.In addition other training sessions will be offered throughout the day, but attendance at these will be limited to ticket holders which can be picked up at the registration desk. So, if you want to ensure being able to attend a Palm training session, plan to arrive early. It is very .important to be there for the 6:30 registration as the training starts at precisely 7AM..late comers will be a real disruption.

And in this Corner!

Ken Royal

Mac vs. PC; the Technological Equivalent of a Food Fight!

I remember watching two TV commentators in a boxing ring debate about which computing platform was the best and why. It was supposed to be a gimmick to make it more interesting for viewers, but these two were actually flailing away at each other with boxing gloves! No, their names weren't Jobs and Gates.
So, when I was asked my computer platform preference for our new 5/6 school, I thought it might be a good plan to go where I ask all my tough computing questions, C.E.C.A., The Computer Educators of Connecticut Association! Certainly I'd get calm responses from this crew, or so I thought. This article would not have been written without their help and expertise. C.E.C.A. is a wealth of computer knowledge and sharing.

Before beginning, I need to say that there isn't a fairer reporter to present both points of view in this debate. I watch the Mets, the Yankees, and even the Red Sox, too, just because I like baseball. And as for computers, I use both Mac and PC, because I like technology. I will make an effort to sit the fence without falling off onto either side.

The Platform Contenders; the Tale of the Tape

Macs (Apple)

Macs come equipped, so all you have to do is install the OS and you're off to the races.
Apple has given us cutting edge technology, like FireWire, IMovie, ITunes, IPhoto and IDVD.
Its new OS-X is UNIX based so it can play well on networks running PCs, Macs, or both.
You can be a beginner or an expert and use a Mac. Someone once said to me that "Macs have a soul. If they crash, you can shut one down, boot it back up, and see a smiling face." Most Mac users get a kick out of a one button mouse and a lot of short cut keys.

PCs (Win)

PCs claim the largest chunk of the marketplace; and are the choice of most corporations. They also claim to have better pricing, for both computers and parts. The reason is that more companies are producing PCs and their parts. Software is a big plus for PC users because there is more of it to choose from, and the software seems to be written, developed and published quicker. And Pc users are lost without that great two button mouse.

Something to Think About

There is no denying that Apple has developed some incredibly advanced technology. Even PC users will agree to that. Macs FireWire is an example that has spread to PCs as an option and recently a standard. And some of the newest PC Laptops seem clones of their Mac counterparts.
One thing that most notice is that the Macs come with almost everything you need right from the start, and PCs seem to need additional option and software purchases to do the same thing. Claiming that one platform out-prices the other doesn't work when you add in all the extras. One thing that seems to be true about Macs is that they can take a beating and come back for more. "They just don't die."

Touch Gloves and Come Out Swinging! And Remember to Protect Yourself…

Hurray for Macs!

Debbie Miller, Canton's Technology Specialist

Debbie works in a Mac district, except for some office PCs. "We love our Macs and have found the total cost of ownership to be
fantastic. We are still running 6 year old computers in the classrooms.
They run everything but the Internet. Debbie shares that great new free operating system multimedia software like iMovie and iPhoto easy to use and make work with digital cameras and editing possible for all teachers with very little training. "We have not found any software that we want to use that does not come for the Mac platform."

Debbie uses Mac Manager for a security interface that is free, powerful and
flexible. She says that it allows her teachers to use the computer in the finder, giving them a truer computing experience. Her Macs are secure computer they are virtually can't be hacked.

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Debbie has also been using OS-X and saw Jaguar at the recent MacWorld. OS-X and X-Serve were previewed, and according to Debbie it was awesome. She believes that "most schools will stay at OS-9 for this year and go to OS-X and X-Serve next summer."
Apple is hoping that many businesses and corporations will make the move too.

Anne Coffey, Technology Integration Coordinator Durham/Middlefield

Anne's District 13 is Mac based in grades K-6 and dual platform at the 7-12 levels.
Over a two-year period her district has gone wireless. They began the process in their new Grade 5-6 school with six iBooks and one Airport base station. It was such a success that the staff wanted more. This year 20 laptops more laptops were added. Anne says that the teachers love being able to bring ten or so laptops to their classrooms without having to move kids to a lab, instead "the lab comes to them!" The district installed the base stations throughout the building, giving seamless connectivity everywhere. Now some of the other district schools have also adopted the wireless technology.

Anne explains that using Macs has made integration and up-keep easier. "The staff is comfortable with the Mac platform; we are able to do a lot of the troubleshooting ourselves due to the ease with which the user can work with Macs. Macs are less susceptible to viruses because most viruses are written for PCs 'cause PCs are more popular. We have taken a hard line on what can be installed on the machines, using Foolproof as our desktop security program. The kids having PCs at home and Macs at school has not been a huge problem because a lot of what they are doing involves using software that is platform-independent, such as Word, PowerPoint, and Excel along with Internet. We have been making efforts at teaching both the staff and students how to work at school, take the disk home, work there and then return. I won't say it has been easy, but I, for one, refuse to believe that we are doing our kids a favor by turning totally to PC. Macs are terrific machines; well-designed; super operating systems. I don't want kids to think that the "real" world uses PCs 'cause it just isn't so - many, many jobs in design (ad agencies, film, ——) Hey! I just realized that I am getting carried away!"

David Evon, District Technology Specialist

David has created some bullet points in favor of the Mac Platform. It makes his statement best in its original format.

- *"Macs and Windows based machines work together on the same network without any additional software with a Mac or Windows file server.*
- *Macs require a great deal less technical support.*
- *Macs have a smaller desktop footprint.*
- *Macs network licensing features unlimited seating and are much less expensive.*
- *Macs are often less expensive than Windows machines of similar performance and quality.*
- *All files from either platform can be opened in the same program on either platform.*
- *Mac hardware is consistent in the same model (video cards etc), full restore of OS can be done without loading additional drivers plus all programs are left in place and remain functional."*

Any doubt which corner David is in? He also offers some interesting links to support his thoughts.
http://maccentral.macworld.com/news/0205/24.school.php
http://maccentral.macworld.com/news/0104/30.schools.shtml
http://maccentral.macworld.com/news/0111/08.educator.php
http://homepage.mac.com/mac_vs_pc/Intro.html

Ted Roth, Technology Coordinator Region 12

"I'm all for Mac," especially at the elementary levels.
The best reason to move to the PC world is that the world of work is dominated by PCs, at least until one gets into publishing, broadcasting, and video."

Ted's Region #12 runs a cross-platform network has used Appleshare server (, which will be replaced by Windows NT this year due to the hiring of a new network manager,) on which all students and teachers can save files regardless of platform. Data Viz translation software allows disks & CDs formatted in either platform to load, and common applications are translated seamlessly from and to Mac version or PC. Ted has listed his reasons to go Mac instead of PC based on his own experience with both platforms.

1. Chief among these was the rash of viruses. Blocking viruses in a Win environment, as you probably is a full time job. Few people are writing Mac viruses, and there are fewer holes for them to get into.

2. We are running some ancient machines, many purchased in 1994. In fact, through last year, half our Mac fleet was pre-PowerPC including many 68030 Macs. This was not our plan, nor would I advise it, but it was not our choice. The fact is it could be done. PCs purchased at the same time were long in the dustbin. If past performance is any indications, you will be able to use Macs much longer than comparable PCs.

3. Repair time and down time are key factors in any school. With both platforms on hand, we have a great deal of experience with repairs on both platforms, and it is clear that Macs are far more trouble-free, and when problems occur, they are much more quickly set right.

4. An important bonus on the Mac platform is Network Manager. It allows you to manage remote computers in

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hundreds of different ways, from locating key software and copying it from machine to machine, to locking or controlling remote desktops, to cloning whole hard drives and lots more.

Ted further recommends AppleWorks because of all the options offered, and its teaching ease. He believes there is no contest.

Ted also may have nailed the bottom line when he says, "*These issues are still not fully understood by members of our community, and this is liable to be the biggest issue in any choice of platform.*"

Geoff Smith, Teacher

Geoff doesn't accept the argument that "It's a PC world!" He believes that the choice of an educational computer environment should be based entirely on which is based for your specific needs. "We should use what is best for the classroom. I have never heard of anyone who really has trouble switching from one machine to the other when that becomes necessary."
Geoff feels that creating a network with Macs is much simpler to do than with PCs. He also recommends OS-X because it's virtually crash proof, and anyone working with kids in a classroom can appreciate that. He believes, "The argument just comes down to ease of use."

Let's Hear It For The PCs!

To lead off this side of the debate, I've asked, Kathy Schrock, for some comments.
She is now leading the technological charge for the Nauset Public Schools on Cape Cod. She is also the Internet Guru for Discovery Schools Schrock's Guide for Educators – http://www.schooldiscovery.com/schrockguide/.

Kathy Schrock, Nauset Public Schools Administrator for Technology

"When I came in, I decreed no more Macs. We have 7 schools, five of which were all Mac when I came in. I am not, nor ever have been a Mac user. We are moving them all to PC's. Kathy feels that programs like AtEase "chews up so much bandwidth, stuff can hardly flow through the walls!" Kathy's is using NT4 and Windows2000 servers, but since the Macs she still has are old (5260's and 580's mostly) she's made no attempt to put them on the network.

"We are deploying Terminal Services for the old PC's, which makes them into screaming fast dumb terminals for about $40 each! There is a Mac client for that. Once we get it in place, my thought is to run the client on the old Macs, too, and then they can run the applications quickly and easily off the server, same as the old Pentium 75's."

Kathy disliked "Mac Stuff" being so proprietary. "I hate proprietary! I can get help, parts, and pieces everywhere. With almost 1500 machines and no real tech support, I need to be able to do stuff consistently and easily."

Marc Lefkovich, Region 15 Technology Coordinator

Mark believes that Mac has not been a very smart company and sometimes arrogant, especially with its loyal customers. Five years ago Marc and his district were heavily into using Macs and would have stayed that way but…
The district couldn't buy machines or parts form anyone but Mac. There were few stores, the prices were high, and the support was not good either. Marc's district turned to Windows and PCs.

Marc believes that Win PCs for good companies are "highly reliable, come with great warranties and can be easily and cheaply fixed." He continues that it's easy to find inexpensive parts and almost any software needed for any task. Marc also feels that the Win OS has gotten a lot more attractive looking. "What's great is that if I have trouble dealing with one computer maker, I can simply choose another."

"After making the switch and slowly continuing the switch at almost all our other schools, I don't see us ever going back unless Apple comes out with something great and particularly useless to our educational needs."

Josh Smith, Educational Technology Specialist

Josh also felt the need to defend the PC angle. According to Josh, working both platforms on the same network has become a lot easier with new Mac developments, including OS-9 and OS-X, which he believes is even better.
Josh still misses floppy drives as an internal Mac hardware, and I'm sure any "sneaker-drive" teacher would agree.

"PCs are cheaper to upgrade and you have a much better variety of options for customizing individual machines for teachers with different needs. Microsoft's XP is very good at detecting and adding peripheral devices, and plug and play is starting to mean just that."

Josh agrees with most, that Macs are still better for video editing; however he believes that other graphic work can be done on either platform if the machine has enough RAM.
He also likes XP over OS-X for home networking and sharing.

And on a final note, Josh brings up the reason PC people become "fumble fingers" when switching back and forth from PC to Mac. "Two button mouse…need I say more…?"

Final Comments

Principal Bill Bircher of the Newtown Public Schools, and a true Mac Wizard says, "What can you do on a PC that I can't do on a Mac? The only reason for anyone to choose a particular platform over another is because you like it. There is no other reason!"

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Nina Hansen is an educational technology integration specialist, as well as long time C.E.C.A. leader, personally prefers Mac's. "However, the fact that most students have PCs at home is a major point. Nina believes that moving from platform to platform is still not that easy. And "for some reason parents and Boards of Education think of Macs as more "play toys" and of PC's as the only "real" computers. It's a real uphill battle. But, after reading some of the latest newspaper articles perhaps things are changing and Mac is starting to resurface as a contender."

The Author's Thoughts

Even when you look at all the information, and all the arguments, the decisions for using one platform over another in a school system are still often illogical. School systems where it is obvious that Macs are the right choice because of hard facts go PC because of outside influences, or those in charge use PC and have never used a Mac. Another reason to go PC instead of Mac is that administrative software, already in place, makes that choice better. It's true that Mac has not helped its cause through some unusual business decisions, but it is hard to deny the cutting-edge technology, as well as the company's ability to pick itself off the canvas, dust itself off, to start all over again. OS-X and X-Server could be the needed push for acceptance in business and a larger piece of the technology pie. Time will tell. For quite a while I have had one hand on a Mac and the other on a PC awaiting our district's choice of platform for our new 5/6 school. I've just discovered that it will be PC. For us, consistency with administrative software has made the final choice.

Technology and Professional Development at the Calgary Academy

Recently I, along with two staff members from the CT Academy for Math, Science & Technology had an unique opportunity to visit the Calgary Academy, located in Alberta, Canada, to learn about the school mathematics and technology programs.

The Calgary Academy is a private day school for students diagnosed with learning difficulties. This school concentrates on teaching students the skills and strategies needed to be successful in today's changing world. The Calgary Academy, which opened with 42 students in 1981, now provides a well rounded education for 600 K-12 students. The provincial test scores, similar to our Mastery and CAPT scores, were published in the Calgary newspapers during our visit and we saw that students at the Academy performed very well.

The all school philosophy states that academic improvement is possible only through carefully planned and consistent structure throughout the entire school. New teachers are regularly mentored by veteran teachers and senior teacher assistants during their first two years of teaching. Each staff member receives intensive professional development and support during the school year. Opportunities for additional training in integrating technology into the curriculum are available during the summer.

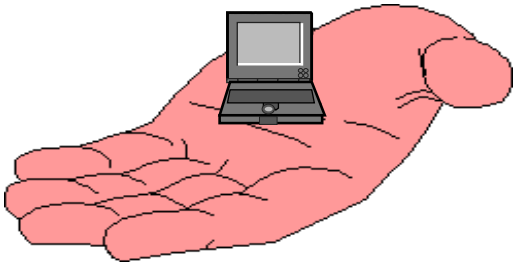
A strong belief that students learn best when provided with a variety of learning resources led to the development and implementation of the Academy's Five Year Plan for Laptops and Integration. Research and development took place during years one and two. During the 2001-02 school year, all faculty members were given iBooks along with intensive training on the use of technology. Each classroom is equipped with a projection device that connects with the laptop. The focus during year three was on teacher productivity and creating classroom materials. Teachers, supported by a six person digital media staff, have developed units integrating technology. Check the school website at http://www.calgaryacademy.com. Click on *CA Community* to see examples of projects developed this year with the new iBooks. During years 4 and 5, many students will receive laptops as technology is further integrated into the curriculum. Students currently in the digital media class have created very professional movies using both iMovie and Final Cut Pro. It was wonderful to see students explaining how they used the technology and how it enhanced their learning.

The Calgary Academy has a separate professional development component, Inlets. Information is available at http://www.inlets.net/about.html. The digital media lab is located at Inlets, and, in addition to assisting Academy teachers, creates interactive CD's and on-line resources for Inlet professional development presentations throughout Canada and the United States. In fact, the Amistad School in New Haven used their model in developing guidelines for this new school and Calgary Academy/Inlets staff presented regular professional development sessions for staff.

Thoughtful planning and implementation, including on-going scheduled and sustained professional development and support, have enabled the Calgary Academy to help teachers improve their skills to improve student learning in all disciplines.

Donna Brown
Connecticut Academy

Handheld Computers: The Next Step on the Technology Pathway



According to Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, one definition of the word technology is "a manner of accomplishing a task especially using technical processes, methods, or knowledge." Each generation of educators had technology available for use in the classroom. The introduction of the chalkboard, film strip projectors and record players, 16 mm films, tape recorders, television and VCRs, all have brought change to the way teachers teach. Today, some classroom teachers have Smart Boards connected to computers, digital video cameras and DVDs.

Another device beginning to make its way into the classroom is the handheld computer. Palm is one of the first companies providing these devices to teachers, administrators and students. They are used to teach students about the way viruses are spread in health and science classes using a program called Cooties. Concept mapping skills are being learned using programs such as Picomap. The possibilities are virtually endless.

One of the advantages of the handheld computer lies in its small size and portability. For classes doing field studies in science, a classroom set of Palms allows the students to record their observations in the field, then transfer them to their classroom or home computer for report writing. Students on a field trip to a museum or historic site can have their questions already loaded into the Palm and can begin to formulate responses to them as they are on-site using a word processing program such as Documents to Go or WordSmith. Graphing calculator software replaces the need for separate calculators. Students can also keep track of classroom assignments, project deadlines, game and concert schedules using the built in scheduling and date book programs.

For a teacher on a field trip, all of the students' pertinent health information can be loaded into the Palm so they have it readily available in the event of an emergency. Rosters of the students allow the teacher to quickly take attendance and account for all children. Back in the classroom, teachers can write out homework assignments, notes to students, project timelines and then wirelessly transfer them to the students by pointing their Palm at a student's Palm and pressing a button. This is called beaming.

There are a variety of attachments available for the Palm which enhance its capability. Portable keyboards make entering information easier, probe attachments allow students to record temperature, humidity, light, ph and other readings. Some models even have attachments which turn the device into a digital camera.

For more information on how Palm handhelds are being used in classrooms and some of the programs that are available visit: http://www.handheld.hice-dev.org/index.htm.

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Personal Registration Form included in this newsletter for those who have NOT registered for CECA 2002 "Imagine the Possibilities."

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