



Connections

Management Council of the Ohio Education Computer Network

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From the CEO...

By Bruce E. Hawkins, CEO

During my experience as an educational administrator, I have been involved in well over a dozen state biennial budgets. It seems that we say each time that it is the most difficult budget that we have ever had to endure. Balancing the current budget was made possible by making cuts and using federal stimulus money. Now we are about to begin a new biennial budget process, and again we are saying that this is the most difficult budget in recent memory. It is hard to argue that with the potential \$8B hole in the budget along with the lack of a "rainy day fund" and potential help of a federal stimulus package.

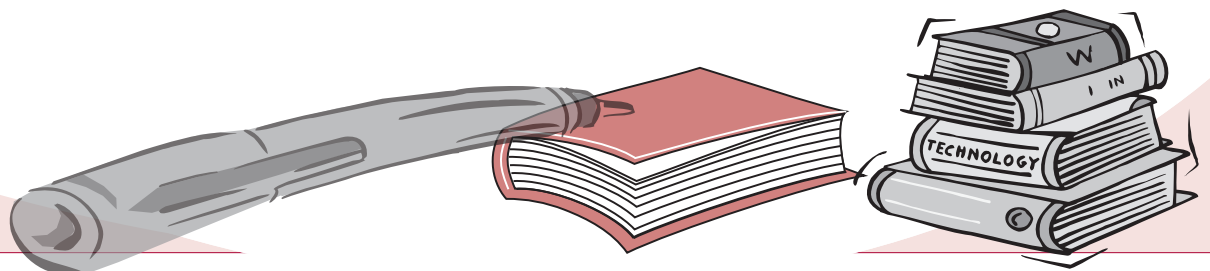
2011 will certainly be a difficult time to be in the Ohio legislature or administrative branch of government. This is certainly a time for us to band together to find potential cost savings while still delivering quality services to the citizens of Ohio.

There have been several studies that have already been completed for the legislature and administration to consider as they prepare for this new budget. One of these studies was the Ohio School Funding Advisory Council which completed their recommendations and reported to the legislature by December 1. The second study by the KnowledgeWorks Foundation will also make recommendations on how to address this difficult budget cycle. Both studies seem to be looking at ways in which various state organizations can work together to become more efficient in delivering services. The challenge in education will be to find ways to reduce spending without hurting student achievement.

A model for such collaboration has been the OECN which has been in existence for over 30 years and has provided technology services to school districts throughout their regions at a cost efficient model. There are certainly ways that we can all investigate to make these services even more efficient, but we need to study the efficiencies that have already been established. One example would be the electronic resources that are provided through INFOhio. If a school district were to purchase these thousands of electronic resources individually, it would cost over \$49 per pupil while INFOhio in working with higher education and the public libraries has been able to provide these resources at \$0.49 per student statewide.

Another example of cost efficiency is the fiber optic network that has been established to provide higher speed connectivity to Ohio schools. At this point, Governor Kasich is working to prepare a budget to the Ohio legislature by the March 15 deadline. There are many rumors and speculation of what this budget might look like and certainly with such a huge deficit, many people will be concerned with how they will continue to deliver state services.

The Management Council is willing to listen and work with legislators as they address this very difficult budget process. The key concept to this process will be collaboration and working together to provide the best services we can to the citizens of Ohio with the budget constraints that we face.



Enhancing Teaching and Learning through Technology

Technology is evolving at a frenzied pace, and as school officials, it is important to learn about new advancements and how teaching and learning can be enhanced by bringing technology into the classroom. The Ohio Educational Technology Conference, slated for Jan. 31 to Feb. 2 in Columbus, will provide teachers, school administrators and other members of school learning communities with opportunities to experience a variety of cutting-edge speakers, exhibits, and ideas that will invigorate and expand approaches to integrating technology into the learning experience. More than 500 sessions and displays are part of the conference agenda.

Through the conference, school administrators, will have the opportunity to hear from leading experts on a variety of topics, including: Access and security concerns; Compliance and safety issues; Technical support staffing and automation; Total cost of ownership; Differentiated learning; Community partnerships; Video distance learning and web-based distance learning; Evaluating the return on investment in using media and technology; Online assessment options; and Researching and communicating the effectiveness of technology tools in education.

For the first time in conference history, representatives from the U.S. Department of Education will be on hand to discuss the federal department's view on the role of technology in education. Sessions will also cover updates regarding Ohio's E-Rate program that will impact future filings for Ohio school districts and how the Ohio Middle Mile Consortium (a \$170 million dollar investment to expand broadband access in underserved areas) will impact educational institutions across the state.

In addition to the sessions, there will be hands-on access to new technology tools and demonstrations of technology in action by students participating in the "Prototype: Design Camp," a three-day

experience bringing together a diverse range of talented students and professional mentors in an intense design challenge to address real-world problems presented by conference attendees, global partners, and the digital world.

Educators at all levels are encouraged to "Bring Your Own Tools" for ninety-minute sessions that are designed to for attendees to learn on their own equipment and discover new and expanded functionality possibilities.

Districts and community schools participating in Ohio's Race to the Top efforts will have the opportunity to hear from Ohio Department of Education officials and meet regional representatives regarding the implementation of Ohio's Race to the Top and the role technology will play in the rollout of the strategy.

For complete details and registration information about the 2011 Ohio Educational Technology Conference, visit www.etech.ohio.gov/conference. Team and student rates are available. Conference attendees will receive certificates of attendance, which may be provided to your Local Professional Development Committee for CEU consideration.



Ohio eTech Ohio Educational Technology Conference 2011
January 31 - February 2, 2011
Greater Columbus Convention Center, Columbus, OH

- Choose from more than 500 sessions and displays
- Practice hands-on activities during the "Bring Your Own Technology" sessions
- Learn about new resources and how to access them
- Network with fellow educators and learn from their experience

Visit www.etech.ohio.gov/conference for additional conference and registration information.

MCOECN ITCs Working with Ohio ESCs for Online Learning

Statistics from Project Tomorrow (a nationwide survey of 300,000 plus students, parents, and educators) show that 27% of high school students and 21% of middle school students took at least one online class in 2009, nearly doubling the 2008 numbers of 14% and 16%. Is your district feeling the pressure to begin offering a few courses online? Is your district losing students and general revenue funds to statewide online schools or community schools? Is your district able to keep up with the demand of parents and students to offer additional years of a foreign language, reduce scheduling conflicts, add AP courses to the course offerings and meet the high demand for credit recovery courses? National surveys show that

- 75% of districts that offer advanced courses use online learning to offer Advanced Placement or college-level courses.
- 60% of schools and districts say they need online learning for credit recovery.
- More than 50% need online learning to reduce student scheduling conflicts to graduate on time.

These statistics were presented during the October 15, 2010 MCOECN sponsored conference on online learning presentation by Dr. Allison Powell, Vice President of State and District Services at iNACOL, the International Association for K12 Online Learning. The mini-conference had over 65 attendees. It was sponsored by the MCOECN as part of our eLearn Ohio

initiative. We are working to facilitate collaborations between ITCs and ESCs throughout Ohio to make quality online learning options available at affordable negotiated pricing.

eLearn Ohio has worked to negotiate statewide pricing for courseware from 6 companies; A+, APEX, Aventa Learning, Florida Virtual, Learning Springs, OdysseyWare, and Rosetta Stone. They have also negotiated pricing from three prominent Learning Management Systems, Blackboard, Brainhoney, and ITS Learning. Pricing for the courseware and LMS's, learning management systems can be found at the Ohio Distance Learning, OhioDL, website, <http://www.ohiodl.org> and the MC-TSG website, at <http://mctsg.com/> under Services. These courses are available to add to course offerings for the 2011-12 school year.

Melissa Higgs-Horwell and Jim Vincent, Distance Learning Consultants for the MCOECN, have worked with these companies to obtain statewide pricing for the courseware and the related professional development. They arranged a Virtual Conference series on Online Learning this fall with 10 afterschool webinars featuring courseware and LMS companies. Jim and Melissa are available to work with ITCs, ESCs and districts to help ITCs and ESCs plan collaborations to offer online learning to meet district needs. With MCOECN ITCs and Ohio's ESCs working together, districts can implement online learning into a school's instructional offering at any level.

21st Century Learning Commons

The INFOhio 21st Century Learning Commons, <http://learningcommons.infohio.org>, now includes a newly introduced Learning Skills section. This Learning Skills section includes an inquiry-based process model, the INFOhio DIALOGUE Model for the 21st Century.

The DIALOGUE Model for 21st Century chart highlights the relationships between the stages in the inquiry process and how today's learners can use this model to build new knowledge.

- The left hand column of the chart depicts the stages of the DIALOGUE model, an inquiry and knowledge building process.
- The second and third columns create the linkage to the skills and standards from Partnership for 21st Century Skills, Ohio Department of Education, American Association of School Librarian (AASL) the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE).
- The last column demonstrates research-based instructional strategies aligned with the INFOhio resources. Here you will find modules created by **INFOhio** in partnership with **Montgomery County Educational Service Center** that establish an explanation of the instructional strategy, a video demonstration of the strategy in action in the classroom, and a comprehensive resource list that shows how the INFOhio resources support the selected instructional strategy.

Take a moment now to begin your own inquiry and knowledge building process by exploring the many ways INFOhio's 21st Century Learning Commons can build creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, communication, and information literacy skills.

INFOhio's **Certified Coach Program** has trained the first cadre of 16 **ICoaches**, who can train classroom teachers and other educators to use INFOhio resources effectively while helping them to integrate INFOhio into their classrooms using 21st century instructional strategies. Each of Ohio's 16 professional development regions has at least one ICoach. INFOhio worked collaboratively with the Ohio ESC Association (OESCA), the Ohio Educational Technology Agencies (EdTechs), and the Informational Technology Centers (ITCs) to create the program.

Each ICoach will conduct training session for educators that deepen understanding of *INFOhio's Core Collection of Electronic Resources* and *INFOhio's 21st Century Learning Commons*, as well as other Web 2.0 tools and procedures. Hands-on experiences will be encouraged. The ICoach will endeavor to work with building/district professional development committees to tailor training sessions to meet the needs of those being trained.

Each ICoach has undergone a two-day training session conducted by INFOhio staff to earn the status of INFOhio Certified Coach. ICoaches maintain their knowledge of INFOhio resources and 21st century skills by participating in regular in-service programs and peer support activities.

More information about the ICoach program is available at www.infohio.org/Educator/ICoach.html.

Watch for an announcement coming soon about the kick-off of Career Forward, a free course developed by a partnership between Microsoft, Michigan Virtual University and the Michigan Department of Education, covering career planning, globalization, financial literacy and entrepreneurship. This media-rich course will be available to every district in Ohio. The coursework can be offered as an online part of existing middle school or high school courses and takes from four to six weeks or approximately 20 hours to complete.

For a face-to-face or phone discussion on how to get started and the features of various courseware and LMS solutions to meet district needs, email Higgs-Horwell at horwell@mcoecn.org or Vincent at jim.vincent@email.sparcc.org. Follow eLearn Ohio on Twitter for information and resources on online learning, <http://www.twitter.com/elearnohio>

Sources for stats:

- 1 Clayton, E. (2010, July). Getting in line for online education. District Administration, 46 (7), 21.
- 2, 3, 4 iNACOL, International Association for K-12 Online Learning. (2010). Fast facts about online learning. Vienna, VA, USA: iNACOL.

SIS/EMIS-R Analysis Update

Through funding from ODE, the MCOECN has taken a lead in evaluating, testing, and implementing the pieces necessary to make the EMIS Redesign (EMIS-R) project a reality. The EMIS-R project is a series of new software and procedures that should soon replace the existing EMIS reporting system that has served Ohio for over 20 years. A team of key ITC staff--coordinated by the MCOECN--is working diligently through the complexity of the various Student Information Systems and other hardware and software necessary to properly report EMIS data using this system. ODE will take the recommendations of this team along with many other factors into consideration to make a determination as to when this system will be implemented as the primary reporting system. The ITCs and the MCOECN are excited to be a part of this important project as it moves forward into production.

SFAC Report May Impact Regional Service Delivery

Over the past year several representatives from the Management Council have observed the activities of the School Funding Advisory Council (SFAC). For those who may not know, the SFAC was created in the last state budget bill (HB 1) to make recommendations for modifications and clarifications to the new school funding model. The Council was comprised of legislators from both parties, representatives from the Department of Education, the Governor's office, and several other organizations with ties to Ohio's educational community. To say the process was political would be an understatement, but in the end many differences were resolved and the Council released their full report one day ahead of the December 1st deadline. The full report is available on the Ohio Department of Education web site.

Members on the SFAC were divided into several subcommittees. Each subcommittee was tasked to study and make recommendations regarding specific areas of need. The Regional Variation subcommittee was assigned the issues of regional service delivery, open enrollment, and transportation. The original concept regarding regional services focused on the role of Educational Service Centers (ESCs) but the scope was quickly expanded to include other service providers such as Information Technology Centers and the Ed Techs.

The Management Council was afforded the opportunity to provide written input to the Regional Variation subcommittee. In our report we argued that a true system of regional service delivery does not exist in Ohio. There are different layers of organizations, networks, and centers providing services to schools in Ohio. By and large these groups do an excellent job of providing much needed services, often with very limited resources. However, it is unfair to qualify this as a "system" when there is no common governance or leadership provided by the state to direct these regional providers in a coordinated fashion. To illustrate, consider that funding and oversight of the various regional provider networks is funneled through different state agencies or through different areas within agencies. We questioned the attempt to judge regional providers as a system when no such system exists. We further suggested that the Department of Education should coordinate a true regional system by creating a "center" for regional service delivery within ODE. We were pleased that this idea was included in the final SFAC report.

Our state selected a new governor in the recent election. As in all things political, it is yet to be determined if the SFAC report will be valued by the new administration. Hopefully our new governor will find relevance in some if not all of the recommendations made by the School Funding Advisory Council. A key campaign message called for greater sharing and collaboration and reduction of duplication among school districts. Greater use of regional service providers would seem to fit precisely into that message, and the development of a true regional service provider system could focus and enhance services that organizations like the OECN ITCs are currently providing.

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