

<http://www.eschoolnews.com>

Contents Copyright 2006 eSchool News. All rights reserved.

NECC 2006 Product Roundups

July 18, 2006

Hardware and peripherals

Brother International Corp., a provider of printing solutions, featured its total cost of ownership (TCO) analysis guide. The guide, called "Hidden Cost, Hidden Opportunities: Calculating the Total Cost of Ownership for Hardcopy Devices in Education Settings," offers the reader a six-step process for beginning to do a TCO analysis of printing solutions so that schools can develop a more long-term and strategic approach to printing and hard-copy output. The guide offers tips on how to conduct a needs assessment; identifying equipment requirements; selecting the best models and determining acquisition costs; evaluating running costs and consumables costs; assessing service and support costs; and bringing the information together to determine the total cost of ownership. Brother also offers through its web site an opportunity to do a customized TCO comparison of different desktop office equipment. <http://www.brother.com>

Dell Inc., supplier of computer and peripheral hardware solutions, announced at NECC that it has teamed with the Jefferson Parish Public School System in Marrero, La., across the river from New Orleans, to create a three-pronged data backup and recovery infrastructure. New data centers, along with a comprehensive information-technology disaster recovery plan, will help safeguard the Katrina-ravaged district against future losses of student and administrative records, according to Dell. Dell says that by the time the district's 40,457 students and 3,054 teachers return to the classroom this fall, information such as student transcripts, transportation routes, library records, food inventory, and payroll, will have a central home rather than being backed up on individual campuses. The district's school board office will be the first stop, according to the company. Information will flow from all office and school servers citywide to Dell/EMC CX 500 network storage systems and a Dell PowerVault tape library for backup purposes. A second, identical backup center located 10 miles away will automatically mirror all data in real time. In case of damage to these sites, Dell is helping the district build a third site further inland, 140 miles away in Lafayette, La. This site will funnel the other centers' data to a Dell PowerVault tape library for backup at prescheduled intervals, according to the company. <http://www.dell.com>

Fourier Systems Ltd., a provider of student computing solutions, offered its Nova5000 student learning appliance. The company says the handheld solution offers schools a powerful, cost-effective solution for student computing needs in the classroom, lab, and home. The device's open curriculum software program is web-based and facilitates a wide range of products across all subject areas and grade levels, covering both core and supplemental curricula. Fourier executives say the 2.4-pound device can be easily transported in a student's backpack from

class to library to home to field trips. The company says students benefit from a sense of ownership and empowerment as their Nova5000 accompanies them through the school day and at home. <http://www.fourier-sys.com>

Gateway Inc., a provider of multimedia classroom solutions, premiered what the company called a "complete strategy guide" to building digital classrooms. According to Gateway, the resource, called "Digital Designs" explores the stages of creating a digital classroom environment and the possibilities of the ideal, student-centered, standards-based classroom setting. The strategy guide is designed to help schools and districts discover new funding strategies and software solutions, and features success stories to aid in the successful implementation of digital classroom initiatives. Gateway says the handbook will help schools and districts examine their needs for a 21st century learning environment, assess areas of improvement, and provide strategies to address those areas.

Gateway also featured three new additions to its line of enterprise storage products. The Gateway E-842R storage area network (SAN), and the Gateway E-824R DLT-V4 SuperLoader 3 and Gateway E-826R LTO-3 SuperLoader 3 automated tape backups offer storage capacity and flexibility for small-to-medium-sized educational institutions at an affordable price, according to the company. <http://www.gateway.com>

Polycom Inc. announced the Polycom Communicator, a Skype-certified device that allows users to operate the unit hands-free or plug into the built-in stereo headphone port for private conversations. The Communicator connects and powers through an integrated USB cable. Polycom also introduced the RSS 2000, an on-demand recording, streaming, and archiving device. <http://www.polycom.com>

Promethean has released a new device designed to engage special needs and primary education students. Called Activwand, the 21-inch device for use with Promethean's Activboard interactive whiteboard, makes it easier for special needs students and primary learners to reach out and touch the Activboard and enhances pupil engagement with the lesson and the development of fine motor skills, the company reports. <http://www.promethean.com>

SMART Technologies Inc. announced the addition of eight new or updated products in its range of collaboration solutions. New products include the SMART Board 600i interactive whiteboard system, which combines a SMART Board interactive whiteboard and a new Unifi projector with built-in audio, as well as Symposium ID350 and ID370 interactive pen displays, which both feature a bezel-less writing surface, two high-speed USB hubs, and more functionality. Additionally, SMART announced support for five additional languages in the latest version of SynchronEyes classroom management software. The new languages are North American Spanish, Italian, German, European Spanish, and Chinese. These languages are in addition to English and French. <http://www.smarttech.com>

Texas Instruments, a provider of education and productivity solutions, released a case study on Ohio's Canton City School District's (CCSD) improved math scores on state assessment exams after an initiative to integrate TI's Navigator Classroom Learning System and graphing calculators into classrooms. TI says all four of the district's middle schools improved their scores on the most recent statewide math achievement test after the successful initiative. The federally funded program dubbed The Genesis Mathematics Project, integrated graphing technology into the Canton City District middle schools and trained

teachers on the technology-based strategies to improve performance, the company said. "We were blown away by the results," said Pam Bernabei-Rorrer, a CCSD math coach. "Students who used TI's graphing calculators along with the TI-Navigator system achieved at a level three times greater than students who did not." <http://www.education.ti.com>

Instructional technology

Answers Corp., provider of search solutions, offered its Answers.com search engine solution, a combination web site and software search solution that the company says offers a clear answer, explanation, or definition in less time than it takes using traditional search engines. Educators choosing to add Answers.com to computers in classrooms, media centers, and libraries, can ensure their fellow staff members, as well as the student body, have direct access to the free web site. The search engine aggregates over 60 titles, including Houghton Mifflin, Columbia Press, Roget, eSpindle Learning, Thomson Gale, Investopedia, All Media Guide, and MedicineNet.com. The citation feature offered by Answers.com at the bottom of every search page encourages users to cite their work. Plus, the "Cite" button at the bottom of the page instantly creates bibliographical entries using MLA, APA, or Chicago styles. www.answers.com

AOL@SCHOOL, a provider of online resources for teachers and students, premiered its new StudyBuddy.com free search engine. StudyBuddy.com is designed specifically to anticipate the informational needs of students and to return grade-appropriate, relevant results, according to AOL. Students can use StudyBuddy.com to search by keywords for specific information or browse by subject area. Search results are organized to meet assignment requirements for relevance and for sourcing by media type such as articles, web sites, photos, maps, and more. Full content pages from reference works by World Book and Columbia Encyclopedias, MapQuest Atlas, National Geographic, the Princeton Review, and the CIA World Fact Book are returned with searches, as are Booknotes entries, providing summaries and study guides for 400 of the most widely read K-12 books. Digital "Backpacks" tools designed to let users save searches help students share information. Parents and students are also able to customize searches based on grade level. A free essay tool lets students write about any topic and get a free critique in 20 seconds. Plus, Algebra 1 students can take a free high-stakes exam practice test that is available in Spanish and English. <http://www.studybuddy.com>

CrossTec Corp., provider of IT security information and management solutions, released its own brand of PC lab management and classroom control software under the name CrossTec SchoolVue. Using CrossTec SchoolVue, an instructor can broadcast his or her screen, multimedia files, or any student's screen to other participants; record and playback screen sessions; monitor students as they work; carry on bidirectional text or audio conversations and lectures; create, administer, monitor, and automatically grade tests; remote control a student PC for one-on-one instruction, and much more, the company said. SchoolVue also enables a teacher to record screen sessions as a demo, or a student's screen, and let others access it, even if they do not have SchoolVue installed on their machine. CrossTec says this option is particularly valuable for use with another new product distributed by the company, SchoolFusion. SchoolFusion allows districts, schools, and/or teachers to have custom-designed web sites and centralized calendars that are simple to manage and cost-effective, according to the company. Information such as homework assignments, PDFs, quizzes, or SchoolVue screen recordings can be updated or uploaded without the user having to know HTML. <http://www.crossteccorp.com>

CompassLearning, a provider of K-12 education software, announced the launch of Odyssey Reading Comprehension and Vocabulary, a curriculum for grades 3-8. CompassLearning says Odyssey Reading is founded on scientifically-based research into how students learn and retain information.

CompassLearning's Odyssey Reading Comprehension and Vocabulary curriculum uses artificial intelligence to simulate a conversation between the user and software program by creating a "person" who responds to the student in the same way a human being might. The company says that Odyssey Reading adds critical elements of engagement to the learning process, touching the emotions of the student and increasing student comprehension through its human/machine interface. <http://www.compasslearning.com>

Curriculum Advantage Inc., a provider of reading and mathematics curricular materials and tools, used NECC to underscore its recent honors in the 2006 Codie Awards from the Software & Information Industry Association (SIIA). Curriculum Advantage's primary solution, Classworks, received the award for Best Instructional Solution in the Language Arts/Reading category for elementary grade products. Curriculum Advantage also received the education industry's Newcomer of the Year award. Classworks is a network-based solution for reading and math used in grades K-12 and including 10,000 learning activities from many award-winning educational software programs, all of which are correlated with National standards. <http://www.classworks.com>

Discovery Education introduced One Place, a digital media management product that offers quick access to online digital media from one integrated access point. One Place is designed to help educators manage their online educational content more effectively, so they spend less time navigating multiple interfaces and more time delivering educational content to the classroom. One Place is integrated with a variety of Discovery products and online services. Schools also can add online services of their own choosing. Educators and administrators will be able to increase efficiency by using a single user name and password for all digital resources; save time by gaining universal access to all local and licensed digital content; customize the One Place main interface to suit their school's needs; and stream live feeds of local content, Discovery says. The product will be available for the upcoming back-to-school season.

Discovery Education also announced that it has reached an exclusive agreement with the American Film Institute (AFI) to distribute a new video series produced by AFI, called "Lights, Camera, Education!," via Discovery's unitedstreaming service and other outlets. The series profiles actual teachers and students as they incorporate the techniques and collaborative process of filmmaking into the study of traditional academic subjects. "Lights, Camera, Education!" is an online application of the professional development workshop series for AFI's K-12 Screen Education program. Teachers who use the AFI Screen Education process in their classrooms have students write, shoot, edit, and show original films as part of their studies. <http://www.discoveryeducation.com>

Encyclopedia Britannica Inc., a provider of learning and knowledge products, offered its Britannica Online School Edition at NECC. Britannica Online is now aligned to every state's curriculum standards and benchmarks, according to the company. The new feature provides educators with quick, easy access to standards and benchmarks linked to supporting articles in *Compton's by Britannica* and *Britannica Elementary Encyclopedia*. The company says the standards and benchmarks are organized by topic and grade level, these articles plus hundreds of printable and online curriculum-based learning activities are ideal for use in the classroom, media center, or computer lab, the company said. The company also has increased the multimedia element of the product.

Encyclopedia Britannica says School Edition now has more than 27,000 graphics, 3,300 animations, audio clips, and videos with new videos covering the Civil War, dolphins, Jackie Robinson, and more. <http://www.britannica.com>

GenevaLogic Inc., provider of active teaching systems for the classroom, featured its Surf-Lock 2 solution. A plug-in for GenevaLogic's Vision classroom management software, GenevaLogic says it developed this new version of Surf-Lock in response to teachers' requests for more control over internet use to support teaching and learning. Surf-Lock 2 can turn browsing on or off with a single click, allowing students access only to selected web sites that support instruction, and stop or limit web browsing instantly for a single student, or the entire class, according to GenevaLogic. The tool works with multiple browsers in any learning environment where Vision6 is installed. Developed for a Windows environment, it is compatible with filtering software and does not require a server.

The company also announced the results of a case study using its Vision6 classroom management software in the Whitefish Public School District in Montana. GenevaLogic has had a district-wide contract with the district since 2000. IT director Chris Deister said that Vision6 was so successful in the high school, that administrators rolled it out in all of the district's buildings. The study found that teachers need less prep time to bring their students to computer labs. The screen sharing option has helped students in Whitefish focus on their lessons through the screen sharing and screen-locking options, and teachers say students retain information better, resulting in less re-teaching, the company found. <http://www.genevalogic.com>

GTCO CalComp featured its new InterWrite SchoolBoard 1071 and 1085, two new wide-format interactive whiteboards. The new wide-format SchoolBoards will be available in the third quarter of 2006. The company says the new models retain all the popular features of the current InterWrite SchoolBoards, which also will remain in production. Both the 1071 and 1085 include high-precision electromagnetic technology; optional wireless Bluetooth connection; a durable interactive surface; and what the company calls "intuitive and teacher-friendly" InterWrite software. The new whiteboard sizes are 71 and 85 diagonal inches, respectively.

GTCO CalComp also announced a new partnership with **Learning Pathways Ltd.**, a British provider of multimedia and online content. The partnership makes more than 2,000 test questions and answers from Learning Pathways available to be used with GTCO CalComp's InterWrite PRS student assessment product. GTCO CalComp has selected certain Learning Pathways test bank questions focused on math, science, and English to be included in all InterWrite PRS systems shipped outside the U.S. InterWrite PRS is a classroom response system through which every student can participate in answering interactive questions with remote-control devices. Results are instantly charted and displayed for real-time student feedback and lesson refinement, according to the company. The InterWrite PRS RF uses radio-frequency technology and features a two-line LCD display that allows students to see their answers and receive instant notification that the answers were successfully transmitted to the teacher. <http://www.gtocalcomp.com>

HunterStone Inc., a provider of productivity solutions for schools, government, and business, offered its THESIS product suite at NECC. The company says the THESIS suite provides cost-effective content authoring tools for Microsoft Office. THESIS is SCORM (Sharable Courseware Object Reference Model) compliant, allowing users to create and deploy standards-based multimedia learning content

to be used with any SCORM conformant learning management system. The THESIS learning object manager provides lesson previews, sequencing, test and assessment facilities, and applies the SCORM standards to the final output. THESIS Standard is tightly integrated with Microsoft Office products and lets people organize the entire MS suite to create eLearning content, according to the company. HunterStone says THESIS Librarian provides subject matter experts and learning content authors with an environment where they can share learning objects and collaborate to develop SCORM conformant course content by utilizing Microsoft's SharePoint technology. <http://www.hunterstone.com>

Innerlink Inc., a developer of web-based health and safety technology solutions for schools, featured its My Wellness Projects suite of interactive products designed to help create a healthier, safer world. Innerlink says My Wellness Projects is the only web-based program of its kind to provide a complete set of solutions to help improve health and safety for students. Project Breathe is a web-based health education program that focuses on cardiovascular and respiratory health, tobacco prevention education and cessation for students in grades K-12; Project Fitness is an interactive, web-based health education curriculum that focuses on weight management, nutrition, and physical activity for grades 6-12; Project Nutrition is an interactive health education curriculum that focuses on building healthful eating habits for students in grades 6-12; Project Recover seeks to create an emotional trauma awareness and support program for students affected by a personal or community trauma; and Project Safe is an interactive safety education curriculum that focuses on helping students in grades 6-12 make informed decisions about their personal health and safety. <http://www.innerlinkit.com>

The **Network for Instructional TV Inc.** (NITV) pursued its mission of increasing the distribution and effectiveness of materials, services, and technologies to improve education at the local level. NITV's programs and services aim to support teachers, parents, and students through the creation of high-quality learning opportunities through the use of advanced technologies, assisting schools in identifying affordable education technology solutions, and creating opportunities in which parents can become involved at all levels of their children's education. <http://www.nitv.org>

Knowledge Adventure, provider of multimedia web materials, offers Knowledge Adventure Books by You. The company says the program combines proven elements such as social sharing, high-interest texts, collaboration, strategic prompts, vocabulary and context, real-world experiences, and student choice to create a software program that will improve reading outcomes and reward and encourage all types of readers. The make-your-own-book software for students in grades 3-4 is guided by actor and author John Lithgow in video segments. Lithgow takes students through each segment of the book-making process, from writing, to cover, to design. Lithgow also presents questions and strategies that can help produce more engaged readers, according to the company. To build vocabulary, challenging words are introduced and defined in context, and students can edit the book further, adding illustrations, or importing their own digital photos, gaining a deeper understanding of the descriptions and themes of the book. For an additional fee, students can also even "publish" a professionally printed and bound book to share with classmates, friends, and family. <http://www.knowledgeadventure.com>

LearningSoft Corp., a handheld computing and assessment company, announced at NECC that it is partnering with eLearning company **Zeus Learning** and the world's first oceanarium, Marineland, to add instructional content to the Indigo Learning System, the company's flagship assessment device. Indigo's

wireless handhelds provide educators in K-8 schools with interactive online content in mathematics, language arts, science, and social studies, coupled with assessments and reporting tools, according to LearningSoft. Marineland will add marine biology content to the Indigo Learning System. Zeus Learning will provide supplemental math curricula for elementary and middle school students, offering virtual experiments that allow learners to play with the variables of a specific experiment and see the results instantly, the companies said.
<http://www.learningsoft.com>

Software-maker **Microsoft Corp.** featured new versions of Microsoft Student with Encarta Premium 2007 and Learning Essentials for Microsoft Office 1.5. Microsoft Student Premium is a software package of integrated tools and content to help middle-, high school, and entry-level college students create and complete assignments. Learning Essentials is a tool that allows teachers to use MS Office applications to create interactive eLearning resources for use with standards-compliant learning management systems. <http://www.microsoft.com>

NetSupport Ltd., a supplier of education management solutions, announced the upgrade of its School product, NetSupport School 8.5 (NSS 8.5). NetSupport School 8.5 is a software-only classroom instruction, monitoring, and testing tool that enables teachers to train students in the computer lab simply and effectively, according to the company. With NSS 8.5, teachers and trainers can make sure that those in the computer lab are making progress on their assigned tasks, using only approved applications and visiting only approved web sites, the company said. Teachers and trainers also can record all screen, keyboard, and mouse activity on student workstations to review later or replay to the entire class. From the standpoint of increasingly strapped school technology budgets, the software enables teachers to make the most of the computer lab equipment they already have, the company said.

New features included in NSS 8.5 include enhanced show and monitor modes for sharper presentation in the classroom. Instructors also can store a copy of a lesson on their students' computers for future review. Additional options for exam questions offer more flexibility for teachers when planning lessons, the company said. <http://www.netsupportschool.com>

OdysseyWare displayed its computerized multimedia curriculum. The product offers full-content, core subject material in math, language arts, history, geography, and science for grades 3-12. It is available through network, CD-ROM, and web-based options, and classroom or lab computers can be used to deliver individualized primary source or supplemental instruction to students. The program is aligned with state standards. <http://www.odysseyware.com>

Pearson Knowledge Technologies announced that its WriteToLearn product is now included in the new Apple Digital Learning Series for middle and high school language arts. Designed to accompany Apple Mobile Learning Labs, the Apple Digital Learning Series provides a collection of curriculum solutions designed to enhance student productivity and access to information, as well as increasing achievement in key curriculum areas. With WriteToLearn, students practice essay writing and summarization skills. Their efforts are measured by Pearson's knowledge analysis technologies. Students receive immediate, specific feedback on their work, while teachers assess student efforts individually or as a class.
<http://www.WriteToLearn.net>

Promethean, provider of interactive learning technology, launched Promethan Planet, a free collaborative web portal designed specifically to help K-12 educators, administrators, and parents maximize the use of interactive learning

technologies. The resource is designed to be comprehensive, and Promethean says it provides a searchable wealth of information to help educators maximize the use of interactive learning technology in the classroom. The resources include maps, scientific diagrams, and graphic organizers incorporated in various formats. Searchable lessons are organized by grade and subject, videos, and web links are ready to download for use with Promethean's Activstudio and Activeprimary lesson-development software. The resources are available at <http://www.prometheanplanet.com>

The company also offered two new interactive ELL resources: ActivLingua and Eduspark. ActivLingua is an English language teaching and learning system designed to integrate seamlessly with Promethean's interactive whiteboard technology with a bank of multimedia resources to create a dynamic teaching and learning experience. Eduspark programs provide dual-language immersion with a strong emphasis on science, the company said. The program reportedly offers teachers the ability to toggle between English and Spanish. <http://www.prometheanworld.com>

Random House promoted its Webster's College Dictionary WordGenius and Unabridged Dictionary WordGenius published on CD-ROM. The WordGenius Dictionary includes definitions, American slang, reverse lookups, wild-card searching, and the ability to find related words by searching for words by their meaning. Users can drag and drop words for instant definitions and spell checking. The CD works with all Windows applications, including Microsoft Office. Random House Webster's College Dictionary WordGenius and Unabridged Dictionary WordGenius are available for \$19.95 and \$49.95, respectively. <http://www.wordgenius.com>

SMARTHINKING, a provider of online tutoring to colleges and high schools, announced the availability of Bridge2College, an assessment and tutoring program targeted at under-prepared college students. The program was designed to help institutions attract and retain students by providing early-intervention academic assistance for students who struggle with math and writing. The program can be self-paced or overseen by a coordinator. <http://www.smarthinking.com>

Sunburst Technology announced a new web-based writing program for students in grades 2-8, called Write Brain. Co-developed by Sunburst DigitalXperts, an online learning development company, the program is accessible online 24 hours a day. Students use it to build writing skills through a research-based process of text production that includes word processing, writing strategies, self-evaluation, peer and teacher assessments, and collaborative writing. The program enables teachers to intensify their writing instruction with limited classroom time, providing critical preparations for high-stakes writing tests. Write Brain features more than 150 educational writing prompts covering 11 genres of writing and was developed with educator input. Teachers can select from prepared lessons, create their own lessons and writing prompts, or edit existing lessons from their school, district, or the online Write Brain community. Those newly created lessons then can be aligned or edited to meet state standards. <http://www.sunburst.com>

Thinkronize Inc., developer of the netTrekker suite of safe educational search products, and **FSCreations** have partnered to provide educators with instant access to reinforcement content for their students. The latest version of FSCreation's flagship product, ExamView v5.2, now features an item remediation summary that allows teachers to instantly link to remediation content provided by netTrekker. Any netTrekker Classic or netTrekker d.i. customer who

purchases ExamView will now have access to this new functionality. In addition to the netTrekker integration, teachers can create and manage question items along with assessments, worksheets, and study guides for their classrooms with ExamView. Users can administer paper assessments scored manually or with scanning devices, deliver online assignments over their school network or the internet, and report and analyze student performance to inform instruction and remediation. <http://www.netTrekker.com> <http://www.fscreations.com>

TrueNorthLogic demonstrated its TrueLife student development system, which is designed to provide one-to-one learning and teaching for students. The system includes flexible communication tools to collaborate and interact with classmates in schools as well as worldwide. Students are supported by mentoring and teaching provided in an online learning environment, ensuring, according to the company, that the digital language spoken outside today's classroom is supported inside the classroom as well. <http://www.truenorthlogic.com/>

Turning Technologies LLC showcased TurningPoint, an interactive PowerPoint student response system. Using PowerPoint presentations, teachers can display questions, surveys, opinion polls, and games that require every student in the class to select a response. Teachers receive immediate feedback. Questions or tests can be linked to individual or state standards, teachers can view student responses in various formats, and teachers can integrate grading and point values into grade book software. <http://www.turningtechnologies.com>

Assessment and data management

Advanced Academics, a provider of eLearning solutions for middle and high school markets, premiered its ROADS online learning platform at NECC. The ROADS platform is designed for optimized "whiteboarding," threaded discussions, audio and visual communications, and proprietary eMail so districts need not rely on an external eMail system. The "student locker" offers storage for learning materials, and gives students the ability to make notes and refer to it in the future. ROADS also offers easier navigation tools for review of the online content, the company said. Plus, student and course management components allow teachers and administrators to drill down to the minutiae of the content for a better understanding of student learning and performance. <http://www.advancedacademics.com>

Edustructures LLC, developer of software infrastructure solutions for K-12 learning environments, featured its SIFWorks Integration Platform, which the company says is built to support all versions of the Schools Interoperability Framework standard. Edustructures says the software streamlines the administration of K-12 schools by allowing applications such as food service, library, transportation, and network and student information to share data automatically and securely. The sharing of this information decreases the amount of time spent on data entry, resulting in better information and analysis, according to the company. SIFWorks permits student enrollment to be carried out in one data entry step, taking an average of four minutes to complete. Without the software, the company says, the same enrollment could require 10 data entry steps at 10 times the time commitment. Different data agencies around the district share data through XML-based messages and events over standard internet protocols. A data entry into one application triggers the immediate sharing of that application with other applications and automates tasks such as generation and publication of a student's eMail address or the creation of library cards and lunch passes. <http://www.edustructures.com>

FileMaker Inc., a provider of database solutions, discussed the latest release of

FileMaker Pro 8.5. The company says new features like its web viewer places the database in a browser format, making it easier to assemble needed information on demand and to users, thus enabling them to link data records to web pages. A "link once and forget it" feature makes it easy for users to keep web records on students and personnel up to date for administrators and emergency personnel. The latest version of the software is Mac-compatible, making the database universally available for the first time, according to the company. Another product, called the FileMaker Learning Center, is a professional development tool that allows users to learn the database's functionality at their own pace. FileMaker is now available in nine languages.
<http://www.filemaker.com>

K12 Systems Inc. displayed its Sapphire Software Student Information System, a web-based system that integrates components such as a teacher gradebook, classroom management system, parent web portal, lesson planner, and master schedule builder into a single solution with a consistent user interface, with all components sharing a centralized database. <http://www.k12system.com>

MAXIMUS Inc. demonstrated its SchoolMAX Enterprise software, which the company says provides online access to district information for all stakeholders. Teachers can insert grades and student comments and even take attendance through the interactive system. The product is modeled after a traditional gradebook, making it easy for teachers to engage the system, according to the company. Principals can use the system to analyze student data, pull reports, and keep track of their schools' reporting and results. Using SchoolMAX, the company says, principals can instantly see what changes should be made to ensure their schools achieve their academic goals. What's more, school technology directors can configure the tool to meet their districts' needs and can integrate the system with legacy applications. District superintendents can use the SchoolMAX system to access student information and measure student results in real time. The product also offers reports that help superintendents make decisions to drive financial improvements and boost communication with parents, the company said.

MAXIMUS also demonstrated AssetMAXX, a capital asset and property management system. AssetMAXX reportedly incorporates all necessary capital asset tracking and reporting tools into one web-based solution. It also allows for the tracking of property for insurance purposes, the company said. The data are housed on MAXIMUS' secure hardware at the company's data center. MAXIMUS handles the day-to-day maintenance of the system and database administration responsibilities that otherwise would be left to an organization's IT department. The idea, according to the company, is to remove the need for users to purchase internal servers; instead, MAXIMUS permits officials to access the materials online. <http://www.maximus.com> **Pearson Education** announced the addition of a complete suite of diagnostic assessments to its PASeries Reading product. Part of the company's PASeries formative assessment line, PASeries Reading is designed to measure reading progress throughout the school year and to forecast growth for students in grades 3-8. The enhancement will allow teachers to identify student reading strengths and areas for improvement. PASeries Reading uses the industry-standard scientific Lexile Framework for Reading. The product now includes progress and diagnostic tests and focuses on overall ability as well as specific skills in reading. Reading diagnostic tests will cover comprehension, literary analysis and vocabulary, or for lower grades vocabulary and phonics. The new diagnostic assessments will be provided to current PASeries Reading customers at no additional charge beginning in August. PASeries is distributed to states and districts by Pearson Educational Measurement and Pearson Assessments.

<http://www.PearsonPASeries.com>

Scantron Corp. introduced upgrades to its Achievement Series and Performance Series formative and diagnostic assessment solutions for K-12 schools.

The newly updated Achievement Series solution is a content-neutral, flexible testing platform that educators can use to develop and administer online and paper tests. It features a new item editor that makes item entry quicker and easier than before, the company said. The web-based item editor permits educators to enter item content, properties, standards, and passages all on one screen. When adding items, users can choose to duplicate certain properties or standards to the next item, thus reducing the need to enter it again. In addition, the item editor includes a new equation editor that allows educators to create complex math equations in Achievement Series, eliminating the need to create math equations in a different application and then copy them into the program. Performance Series is a web-based, computer-adaptive test that educators can use as a diagnostic for student placement and to report on progress. The new version features the addition of a year-to-year student report to allow school districts to track student growth and trends and use the data to inform instructional decisions. With the new report, educators can display results data from every test a student has taken in the selected subject, all in one location. If a student has taken a test for several years, Scantron says, educators can, for example, get a good idea of how the student's scores are trending and predict a range of scores for future tests. <http://www.scantron.com>

SchoolNet Inc. announced the release of SchoolNet 7.0. The new version of the instructional management system features role-specific portal views, including personalized home pages with access to relevant reports and tools. SchoolNet 7.0 focuses specifically on the role of administrators, principals, teachers, and parents. <http://www.schoolnet.com>

Teacher's PAL showcased InstructiON, an instructional management system that includes curriculum management, mastery assessment, gradebook integration, lesson planning, and performance reporting. Educators can view a weekly calendar of scheduled activities, manage lesson plans and assignments for each class, and assign grades and assess student mastery of standards. <http://www.teacherspal.com>

VIP Tone Inc. announced its acquisition of Learning Technology System, developers of the process-based instructional management information system IMSeries. VIP Tone added IMSeries to its School MATRIX Platform, which integrates a Student Information System with the management of standards and local curricula, lesson planning, assessments, case management, and other functions. <http://www.viptone.com>