Electronic Tools for Technology Evaluation, Assessment, and Planning

On January 8, 2002, President Bush signed into law the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* (NCLB) with the aim of closing the achievement gap between disadvantaged and minority students and their peers. The Act is based on four basic principles: stronger accountability for results, increased flexibility and local control, expanded options for parents, and an emphasis on teaching methods that have been proven to work (US Department of Education, 2003). Of these principles, the phrases “accountability for results”, “increased local control” and “proven teaching methods” are of particular importance. Roughly translated, national, state, and local school entities will be held accountable for the success or failure of students and will be forced to examine teaching methods in the process.

Conversely, in opposition to the efforts of NCLB is the recent economic state of the nation. When discussing public education it is almost impossible to avoid the phrase “budget cuts”. The effects of the economy can be witnessed at all educational levels, including national, state, and local entities. Legislators as well as administrators are being forced to cut programs, tighten budgets, and reevaluate educational resource allocations.

Traditionally, technology has been an area where vast financial resources have been made available with little to no accountability of their effectiveness. However, the traditional approach is currently in direct contradiction with both the economic state of the nation and NCLB. As a result, legislators and administrators at all levels are scrambling to employ planning and decision-making methods to not only justify the need...
for technology but also afford assessment and accountability of technology use in education.

Nationally, on May 23, 2003, the US Department of Education called for input in crafting a new National Education Technology Plan to help address accountability and funding issues. Likewise, on June 10, 2003, President Bush announced the acceptance of accountability plans for all 50 states (US Department of Education, 2003), which included extensive sections on technology in education. Therefore, both national and state entities are crafting or have crafted plans to accommodate both the economic crisis and NCLB. The next logical area of emphasis will turn to the local level and school administrative decision-making.

This presentation will focus on technology planning and decision-making methods that can be used at the local level by school administrators and faculty. These methods will allow for stronger accountability, increased local control, and greater assessment of effective practices, all primary goals of NCLB. The specific areas of discussion will include information on how to 1) plan and implement a technology evaluation, 2) conduct a technology needs assessment, 3) and develop and execute a technology plan. Electronic resources such as handouts, worksheets, and guidelines will be illustrated. The practices and materials introduced will allow local administrators and faculty to use sound methods and existing electronic resources to guide their decision-making processes while taking into account the social, economic, and political factors currently influencing technology in education.