**Integrating NETS: A Success Story**

Over the past ten years, beginning in 1992, Valley City State University (VCSU) has been moving in a new direction. This new bearing has not replaced the continuing strengths of the institution, which include the training of pre-service teachers and the preparing of regional business graduates and pre-professional students. This new purpose has woven the use and understanding of technology into the fabric of the curriculum and daily life of the entire campus population. VCSU has become a state and national leader in educational technology. In May 2002 the VCSU Teacher Education Program was recognized with the ISTE/NETS Distinguished Achievement Award. This award recognizes exemplary models of integration of the ISTE/NETS for teacher standards into their teacher education programs

There are four main elements to the Valley City State University Teacher Education program that led to the ISTE/NETS Distinguished Achievement Award. In the fall of 1996, in order to help preservice teachers achieve greater success in transforming education with the power of information technology, Valley City State University (VCSU) became a notebook campus. All faculty and students are issued a notebook computer for 24 hour use. In 2000, the elementary education program received a PT3 Grant and began to develop a collaborative effort with K-6 classrooms. The heart of the effort is two-fold: 1) to provide in-service teachers with technology expertise and support for their efforts to integrate technology into their curriculum, and 2) to give preservice teachers practical classroom experience in integrating technology into the curriculum. Along with this collaboration, the elementary education faculty mapped the NETS*T to their classes.

Because information technology permeates the VCSU elementary education program as well as the entire campus, integrating NETS*T into the education course was a logical progress of what we were already doing. The conceptual framework of the program is based on the teacher as a knowledge-based decision maker. One of the required university abilities in our program is technology ability. Students are required to demonstrate this ability in various education courses and on their graduation digital portfolio. Integrating the NETS*T into the course requirements was a natural outgrowth of the ongoing commitment to the effective use of technology.

VCSU contracted with an outside evaluator to assess our progress in meeting the NETS*T. The evaluators report indicated that the students exceeded all the elements of the Professional Preparation Performance Profile. The report also indicated that the students met eight of the NETS*T and were making significant progress on six more. There were nine that had no observable progress. This report is being used to inform our next future mapping of the standards to specific projects in courses.

Another unique and important aspect of our education program at Valley City State University that relates to the NETS*T is our digital portfolios. Measuring student learning remains a challenging task at every level. At Valley City State University, the digital portfolio is the basis for institutional assessment of student achievement, along
with more traditional measures. The unit’s objectives for student learning tie into the University’s student assessment model, which is based on documentation of eight abilities. Each teacher education program requires five university abilities for candidate proficiency, and all teacher education programs have specified competencies to be achieved in the three teacher education abilities: planning, implementing, and evaluating. Content area faculty have identified the abilities, skills, and levels required for candidate proficiency for eight of the University abilities. Effective with the class of 2002, teacher education candidates must produce a digital portfolio to document their competencies on the required abilities and skills at the defined levels for their program. The senior electronic portfolio is now a requirement for graduation.

The mapping of the abilities throughout the curriculum, especially in the majors, has been a key method of ensuring that students gain the knowledge and skills they need for an acceptable portfolio. Throughout the portfolio development, candidates reflect on how their educational experiences and abilities relate to the real world. Upon graduation, preservice teachers take with them the compelling knowledge of how powerful portfolio assessment can be.