



## VITALNews

Virginia Initiative for  
Technology and  
Administrative Leadership

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### Learning Patience from the Birds

My husband and I just returned from our annual birding trip to eastern North Carolina. We added two birds to our life list and were awed by the flocks of thousands of snow geese and tundra swans that floated on the lakes and swarmed in the fields. As I stood on the observation deck overlooking Pungo Lake spying on the swans, it occurred to me that this hobby may have something to teach those of us engaged in helping teachers successfully integrate technology. What's the lesson? In a word: patience.

Birding requires lots of patience. Once a bird is in the scope, the viewer must look carefully for precise details of the beak, feather markings and leg color. I would suggest that as we work with individual teachers to help them use technology themselves and put it in the hands of their students, we must apply this same patient, careful

“looking” before we apply particular solutions.

Some technology integration models try to link several elements including access, pedagogy, and technology use in one continuum. We should envision a series of continuums that describe pedagogy, access, student learning styles, and content. Then, we can more carefully examine each facet of a classroom and determine the most successful uses for technology in that setting.

A technology specialist whose primary role is to do this kind of careful identification is invaluable, and Virginia has recommended that divisions hire one for every 1,000 students. Teachers generally lack time to do this kind of work on their own and an extra pair of eyes and hands can be the difference between technology use or non-use. Many pundits have commented on the difficulty of changing schools, but I believe with careful, patient work, technology can be integrated successfully.

*Happy New Year!*  
*Karen*

## Technology Rises to Tsunami Challenge

The devastation wrought by the Christmas tsunami is almost incomprehensible in scope. The Internet has played a unique role in providing up-to-the-minute news, facilitating donations, and organizing discussion boards that help users locate loved ones.

*On The Media*, a weekly radio program from National Public Radio, recently spoke with Esther Dyson about the role of the Internet in responding to crises. You can listen to the program online at [On The Media's website](#).

## WCVE and VSTE Host Conferences

EdTech has become one of central Virginia's most valued educational resources for teachers, principals, library media specialists and administrators. This annual two-day conference is hosted by the Educational Services staff of WCVE and

highlights the wealth of technology available to educators from K-12. Everyone is offered an opportunity to network and share ideas on technology application and integration for classroom use in hands-on workshops and sessions.

EdTech 2005 will be held Wednesday, February 2 and Thursday, February 3 at Randolph-Macon College in Ashland, Virginia. Deadline for registration is January 28, and those who register before January 14 will be eligible for three special door prizes. To learn more, [visit the conference website](#).

VSTE's 2005 Annual State Technology Conference will be held in Norfolk at the Waterside Marriott from March 13-15, 2005. This conference represents an excellent professional development experience for Virginia teachers. To learn more, [visit the conference website](#).

## USDOE Releases National Ed Tech Plan

American education is being bolstered by the increasing use of educational technology, greater accountability, and growing new partnerships between tech-savvy students and

teachers, according to a report released today by the U.S. Department of Education.

*Toward a New Golden Age in American Education: How the Internet, the Law and Today's Students are Revolutionizing Expectation*, focuses on signs of progress in core subjects, benefits from reforms stimulated by the bipartisan No Child Left Behind Act, and the success of innovative new approaches to learning through advances in educational technology. It also profiles today's students and includes a sampling of the views and recommendations of more than 200,000 students in all 50 states, which is consistent with the president's management agenda for government to be more customer-oriented.

The report includes Paige's vision and recommendations for a National Education Technology Plan, based on input received from educators and technology experts across the country.

The report includes numerous details of successful initiatives and partnerships developed at the state level by school districts and by individual schools. It concludes with a series of recommendations for enhancing the use and benefits of new technologies, and places them within the

context of long-term, systemic transformation, covering such issues as leadership, management, teacher training and funding.

The full text of the National Education Technology Plan is available at [www.ed.gov/technology/plan](http://www.ed.gov/technology/plan).

## ETIC Offers Software and Hardware Reviews

Educational Technology Information Center, ETIC, is a free web site offering peer reviews of hardware, software (instructional and administrative) and services in the K-12 and Higher Ed markets. It is sponsored by T.H.E. Journal.

According to the ETIC website, the goal is to provide a forum for educators to share their experiences using technology in the real world so that everyone can make smarter ed-tech investments.

Publishers, manufacturers, resellers, and end users will all benefit from this site. Manufacturers and software publishers will be able to input data about their company and products and

respond to comments and questions posted from others. People who have made a purchase will be able to rate products and write reviews of them based on their real experiences. Prospective buyers will be able to read reviews and commentary and post their own questions to help them gather information to justify a purchase.

To learn more, [visit the website](#).

## ASCD Provides Daily News Brief

Don't have time to keep up with education news? Then, the *ASCD SamrtBrief* is for you. I subscribe to this free, daily email service and am impressed with their news coverage. You do not have to belong to ASCD to subscribe to the service. Each weekday morning, you'll receive an email with links to major national and international news stories related to education. To learn more, read a sample issue, or subscribe, [visit the website](#).

While you're there, poke around a little. ASCD's annual conference will be held in Orlando, FL, April 2 – 4, 2005. In addition, they offer lots of publications and other resources.

## Open Source Playground Available

In past issues of the newsletter, we've discussed two open source tools: Moodle and Wiki. Moodle is a content management system similar to Blackboard or WebCT. Wiki is a web-based publishing system that allows collaborative writing and editing.

Recently, I installed both of these tools on my website, mostly for my own experimentation and to use with my preservice teachers at William and Mary. However, I would also like to encourage others to give them a try. In addition to Moodle and Wiki, I have also installed a notetaking/bibliography tool called Wikindx.

In these days of shrinking budgets, these free open source tools can be quite appealing to school divisions. They are surprisingly easy to use with stable versions available for all three of them. I was able to quickly and easily set them up on my server.

You can get to the tools at [simplykaren.org](http://simplykaren.org). I also maintain a personal blog there as well as a photo and digital video archive.

## Karen's InBox

*A monthly feature in which we get a peek into Karen's InBox for items of interest to the VITAL community*

### ASBJ Must Reads

The American School Board Journal has just published its must-read list for 2004. The seven picks of the Notable Books of 2004 include a study of a career-changer's first year teaching in a New York City public school and an exploration of the social and economic conditions underlying the racial achievement gap. You can read the list by [visiting the website](#).

### 21<sup>st</sup> Century Yearbook

From the *Des Moines Register*, an article about the "new" yearbook being produced by Lincoln High School. In addition to the usual hardbound book, students can also buy a CD-ROM version. They will also have access to a website. By adding digital media, the yearbook staff can include many more photographs than they could

in the book and also use video. You can [read the article online](#).

### Flat Stanley Encourages Writing

Participating in the Flat Stanley project is free and easy. Students create their own version of Flat Stanley and complete journal entries. They then mail their Flat Stanleys and accompanying journals to another project participant whose students add to the journals. Want to know more about this popular online project? [Visit the website](#).

### Quicktakes

*Links to websites of interest to educators*

[You Wouldn't Want to Be...](#)

Created by The Salariya Book Company, these innovative titles use a unique combination of information and humor to describe life in earlier times. Web users can interact with the characters by simply moving the cursor over them, to see their thoughts and comments as each story unfolds. The website offers four books on topics

including Rome, Egypt and whaling.

[It's Delicious](#)

A new online, bookmarking tool allows users to not only save their favorites online but also to find out who else has been bookmarking the same sites. Rather than using a folder-based organizational method, del.icio.us allows users to assign keywords, called "tags," to their bookmarks. Users can also subscribe to others' lists and be notified when new bookmarks are added. Use the link above to visit the homepage or [check out my site](#).

[Podcasting](#)

We'll cover podcasting in more detail in future issues of the newsletter, but the simplest description is on-demand radio. Podcasts range from very amateur talk shows to archives of real radio shows. Use this directory to start exploring this emerging technology.

