

VITALNews

Virginia Initiative for Technology and Administrative Leadership



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Technology and
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Life Long Learning

Leadership is learning, according to Dr. Peter Vaill, an organizational change theorist. This “learning premise” suggests that leaders must go against the usually negative view of a beginner and learn to be good beginners as they navigate what Vaill calls the “permanent white water” faced by organizations in the contemporary world.

Schools are no different than other organizations when it comes to turbulence and change. New policies like No Child Left Behind, new theories of learning, and new technologies all put pressure on schools to change. Leaders at all levels of the school must find ways to embrace these changes and move forward despite the many challenges faced.

One way to do this, according to Vaill, is by becoming a life-long “leaderly” learner. Becoming a principal does not mean that you can stop learning about being a

principal. In fact, you are only just beginning.

And, you must challenge the teachers to keep learning as well. How often, when we are introducing a new program, do we bring in an expert for a day or two, read an article, maybe visit a neighboring school with the same program, and then we move on, secure in the notion that we have learned all there is to know about this new program? The next year, a new expert comes with new ideas, and so on.

Teaching is a craft that can only get better the more we think, talk and read about it. Every day is a new beginning, and rather than seeing it as the same old thing, we should embrace that sense of being a beginner, looking at our schools and students with fresh eyes.

Vaill’s essay is a quick but worthwhile read and can be [accessed online](#). In addition, the video [Principles in Action](#) provides ideas for how to create ongoing professional development in your school.

*Happy surfing,
Karen*

Don't Miss VSTE

VSTE's 2005 Annual State Technology Conference will be held in Norfolk at the Waterside Marriott from March 13-15, 2005. You can register online for the conference until February 27, 2005. This conference represents an excellent professional development experience for Virginia teachers. To learn more, [visit the conference website](#).

NECC in Philadelphia

Imagine 15,000 educators, a vendor hall the size of several football fields, and workshops that go from morning until night, and that's what the National Educational Computing Conference is like. This one-of-a-kind educational technology conference is definitely high energy and guaranteed to excite even the most reluctant technology user.

Here's the really good news: this year, NECC is in Philadelphia, just a half-day's drive from most parts of Virginia. This is a wonderful conference for teachers and administrators, and I would encourage you to send a

team of folks to enjoy this experience. And don't just send the geeks and technoenthusiasts. Look around for some content folks who, even though they may not be techies, are open to new ideas and excited about learning. To learn more, [visit the conference website](#).

Virginia Featured in National EdTech Plan

Virginia's success in utilizing educational technology to increase student achievement is highlighted in a new report from the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE), discussed in last month's *VITALNews*.

Virginia is praised in the USDOE report for pioneering online testing and improving instruction through the Web-based Standards of Learning (SOL) Technology Initiative. Since the initiative was launched in 2000, Virginia students have taken more than 400,000 SOL tests online, including 47,000 tests taken online during the course of a single day in the spring of 2004. All of the commonwealth's high schools and 40 percent

of Virginia's middle schools now meet the initiative's objectives for educational technology.

The USDOE report also recognized the commonwealth for its progress in meeting the goals of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. Virginia was one of nine states in which the number of schools meeting the federal law's objectives for achievement in reading and mathematics increased by at least ten percentage points.

In addition to the test delivery system, Virginia's Web-based SOL

Technology Initiative, implemented five years ago, gives school divisions the opportunity to use technology to improve instructional, remedial, and testing capabilities. The initiative provides greater student access to computers; Internet-ready local area network capability in every school; and adequate high-speed, high-bandwidth capability for instructional, remedial, and testing needs. To date, all Virginia's high schools, more than 40 percent of middle schools and 10 percent of elementary schools currently meet the technology initiative requirements.

The infrastructure developed through the SOL Technology Initiative is now supporting the

implementation of a Web-based Educational Information Management System (EIMS) for the collection, reporting, and management of state and local student data about K-12 education. The EIMS also will provide a powerful tool for educators to make informed decisions about instruction.

Currently, the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) is working to create unique student testing identifiers, ensure secure data transfer, and provide decision-support tools teachers and administrators can use in measuring student progress. VDOE expects to have student data from all 132-school divisions in the EIMS by the end of February.

The USDOE report also featured a program that supplied every Henrico County high school student - and later expanded to include all middle school students and elementary school teachers - with a laptop computer as an example of a successful effort by a school district to integrate technology and instruction.

The full text of the [National Education Technology Plan](#) is available online.

Report Highlights of Leadership on Student Achievement

Two reports from Mid-content Research for Education and Learning are essential reading for school leaders. The first—Balanced Leadership—provides a meta-analysis of research into the effect of leadership on student achievement. Using the results of that report, a new McREL report examines the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards for school leaders. The report seeks to answer the question: In what ways does the Balanced Leadership Framework compare to and add value to the use of the ISLLC standards for the preparation, licensure, and professional development of school leaders? You can read both reports online at the [McREL website](#).

Leading for Learning

This series of special reports from Education Week deals with issues of leadership as they relate to education. The most recent

article focused on site-based management in the Edmonton, Alberta school district. You can access the reports, as well as online chat transcripts. In addition, the series includes a review of data collected from the federal 1999-2000 Schools and Staffing Survey. The results—probably not a surprise to the *VITALNews* readers—indicate that principals spend far more time on management activities than instructional activities. Visit [Education Week's website](#) to learn more. NB: You will need a login and password to access the site.

Karen's InBox

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

Just In Time for Valentine's Day

An article from an Australian newspaper tells the story of a couple who met in an online chat room, fell in love, and set a wedding to date only to discover when they met in person that they were already married. An

amusing story of love in the modern age that you can read [online](#).

IPods Move Into Medicine

Just in case you weren't sure what to do with an iPod, this article from CNET News describes how radiologists from the University of California, Los Angeles, are using the handheld music players to store, view and share digital images. Because the system uses open source software, UCLA can avoid the \$100,000 workstations normally required to render the 3D images. You can read the article [online](#).

Curriculum and the Culture Wars

A recent article in *The Detroit News* discusses the increasing battles over what to teach in our nation's schools. While issues of sex education and evolution have been around for a long time, President Bush's reelection may signal strength for conservatives, who are now moving to make changes in at the local and state level. You can read the article [online](#).

Heaven on Earth

I am an amateur astronomer who enjoys pointing my telescope at the stars. But, when the temperature gets below about 30 degrees, I much prefer doing my astronomy work inside. Thanks to the Internet and some remote controlled telescopes on the Canary Islands, I can do just that. Since the Canaries are 5 hours ahead, I can start viewing as early as 3 PM!

[Slooh.com](#) offers Internet users live views of a variety of deep space objects every evening. Every 10 to 15 minutes, the telescopes move into position to view nebula, stars, and clusters. Users can manipulate the view and snap up to three pictures that are stored in their mission log and can be downloaded to share with others.

While I generally prefer recommending free sites, Slooh.com is an exception. But it is certainly worth the annual \$50 fee that allows you to login every day if you like. (Of course, clouds or rain will scrub the missions but that doesn't seem to happen too often.) Part of the annual fee entitles members to two private viewings each year in which you can ask to see a particular object. The site does offer a free seven-day trial.

Recently, I spent several evenings in my backyard trying to bring the recently discovered Machholtz comet into view, but it was just a little too dim for me to see. With Slooh.com, not only could I see the comet but I could also take several pictures, one of which can be seen below. It is certainly an exciting way to bring the heavens down to earth!

