

VITALNews

Virginia Initiative for Technology and Administrative Leadership



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Technology and
Administrative Leadership

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The Range of Technology

I recently got an email from the minister at my church. She wanted to display the words to a hymn during a church service, and someone had told her that I could help her out with a computer and a projector. In my reply, I suggested to her that the most appropriate technology to use for this particular need would be an “old-fashioned” overhead projector and a transparency.

I tell this story because it illustrates for me one of the problems with the advent of readily available advanced technologies: we forget that they don’t make the old ones completely obsolete. And that’s why, instead of starting with the technology, we should start with the problem or need. In this case, she needed to display text to an audience for about two minutes. When we take the time to really examine that need, we can weigh the options and dragging \$3000 worth of equipment to church (not to mention power strips and extension cords) really seems like overkill.

This little vignette makes me wonder how much overkill is going on in our schools? Teachers—afraid of being seen as old-fashioned—feel as though they aren’t technological enough if they continue to use technologies like overhead projectors. Yet, if that’s the right tool for the job, then we should be encouraging them to use it.

Adding advanced technologies to our toolkit should widen the range of available technologies not narrow it. For me, technology integration is about making choices that meet needs and solve problems. For presenting static text, charts and graphs, or even student work, an overhead might be just the thing. For interactive, multimedia presentations, an LCD projector and computer are probably more appropriate. I’m hoping that one of the ways that ITRTs might really make a difference is in helping teachers make these choices about which tools are right for the job.

*Happy surfing,
Karen*

VSTE Offers Pro Dev Deal

The [Virginia Society of Technology in Education](#) has negotiated special tiered pricing with [Atomic Learning](#) to offer schools in Virginia a substantial break on site licenses -- a break that grows as the total number of teacher and student users increases.

Small school divisions can now purchase based on larger school division cost levels. Large school divisions can save even more money. This program is open to all educational programs in Virginia, K - Community College, public and private. Pricing levels are based on the total number of user licenses purchased state-wide.

Atomic Learning offers a library of over 16,000 tutorials on over 80 software applications from well-known publishers including Apple, Adobe, Macromedia, Microsoft, Blackboard, Promethean, Tom Snyder Productions (Scholastic), award-winning Inspiration Software, Thinkronize (netTrekker) and many more.

To learn more about how this opportunity can help your school, visit the [VSTE website](#).



The best place to look for educational technology conferences is at [T.H.E. Journal](#). Their [searchable calendar](#) is a comprehensive guide to national and international conferences. In this space, we'll be featuring conferences of particular interest to Virginia educators.

[Educational Technology Leadership Conference](#)

Sponsored by the Virginia Department of Education and held at the Hotel Roanoke Conference Center in Roanoke, VA, December 5-7, 2005. This conference caters to school division leaders and provides lots of opportunities to network with administrators from across the state.

[Virginia Society for Technology and Education Annual Conference](#)

Hotel Roanoke Conference Center, March 12, 13, and 14, 2006. This gathering of educators just keeps getting bigger every year and is perfect for classroom teachers. Plan on sending a team!

[Florida Educational Technology Conference](#)

Orange County Convention Center, Orlando, FL, March 22-24, 2005. This state conference has become something of a national and international celebration. I'll be doing a presentation so why not come?

[National Educational Computing Conference](#)

San Diego, July 4 - 7, 2006. Thousands of educators come together once a year to talk about technology. Just amazing!

VSKOOL Consortium Offers Help to Schools

Hurricane Katrina had a devastating effect on so many people and organizations, and schools are no exception. Students have shown up in districts across the country, including here in Virginia. Other students do not have access to local schooling. I'm sure all of us have wondered about ways we can make a difference for these students and their teachers.

vSKOOL is a consortium of organizations and institutions--including education associations, virtual schools, technology, media, and instructional software companies, for-profits, non-profits and foundations--all working together to provide education-related relief to K-12 students, educators, and families displaced by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

vSKOOL was launched September 7, 2005, by Cable in the Classroom, the cable industry's education foundation, and the North American Council for Online Learning.

Other initiative organizers include the Consortium for School Networking, the Education

Industry Association, the International Society for Technology in Education, Elliott Masie's Learning Consortium, the Software & Information Industry Association, and the State Educational Technology Directors Association.

In offering help for schools and students affected by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, vSKOOL also is working in partnership with the U.S. Department of Education.

Specifically, vSKOOL is:

- * Finding traditional and virtual school programs to offer course enrollments and tutoring to affected students;

- * Locating highly-qualified teachers to volunteer to teach or tutor affected students in face-to-face and online settings;

- * Soliciting and identifying corporate and foundation support (e.g., through scholarships) to help provide students access to valuable educational products and services;

- * Organizing computer hardware, software, and infrastructure providers to provide computers and broadband internet connectivity to create learning centers to provide access to online courses and other educational technology products and services; and

- * Coordinating with providers of other, related educational products and services to offer schools serving displaced students a variety of choices to tailor instruction to their unique needs and circumstances.

vSKOOL has several ways to learn more about their work and how you might help. Your first stop should be [the vSKOOL website](#). From there, [check out the blog](#) that is updated daily with news and information about education and Hurricane Katrina. Finally, if email is more your speed, [subscribe to the vSKOOL mailing list](#) at Yahoo.



It's Election Time! A Focus on Voting



Voting Data

Want to know how Accomack County voted in the 1988 Congressional election? Or how Portsmouth voted in the 1985 Gubernatorial race? Or maybe you're more interested in historical Presidential election data? The University of Virginia Library has a one-stop for this kind of data.

The election data is provided as part of [Geostat](#), the Geospatial and Statistical Data Center, which provides access to maps, geospatial data, and social science datasets.

Plan to spend some time exploring all the resources available at the Geostat website. You can search county and city data, maps and aerial photos and census data. While some of the resources are limited to UVA users, most are available to everyone.

LWV Website

[The League of Women Voters in Virginia](#) is a nonpartisan political organization encouraging the informed and active participation of citizens in government. The site offers a Voter's Guide to the upcoming November elections that includes information about candidates in all the races throughout the state.

Students can figure out their voting locations, fill out sample voter registration forms, and find out who their representatives are and how to contact them.

The League also offers several publications including *The Virginia Voter* newsletter, the *Legislative Newsletter*, published when the General Assembly is in session, and *Your Virginia Government*, a book prepared for the citizens of Virginia.



The Democracy Project

From PBS, [The Democracy Project](#) is a website designed to help students understand both the voting process as well as the importance of voting.

Students can be President for a day, choosing their activities and making decisions. They can take a tour of their town, learning how local, state, and federal governments affect everything from school buses to the school nurse, courtrooms to classrooms. The Voting Time Machine takes students back into time where they learn the history of voting rights in the United States. The site also includes an interesting list of elections that were decided by just one vote, including the decision to go to war against Mexico in 1846.