



Did you know that....?

Computer equipment purchased through NERIC that is excessed by the BOCES may now be acquired by school districts for a nominal fee?

Here's how.....

First, equipment must be determined by BOCES to be fully depreciated (approximately after 5 years from purchase). Then, the BOCES follows the policy and excesses this equipment. The BOCES advertises this equipment for purchase at a nominal fee. Districts may then purchase the equipment. Once a letter of interest is received from the district, the transfer of assets begins.



If you would like to learn more about this win/win opportunity, please contact MIT@gw.neric.org ■

From the Director's Desk...

Continued from Pg. 7

PART II. SYSTEMS AND DATA AUDIT

a. Objective - To analyze the manner in which a district collects, maintains, disseminates and utilizes data.

b. Two Phase Audit - Overall phase looks at district policies, procedures, staffing and other district controlled issues relating to systems and data. A detail phase then analyzes data readiness by creating a data map of key data elements. The audit results in recommendation to bring district into a state of data readiness.

PART III. LEAP AND STEP DATA PROCESSING

a. Objective - To load all previous years LEAP and STEP information into the warehouse.

This effort is the first phase in improving student information systems to meet the goal of using data driven decision making to inform and improve instruction in the classroom. Cooperation is the key in accomplishing this goal as inexpensively as possible.

I hope you have a great end to this 2003-2004 school year and I will be sharing more information with you in the fall. Feel free to call me at the NERIC if you want to talk more about Data Warehousing.

Reminder:

Signed 2004/2005 Commitment Forms for NERIC Services were due from school districts to the NERIC on May 1st. Also included in the packet were 1) Statement of Assurances for Technology Services, 2) Letter of Agency form for E-rate consortium application, and 3) Form 479 - CIPA Compliance. If you have not returned your signed forms yet, please do so.

The Northeastern Regional Information Center has collaborated with the BOCES Communications Service to produce **Computer Bytes.**
Editor: Elaine Banach 456-9256

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The compliance officer for Title IX and Section 504 is Barbara Nagler. She is available from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. weekdays at the above listed address. Her phone number is (518) 456-9215.

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COMPUTER BYTES

Providing Computer Solutions for Educators



N O R T H E A S T E R N R E G I O N A L I N F O R M A T I O N C E N T E R

FM on the Internet

A New Delivery Method *By Jim Polewczak*

Starting this past year, we have begun a new way of providing our premier financial package, Finance Manager. We now have the capability of providing this service via Internet, using Citrix. For those who are not familiar with Citrix, it is a method of supplying a remotely running application, with a minimum of fuss and equipment. Instead of the traditional client / server application running at the district, it runs on a server farm here at NERIC, and the users simply access a desktop which is running on a server here at NERIC.

Why should you consider this option? There are several answers.

First, the product is identical to what you would run at your district. The biggest difference is that the district does not need to provide a server to run the application, and along with that, all the attendant headaches. What am I talking about? How about data backups? Do your network personnel actually check the backup results every day, and take the backup media offsite every day? We do here at NERIC. That in itself should be a big relief. As they say in the commercials ...But wait, there's more.....

You know those older Windows 98 machines you have, and were considering replacing? They are ideal for the Citrix application. Citrix is a thin client application, meaning it doesn't place a heavy processor load on the desktop. All the heavy work is done here at NERIC. But wait, there's more.....

Security is always an issue. Some districts require users to change their passwords on a regular basis, but not all. In our system, you will be asked to change your password on a quarterly basis. Also, mickey mouse passwords are not permitted, so having someone guess your password is much more difficult. But wait, there's more.....

Since you're not running a server at the district, there's a cost savings in itself. In addition, there are other licensing cost savings. On top of that, Citrix users also have the use of Office XP. That means the latest version of Microsoft Word, Excel, Access, and Powerpoint are available to each Citrix user. On top of that, your data files can be stored on our server farm, and backed up each night. Alternately you would have

the option of saving them on your local machine. The workaholic can then take them home, if they so desire. But wait, there's more.....

There are times when the users just are

There are times when the users just are totally stumped at how to solve a problem. A huge support advantage of Citrix, is that the financial coordinators can "shadow" an FM user and help them understand how to solve a problem.

totally stumped at how to solve a problem. A huge support advantage of Citrix, is that the financial coordinators can "shadow" an FM user and help

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FM on the Internet A New Delivery Method

them understand how to solve a problem. What is shadowing? Basically, a coordinator can start a program which will then tap into the user's Citrix desktop to see exactly what the user is seeing. The coordinator can even move the mouse, and use the keyboard as if they were sitting directly at their side. Shadowing cannot take place unless the user specifically allows the coordinator to enter. This happens by the user seeing a notification on their screen that someone wants to shadow, and then the user must click on the

OK box. No one can be shadowed without their knowledge. Also shadowing can only be done by the NERIC support staff, so there will be no games played by other district staff. But wait, there's more.....

The list goes on. Contact Marlene Howe at mhowe@gw.neric.org or Ralph Scorza at rscorza@gw.neric.org to find out about other benefits and cost savings of running FM over the internet.

Health (DOH) to assist school districts, counties and §4201 schools in obtaining Medicaid reimbursement for billable services and evaluations provided to Medicaid eligible students who have been determined to have a disability. Billable services are speech, physical therapy, occupational therapy, psychological counseling, skilled nursing, and special transportation. Districts can also bill for psychological, medical, medical specialist and audiological evaluations, as well as Targeted Case Management. Since districts are required to provide services on a student's Individualized Educational Program (IEP), regardless of their eligibility for Medicaid, any revenue recovered in this manner is beneficial to the district (helping to offset a portion of the cost.)

Before districts will be able to use the Web Reports capability, the Superintendent of each school district will have to submit a list of people who are to be granted access to their district's information. This will generally be limited to Superintendents, Business Managers, CSE Chairs/ Directors and Medicaid clerical staff. All users will be required to complete an Acceptable Use Policy form before

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Medicaid Web-Based REPORT

By Mary McGeoch

New York State Department of Education, New York State Department of Health, and NERIC's sister regional information center - the Central New York Regional Information Center (CNYRIC) - have worked together to develop Web-Based Medicaid Reports capability. Districts will continue to submit their demographic and services billing data to NERIC, but soon will be downloading their own reports and the eligibility and remittance data from the web. CNYRIC hopes to allow web submission of Medicaid data sometime next year.

A little background for individuals who are unfamiliar with Medicaid billing by school districts - The School Supportive Health Services Program (SSHSP) was developed jointly by the New York State Department of Education (SED) and the New York State Department of



NERIC's Annual Fall Hike

On September 27th some NERIC staffers and family members climbed Severance Hill. They had a great view of Schroon Lake. Severance Hill is just west of Northway Exit 28. The trail length is 2 miles round trip and has a height of 1,693 feet. Severance Hill starts with a tunnel under the Northway that was created to safely funnel



deer from one side of the Northway to the other. If you would like information on the NERIC's Fall Hike for 2004, please contact Linda Hovious at lhovious@gw.neric.org.

Staff STUFF

By Elaine Banach

New Staff:



Felicia D'Aversa:
Administrative
Coordinator



Christine Schultz:
Administrative
Coordinator-
Guilderland



Jonnie Maria Lazzara:
Administrative
Coordinator



Dawn Zacharek:
Instructional Coordinator

Richard Juliano:
DDP Coordinator - Chatham

Keith Spiewak:
DDP Coordinator - Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake

Promotions:

Rebecca Armsby:
Secretary to Director

Kerry Farina:
DDP Coordinator

Joe Masucci:
DDP Coordinator - Scotia-Glenville

Lisa Schaeffer:
Statewide Projects Coordinator

Jamie Steenberge:
Administrative Coordinator - Saranac

Robert Womble:
DDP Coordinator

Employee of the Month

WINNERS

September 2003 -

Lisa Schaeffer:
Statewide Projects
Coordinator

October 2003 -

Beth Cash:
Instructional Coordinator

November 2003 -

Kerry Farina: DDP
Coordinator

December 2003 -

William Wanzer:
Instructional Coordinator

January 2004 -

Mike Ippolito:
Applications Analyst II

February 2004 -

Carol Stack:
Applications Analyst II

March 2004 -

Hilary Delavare:
Instructional Coordinator

April 2004 -

Leah Groff:
DDP Specialist

New Staff Join NERIC Student SERVICES

By William Colgan

NERIC Student Services received an infusion of talent and energy this winter with the addition of three new staff members: Jonnie Maria Lazzara, Christine Schultz, and Tom McKeown.

Jonnie comes to the NERIC by way of Atlanta, Georgia, and brings with her some twenty years experience in computer implementations in the print industry, as well as a distinctly not upstate New York manner of speech. If a conversation with Student Services ends in a warm "Have a wonderful day, Y'all", the caller probably was speaking with Jonnie. She is providing user support, with frequent field visits, for the NERIC's WISDIM and Win School student database applications.

Christine works primarily, but not solely, with staff in the Guilderland School District, supporting the NERIC's StarBase Oracle[®] powered student database program. Christine joined the NERIC after a decade plus as an independent trainer and database developer for public and private sector clients, including Fortune 500 companies. Christine brings an important depth of training experience to Student Services, and she will be developing training programs and supplemental database extracts for use

by all the NERIC's StarBase customers.

Tom had served with the NERIC's Financial Services unit for the past four years. He thus comes to Student Services with an immediate background with public school districts, and brings experience with the NERIC's customers in particular. Tom primarily works in StarBase support, with particular focus on the NERIC's unique WEB based implementation of StarBase. Tom's ability to handle tough technical challenges, plus his knowledge of what public school districts need and do, are real assets for Student Services.

These new Student Services representatives may be reached: Jonnie Lazzara (jlazzara@gw.neric.org); Christine Schultz (cschultz@gw.neric.org); and Tom McKeown (tmckeown@gw.neric.org).



Helping Make HOLIDAY DREAMS Come True

By Mike Ippolito

Many charities provide invaluable services to families with a serious financial need. But few offer the type of reward that comes from delivering a van full of gifts to the doorstep of a family and seeing childrens' faces light up and parents' eyes tear up at the sight of a holiday dream come true.

For the past two years, NERIC's Systems & Programming department has organized an interoffice Adopt A Family project in conjunction with the Albany County Department of Children, Youth and Families. The generosity of so many NERIC and Central Administration employees has allowed us to deliver over \$2000 worth of gifts to families in need each year.

Items requested and donated range from essential items (shirts, boots, socks, coats, hats, cookware, bed sheets, blankets, personal care items, gift certificates for the grocery store) to enjoyment items (television, board games, video game systems, restaurant gift certificates).

The Systems & Programming unit would like to thank everyone that contributed this year for making our effort such a success. If you are interested in becoming a donor for next year's winter holiday season, please contact Mike Ippolito at mippolito@gw.neric.org.



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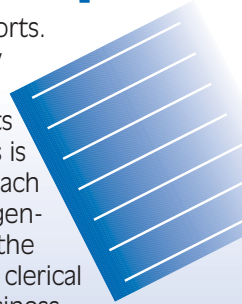
Medicaid Web-Based Report

access can be granted. This is to protect the confidentiality of the information.

NERIC Medicaid Support staff (David Blades and Mary McGeoch) will assist districts with setup and training. Each district user will be required to have Internet Explorer (IE) v. 5.5 or higher, hardware capable of supporting IE 5.5 or higher, and Internet access. SED is requiring compliance by districts in order to continue to bill for Medicaid reimbursement. If any of the individuals who will need access does not currently have access, they are asking districts to rectify this situation as soon as possible. Approved personnel will log into a secure website. They will then be able to access, print, or save eligibility and remittance data and all associ-

ated reports. Currently one set of reports and disks is sent to each district, generally to the Medicaid clerical staff. Business officials may find that having access makes it easier for them to anticipate revenue and reconcile reports.

For more information please contact Mary McGeoch at mmcgeoch@gw.neric.org.



School Safety and Security

The Capital Region BOCES Health/Safety/Risk Management program and the Northeastern Regional Information Center (NERIC) have teamed with all Schenectady County schools and the county's Emergency Services Department to implement new technology that will improve school safety and security.

Introducing Site-Wise

The Schenectady City School District secured an Emergency Response and Crisis Management grant from the U.S. Department of Education last year to purchase Site-Wise, computer software that can be used to digitally map every nook and cranny of a school building. A product of the MJW Corp., Site-Wise enables authorized personnel to access digital pictures and related diagrams of any school building through an Intranet (an organization's private and secure internal network) or the Internet.

NERIC will host the application on its server. "This will provide emergency responders access to the information from a secure, remote site," said NERIC Assistant Director Denise Graminski, adding that NERIC will also provide training. "The software is user-friendly, so there's not a steep learning curve."

When time is of the essence

New York State law requires all schools to have
Continued on Pg. 6

REGIONAL TECHNOLOGY Awareness Day 2003

By Lisa Schaeffer

The 16th annual Awareness Day was held on December 5, 2003 at the Desmond Hotel in Albany. Approximately 400 educators representing about 100 school districts and 7 BOCES attended the event.

LaMar Hill, Director of business development for Albany Nanotech at the University at Albany provided the keynote address. He presented an overview of Tech Valley, and how emerging high tech innovations are expected to create new opportunities for the Capital Region's business community and beyond. He told the audience "Education is the key to this industry".

Five school districts provided breakout sessions, Clifton Fine, East Greenbush, Fort Edward, Niskayuna and Plattsburgh City. The sessions gave students an



opportunity to show how technology has impacted their education. Other sessions included Data Readiness for

districts, Clear Track 2000, How to cut your technology costs and many more. Twenty-eight vendors participated and provided an opportunity to check out new and existing products and services that are available.

This year for the first time Awareness Day offered a Cyber Café which offered a hands-on opportunity to try out new software programs available through NERIC. Staff was on hand to answer questions.

Mark your calendars! Awareness Day 2004 is scheduled for December 1st and once again is at the Desmond. The target audience for this event is Superintendents, Assistant Superintendents of Instruction, Business Managers and Technology Coordinators. For more information please contact Lisa Schaeffer at aschaeff@gw.neric.org.

Distance Learning Schools Expand Reach

By Mike Sylofski

For many years, distance learning schools have talked about the possibility of connecting with other sites across the state and the country. In this school year, that possibility is becoming a reality. The regional distance learning (DL) consortium, consisting of four regional BOCES (Capital Region BOCES, Franklin-Essex-Hamilton BOCES, Hamilton-Fulton-Montgomery BOCES, and Washington-Saratoga-Warren-Hamilton-Essex BOCES) and 29 component districts, has implemented three

major expansion projects, connecting the Distance Learning Network to a growing number of sites.

First, the Distance Learning Network expanded its reach north by connecting to three sites in the North Country. Students at Franklin Academy in Malone and Tupper Lake Jr./Sr. High School began sharing daily classes for the first time this past fall. St. Regis Falls CSD also recently joined the project and is planning to participate in daily classes as early as this summer.

The Distance Learning Network also expanded south by interconnecting with the Luminet distance learning network at the Broome-Tioga BOCES in Binghamton. This inter-region connection of DL networks is the first of

its kind in New York State. Daily classes are currently taught from Fort Edward, Scotia-Glenville, and Tupper Lake to a school district outside Binghamton through this connection. This fall, other distance learning networks in the Utica and Syracuse regions are planning to connect to this growing system, creating more course choices for students and more potential intra-state school collaborations.

Finally, distance learning schools also implemented a "videoconferencing gateway" off of the Distance Learning Network. This gateway allows Network sites to use their distance learning classrooms to connect outside the closed system to any provider with basic videoconferencing equipment. Students

have connected to zoos and museums for virtual field trips through this gateway, and with fellow students in other parts of the country for shared reading programs and cultural exchange activities.

It has been a very exciting year for distance learning schools as the network expands its reach. Now spanning twelve counties, the distance learning project continues to further its mission by bringing new learning opportunities to students, staff, and communities in our region.

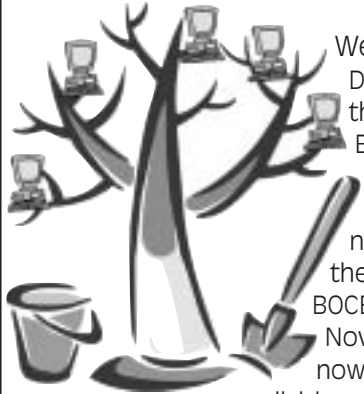
For more information please contact Mike Sylofski at msylofsk@mum.neric.org or go to our web page at <http://dl.neric.org>.





We Now Have One Big Happy Tree!!

By Jim McQuade



We celebrated Arbor Day early this year at the Capital Region BOCES as we unveiled our unified computer network for each of the five divisions of BOCES. Our CRBOCES Novell NetWare "Tree" now includes each of

our divisions (Central Administration, NERIC, Special Education, School Support Services, and the Career and Technical Center) under a single network. This network will facilitate increased communications between our divisions and allow us to be more responsive to our member school districts.

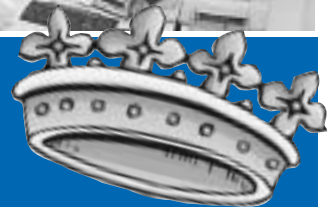
As a result of our unified network we also are now able to access our network remotely. With NERIC Webtools we can now access our mapped network drives from home, from a school district, from anywhere. We have the ability to log in and use files in our home directories, our departmental files, our division's common files, or our BOCES public drive (P:) from any computer connected to the Internet. This instant access to important information makes our organization more efficient and enables us to respond quicker to the needs of our users.

In addition we also upgraded our GroupWise email system at each of the divisions which allows us to take advantage of increased virus protection and SPAM blocks which protects our network from potentially harmful variants. As we do for our supported school districts, NERIC has successfully leveraged technology to make our organization stronger by supplying our staff with the tools they need to be more effective in, and away, from the office. The CRBOCES tree has positioned us for the future and will allow each of our divisions to continue to provide quality customer service to our member school districts.

For more information, please contact Jim McQuade at jmcquade@gw.neric.org.



The Day Ralph Was CROWNED KING...



NERIC staff had their 2nd annual Hat Day on March 19th. Look for the Cat in the Hat, Policeman Courtright, King Ralph, Pirate Bob, and Mad Hatter Ruth...just to name a few. Our retired Assistant Director, Jim Craner, even paid a visit to see this cast of characters. At the NERIC we are used to seeing Jim Craner's beautiful animal photography, so I guess this picture was an interesting (and fun!) change of subject for him. Jim was nice enough to photograph our crew and even insert a picture of our North Country staff. Thanks Jim!

School Safety...

Continued from Pg. 4

emergency response plans, but first responders typically rely on blueprints or floor plans that may not necessarily contain the most accurate information, explained BOCES Supervisor for Security and Safety Management Services Brian Backus. With Site-Wise, building schematics can be updated regularly. More importantly, Backus said, the technology will save time and improve efficiency in crisis situations. "Before arriving on site, first responders will have already assessed the problem and mapped out the best possible route to resolve the emergency," he said.

Virtually invaluable

Besides safety, Site-Wise may be used for other practical purposes. "This technology will be an invaluable tool for our school district," said Scotia-Glenville Superintendent Michael J. Marcelle, pointing out that it could be used in facilities planning. "It could allow us to create virtual tours of proposed building projects to post on our Web site for parents, residents and committee members to review at their convenience."

Site-Wise could help maintenance staff or outside repair crews locate key pieces of equipment - such as electrical panels or heating and plumbing mechanisms - when malfunctions occur. It could also serve as an orientation or training tool for new employees. "In the future, I'm sure we'll find many more uses for it," Marcelle said.

Site-Wise should be up and running in all Schenectady County schools by June 2005.

To learn more about Site-Wise, or other programs and training provided by BOCES Security and Safety Management Services, call Brian Backus at 464-5108. For information on NERIC programs and training, call Denise Graminski at 456-9205, or visit www.neric.org.



EMAP

Another new function of EMAP: The Laser P.O.

By Robert Christy

The Madrid-Waddington School District was the first in the North Country to implement the printing of purchase orders on a laser printer thru EMAP. Julie Bresett, the Business Manager at M-W, developed the purchase order form herself using Microsoft Excel. Since the introduction of

the laser P.O. a reduction in cost (no more purchasing of pre-printed P.O. forms) and time (less paper work) has been realized. The Colton-Pierrepoint School has also adopted the laser P.O. application.

Another new function of EMAP is the ability to run the whole payroll without updating the payroll files.

The test payroll function produces reports which can be verified before the live payroll function, which updates the payroll files, is run. This function is particularly helpful when preparing to run payrolls such as the first payroll of the fiscal year, the school year, the calendar year and the balloon payroll at the end of the year.

As mentioned in a previous BYTES article EMAP is completely GASB34 compliant. EMAP has the capability to upload fixed asset files from other applications eliminating initial input of fixed asset data. For more information or questions contact your EMAP coordinator.

From the Director's desk

Data Warehousing -LEAPing to the Next STEP

By David W. Courtright

I hope you are having a great spring. I thought winter would NEVER end!! As the weather gets better and seasons change, there is also great change in the data activities across the state.

The State Education Department (SED) sent out a February 4, 2002 memo to all districts that outlines their plans to establish "a statewide data system designed to reduce the local burden of data collection, provide basic data analysis tools to local educational agencies and provide a consistent and widely understood approach for collecting, storing, analyzing and using data about students. Such a system will give teachers and administrators access to analyses of assessment results and links to related curricular and instructional materials." This memo may be accessed on the web at <http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/deputy/Documents/Q2-04studentid-fm.htm>. This memo states the

overall purpose, the benefits and the elements of this statewide system.

The SED is also implementing two key elements of the plan. First they are moving ahead to acquire eScholar data warehouse licenses for all students in the state. Second, the SED has awarded bids to develop and implement a universal unique student identification numbering system. In the February 4th memo, with regard to this id system it states that "STEP and LEAP will incorporate the unique student identifier in the 2004-05 reporting cycle. By the 2005-06 school year, the statewide system will include all of the data elements required for the accountability system and the school report card. The system will then be able to produce the necessary reports to allow districts to verify the accuracy of their data and review their accountability status before officially submitting data." It then states that the Regional Information Center is expected to provide the

service to accomplish this task.

How is the NERIC going to meet this huge

expectation in a cost effective manner? We plan on accomplishing this task by being extremely focused and introducing a Data Readiness Protocol throughout the region to assist districts in assessing and modifying their capability to comply with this environment. This protocol includes the following:

PART I. EXECUTIVE LEVEL TRAINING

a. Awareness Session - Outlines the changes necessary to enable a district to thoughtfully collect, maintain, disseminate and utilize data. Focusing on regulatory changes, instructional reporting needs, systems issues and data issues will foster awareness.

b. Data Administrator Training - Districts need to assign a data administrator to make executive decisions related to collecting, maintaining, disseminating and using data. Training is designed to provide the skills necessary for a person to act as the executive decision maker for data standards in the district. The training will expand on the issues covered in the awareness session.

Continued on Pg. 8