

# Seventh Annual Tech-Savvy Superintendent Awards

The move toward an increasingly digital society, and the emergence of a new era of accountability in the nation's schools, have changed our expectations of the superintendent. As school leaders come to rely on computers and the internet to engage students' interest, track their progress, individualize instruction, and aid in decision making, an understanding of how technology works and how it can be used to transform teaching and learning is an increasingly essential characteristic for the 21st-century school executive. With our 7th annual Tech-Savvy Superintendent Awards, sponsored by Blackboard Inc., *eSchool News* recognizes 10 of the nation's top K-12 executives for their outstanding leadership and vision in educational technology. Chosen by the editors of *eSchool News* with help from last year's winners, these 10 exemplary leaders will be honored in a private ceremony held in conjunction with the American Association of School Administrators' annual conference in New Orleans March 2.



**Herbert M. Berg**  
Kershaw County School  
District, South Carolina

In his four years as superintendent of the Kershaw County School District, Herbert Berg has sought to create equal learning opportunities for the 10,000 students of this rural South Carolina school system—developing an award-winning one-to-one laptop initiative for all high school students, establishing a system-wide internet presence for all classrooms, and infusing technology into professional development for educators.

Under his leadership, the Kershaw County school board voted in September 2004 to approve the i-CAN Project, an \$8 million initiative to provide wireless laptop computers to all of the district's 2,900 high school students and their 275 teachers over a four-year period—so that students would be able to say “I can” when they face their future.

When Berg arrived in Kershaw County, the school district was spending only \$4 per student per year on technology, and more than 75 percent of the district's 4,500 computers were obsolete. Today, the district spends more than \$200 per child, and the average district computer is only three years old. With three years of laptop deployment in place, all freshmen, sophomores, and juniors—more than 2,500 students in all—have received laptops. To extend the program beyond the classroom into the community, Kershaw County residents can purchase Hewlett-Packard equipment at the district's negotiated re-

duced rates for their own personal use. All of the district's 20 schools are wireless, including the five i-CAN sites (three high schools, one technology education center, and an alternative school), which are 100-percent wireless via high-speed broadband internet connections.

Berg also understands that for any technology initiative to be successful, teachers must see its benefits. “If it doesn't make the teachers' days easier, than they won't use it, and we'll have wasted our time and lost an opportunity,” he says.

<http://www.kershaw.k12.sc.us>



**Joseph Ferraina**  
Long Branch  
Public Schools,  
New Jersey

As the superintendent of a school district where one-third of the students are white, one-third black, and one-third Hispanic, Joseph Ferraina knows the challenges in teaching a diverse student population. An immigrant to this country himself, Ferraina was forced to overcome a language barrier at an early age. He taught Spanish for 20 years, and as superintendent, he now speaks the three main languages of his district's student population: English, Spanish, and Portuguese. He also speaks another language: technology.

Looking to eradicate a digital divide that has plagued the many economically disadvantaged students in his district, Ferraina started a program to provide laptops to each fifth grader. As the students move from grade to grade, the laptops follow them, serving as a tool to foster the development of critical 21st-century skills. Recognizing that many of his poorest students had no way to access the internet from home, he started a program to provide dial-up access to those families who couldn't afford it on their own. Currently, he is working on a project that would provide wireless access to all students from their homes.

Ferraina also is an advocate of data-informed instruction, urging his teachers to use data as a tool for targeting reforms to meet the needs of individual students. In addition, a series of new school buildings under construction in his district will showcase the latest in school technology. As part of the project, developers have integrated fully functional television studios and, in some cases, replaced old woodshop classrooms with state-of-the-art industrial technology labs. Recently, the district opened a new Cisco-powered classroom in one of its high schools—and 70 percent of the students enrolled in the program reportedly have received college scholarships.

<http://www.longbranch.k12.nj.us>



**Annette Griffin**  
Carrollton-Farmers  
Branch Independent  
School District, Texas

As superintendent of Carrollton-Farmers Branch ISD since 1997, Annette Griffin has worked to strengthen parent and community support—and technology has played a large role in these efforts. Widely recognized for her educational leadership not only in her own district but across Texas and the nation, Griffin actively builds partnerships among the district, parents, local governments, colleges and universities, chambers of commerce, and businesses. The National School Public Relations Association has recognized

Carrollton-Farmers Branch as having one of the top eCommunications networks in the country, and the district's Public Information Team has been asked to present nationally on technology topics from podcasting to eCommunications.

Griffin recognizes the important role of technology in customizing instruction to address the unique instructional needs of students with diverse backgrounds. iPods were given to students as a part of the “Newcomer” program, classes designed for new students to the district who do not speak English. Teachers recorded vocabulary, stories, poems, songs, and video so students could hear and practice English wherever and whenever they want. Teachers who traditionally saw 40-percent vocabulary retention rates began seeing 90-percent retention rates, officials say.

Under Griffin's leadership, the district initiated its Universal Technology Access Program. This program puts computers in the homes of students who otherwise would not have home access to technology. Teacher workstations that are replaced after three years are reconditioned and then given to district families who need them. The district has distributed more than 1,000 computers this way, reaching more than 2,000 students. Some parents have reported that their newfound computer knowledge enabled them to secure better jobs.

<http://www.cfbisd.edu>



**Gerald Harris**  
Mariemont City  
Schools, Ohio

Gerald Harris, Ohio's 2006 Technology Administrator of the Year, is in his 13th year as superintendent of the Mariemont City Schools and has presented on the promise of technology in education at state and national conferences. He has been instrumental in providing the vision, design, and implementation of technologies that have transformed the way Mariemont teachers teach and students learn.

During his tenure, Harris has led the school district from technological infancy to its current place as one of the state's leaders in technology integration. His mantra of “investment in technology must directly impact the teaching and learning experience” has guided the allocation of dollars, the direction of professional development, and the focus of the principals and teachers he leads. From kindergarten through 12th grade, teachers know the exact technology and research skills to teach, and these skills are manifested in annual projects across the district.

Teachers have been given the autonomy to help build upon this vision. Every teacher in the district maintains an active web page to harness the power of the internet for his or her classroom. The library aide in the junior high school works with the Library of Congress to record, edit, and publish video interviews with local veterans; this Veterans Oral History Project has become a source of pride in the community and a valuable resource for Mariemont's students. In addition, the district has outfitted more than 60 “smart classrooms” over the past five years. Online versions of textbooks, internet resources, archived video samples, student-generated presentations, and teacher-created lessons all can be seamlessly melded into classroom instruction—making the impact of Mariemont's teachers limited only by their capacity to dream.

<http://www.mariemontschools.org>

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### Daniel J. Hoelsing Laurel-Concord Public Schools, Nebraska

A member of the Nebraska Information Technology Commission, Dan Hoelsing has demonstrated exceptional vision in leading the development and implementation of a district-wide technology plan for three small schools in northeast Nebraska: Laurel-Concord Public Schools, Coleridge Community Schools, and Newcastle Public Schools.

In 1996, Hoelsing helped develop a community life-long learning center in Laurel through an agreement with the Laurel city government to combine school and city libraries. The immediate success of the Learning Center brought an awareness of the importance of getting computers into the homes of the district's students and parents.

Hoelsing encouraged the board of education to reach out to students and parents through a computer lease program in cooperation with Apple. About 100 families took advantage of the program, and parents now have online access to their child's schedules, grades, attendance, and assignments through PowerSchool, an online student information system.

In the district's schools, students take the tests used for state reporting online, and teachers use laptop computers to manage their day-to-day classroom tasks. Hoelsing also has led the development and implementation of new software that has greatly enhanced the efficiency and productivity of his teaching and administrative staff—including a lesson-planning program for teachers to create their lessons plans, as well as online programs for tracking substitute teachers, comparing contracts and negotiations, and more. As a result, he and his staff now have access to the information they need via the web from any school, at any time of the day.

<http://www.laurel.esu1.org>



### J. Terry Jenkins Auburn City Schools, Alabama

J. Terry Jenkins has been in education for 36 years, 28 of them as a superintendent. He has the distinction of being named Superintendent of the Year in both Alabama and Georgia. After coming out of retirement in 2000 to become Auburn's superintendent, Jenkins not only brought a rich background of experience, but was still open to new ideas. His style of management allows his leadership teams and principals to be innovative; this is particularly true with technology.

When Intel and Scholastic Books named the district's kindergarten school a 2005 School of Distinction, the school was awarded enough money to buy 10 interactive whiteboards. Jenkins provided funds for the rest of the classrooms at the school to have them. After the principals and teachers at other elementary schools saw the way the boards engaged students, Jenkins promised them he would match the money they had to buy their own boards. As a result, 85 percent of the district's K-5 classrooms currently have the devices, and 100 percent will have them by the end of the year.

Jenkins requires teachers to have at least 40 hours of tech-related professional development annually. Concerned that students weren't being prepared for a rapidly changing world, he also spearheaded the creation of a laptop program for the district's high school students. All high school teachers now have laptops, and ninth graders received laptops last fall. The introduction of a new program called "Tech Tuesdays" is helping teachers learn how to teach differently to make the most of these new learning tools.

Using online surveys, the district has performed gap analyses for teachers so they have a better understanding of their level of technology integration in the classroom. Students also will be given learning style inventories, district officials say, so teachers can make sure they are reaching every child.

<http://www.auburnschools.org>



### Dale P. Lynch Hamblen County Schools, Tennessee

During his five-year tenure as superintendent of Hamblen County Schools, technology has been an integral part of Dale Lynch's daily walk. Information is critical to any effective organization, and Lynch is a consummate communicator.

Through the use of the First Class collaboration system, which integrates eMail, calendars and schedules, contacts, conferences, shared documents, web pages, podcasts, and emergency paging, Lynch models the effective use of technology in the day-to-day execution of his position. He believes in using technology to communicate, and he models this belief as he presents video podcasts of major school events, such as the recent release of the Tennessee Report Card Achievement results for 2006. As a result of his modeling the use of technology, every school in Hamblen County creates podcasts to distribute educational content to its students and the world.

Hamblen County's technology plan also demonstrates vision. The district is in the process of implementing voice-over-IP telephone systems; four of its 20 schools have been updated to VoIP, with the remainder to be completed soon. Hamblen County also is one of the first school systems in Tennessee to implement the Schools Interoperability Framework (SIF) standards to improve the quality and availability of student and administrative data, while reducing data-entry effort and inconsistencies. The linking of data repositories for student information, food services, courseware, active directories, transportation, and library services will empower school administrators with more access to high-quality data than ever before, officials say.

<http://www.hcboe.net>



### John David Martin Fauquier County Public Schools, Virginia

J. David Martin has been superintendent of the 11,000-student Fauquier County School District since 2001. Committed to using technology to improve the quality of education for his students, he has undertaken the challenge of integrating multimedia in every core classroom throughout the district. This technology, which consists of, among other things, interactive whiteboards, high-definition classroom projectors, streaming video resources, and laptop computers, is designed to better engage students, giving them an opportunity to become more active participants in their education.

Professional development also has played a key role in Martin's efforts. This year, administrators are using a suite of online teaching and training resources from Blackboard Inc. Officials say these resources, available online 24-7, will help teachers improve their understanding of technology, encouraging them to use the digital resources at their disposal more effectively.

To improve communication with parents, the district has launched a new web site with individual web pages for its teachers. Martin also led the creation of the district's first TV station, with broadcasts on cable and the internet. A district-wide "video over internet protocol" project is underway to provide videoconferencing services for employees, thereby reducing travel costs. Other programs Martin is working on include an online IEP system for the district's special-ed program and a system that allows parents to pay for school lunches online.

<http://www.fcps1.org>

### Hector Montenegro Ysleta Independent School District, Texas

Hector Montenegro, the Texas Computer Education Association's 2006 Superintendent of the Year, has been a visionary leader in raising standards across the board. In his nearly four years at the helm of this 46,000-stu-



dent school system in El Paso, Montenegro has consistently strived to give both teachers and students the technology resources they need to succeed. In January, he distributed dual-platform laptops (Mac/Windows) to all teachers and librarians in the district—about 3,000 staff members altogether. Besides receiving hardware and software, teachers and librarians also have access to embedded professional development.

Committed to technology as a tool for improving learning, Montenegro has spearheaded the district-wide integration of a variety of internet-based resources, including Discovery Education's unitedstreaming video-on-demand service, the netTrekker search engine for safe and efficient web-browsing, Connected Tech, Classroom Connect's online tool for helping educators deploy technology more effectively, and more. His weekly eMail communications to principals include a periodic update on the usage statistics for these resources.

Under Montenegro's leadership, Ysleta has received more than \$3.5 million in ed-tech grants in a four-year period. One such award provided one-to-one laptop access for more than 600 middle-school students. Mobile laptop carts and handheld technologies also are used throughout the district. On the infrastructure side, Montenegro has led a number of upgrades, including a computer network with high-speed fiber in every classroom, district-wide wireless access, a voice-over-IP telephone system, and upgraded district finance and human-resource tools built to ensure interoperability.

<http://www2.yisd.net>



### Frank Petruzielo Cherokee County School District, Georgia

As a superintendent for the past 16 years, with half of those spent in two of the largest school districts in the nation, Frank Petruzielo has made the integration of technology a top priority in each school system he has led. The results are apparent: Teaching and learning, as well as productivity, efficiency, and accountability, have been fundamentally improved and enhanced.

Through Petruzielo's leadership and guidance, Georgia's Cherokee County School District is currently deploying hardware, software, and training targeted at creating "intelligent classrooms." These intelligent classrooms are part of his vision for enhancing learning environments by using technologies and identifying pedagogies that engage students in the learning process and that offer educators innovative methods for delivering instruction. Petruzielo's "Teach 21" multi-year initiative includes emerging technologies such as interactive whiteboards, student response devices, remote tablet-style input devices that work in conjunction with the whiteboard technology, podcast and vodcast (videocasting) devices, tablet PCs, multimedia projectors, classroom audio systems, document cameras, and access to on-demand educational videos. The "Teach 21" deployment includes a professional development component, which encompasses more than 200 hours of rigorous training and standards-based technology projects conducted with students. The program is geared at developing 21st-century teachers who engage students through the use of technology.

Petruzielo drives his staff to ensure adequate, equitable, and current technologies for all students. With more than 35,000 students and more than 18,000 computers available to those students, he has firmly established a legacy for making technology available. Petruzielo also is a strong advocate of data-driven decision making. Teachers all have access to a data warehouse that provides five years of student achievement data on each student to enhance individualized instruction.

<http://www.cherokee.k12.ga.us>