

MEMBER profiles

Karl Fisch

Bestowing the Gifts of Professional Development

Karl Fisch has always offered a helping hand at Arapahoe High School in Centennial, Colorado. “I started [in education] teaching middle school math and then came to Arapahoe to teach high school mathematics in 1991. In 1993 my administration said, ‘We hear you know a little bit about computers...’ Student information systems were finally hitting the building level and this was the first time data entry had to happen at the building level.” Fisch started helping the staff with technology part time, but eventually transitioned into full-time director of technology, the position he holds today.

Fisch has brought significant change to the school through his commitment to make a difference. “We received two grants focusing on constructivism and the use of technology to facilitate

a more student-centered approach to instruction,” he says.

Although the grants brought in a lot of tech “stuff,” including mounted LCD projectors, new computers, and wireless laptops for three classrooms, Fisch says that the heart of the proposals was to improve staff development. “We felt that what teachers needed more than anything else was time: time to learn, talk, collaborate, share successes and challenges, sometimes even argue, in a good way, as we try to figure out the best way to help students learn and be successful in a rapidly changing world.”

The grants enabled the school to set up its 21st Century Learners staff development program, with an initial 16 teachers the first year and an additional 30 the following year. “Each group meets to look at what the latest research

says about how people learn, how to translate it into classrooms, and then which tech tools can facilitate that.”

Fisch’s desire for universally accessible technology drives him. “I would like to see ubiquitous access for all students and teachers 24/7/365. It might be laptops; it might be something else. My goal for both students and teachers is to help all of us develop our own personal learning networks, using the power of technology to extend the reach of those networks, to enable all of us to learn deeply about things we are passionate about.”

Visit Karl’s blog, The Fischbowl, at <http://the.fischbowl.blogspot.com>.



Affiliate

Keeping Lines of Communication Open

The New Jersey Education Computer Cooperative is unlike most ISTE affiliates. “We are an organization made up of large and small school districts, not individuals,” says Executive Director Ned Davis. Developed from a computer user group founded in 1982, NJECC has vastly expanded, becoming the hub of 100 school districts and the largest computer buying group in New Jersey.

NJECC makes keeping track of 100 districts look easy. “The biggest challenge is keeping everyone informed and in the loop,” Davis says, “but we make sure that communication flows in all directions.”

<http://www.njecc.org>

One of the main ways everyone stays connected is through unique monthly meetings. Members can speak to a representative from the New Jersey Department of Education about state and federal funding, and offer input on state mandates. “We maintain a direct connection to the state department, where someone can give us answers and also take back questions. It’s vital to keep these lines open,” says Davis.

NJECC held its 21st annual conference March 18–20, in conjunction with the New Jersey Department of Education and Montclair State University, and will host its annual Digital Media Institute of hands-on workshops at the end of June. In the long term, Davis hopes that NJECC will deepen relation-

ships with state universities that have district outreach technology programs and create a task force with New Jersey’s other ISTE affiliate, NJAET, to present a statewide perspective on technology.

“We’ve been in existence for 24 years because of the need to communicate and collaborate how technology can enhance the learning process,” says Davis. “Through the integration of technology into all phases of the curriculum, we will help prepare our students for the future.”

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