



7,000 Oregon Students Use Palm Handhelds in Classrooms

SUNNYVALE, Calif.--(BUSINESS WIRE)--Oct. 26, 2005--

Consortium of Oregon Schools Uses Mentoring and Training to Spread Handheld-integration Strategy Statewide

More than 7,000 students in eight Oregon school districts are using Palm® handheld computers this school year, thanks to a creative mentoring program developed by three recipients of a federal technology grant, Palm, Inc. (Nasdaq:PALM) said today. Their handheld-integration strategy brings in teachers statewide.

"Originally, the districts applied for a one-time grant, but state instructional technology guidelines allowed them to reapply if the district was willing to mentor another district in the use of technology," said Lynn Lary, instructional technology specialist at Lane Education Service District, which supports 16 school districts.

Intent on extending their grants, Lary and two other grant recipients, Colt Gill, assistant superintendent of South Lane School District, and Todd Hamilton, instructional technology specialist at Eugene School District, got to work collaborating on a mentoring and training program. That was three years ago. Today, the program has generated district partnerships throughout the state and has resulted in the formation of the Northwest Handheld Integration Project.

The first year, handhelds were implemented in South Lane and Eugene School districts. "Handhelds are becoming so common in our classrooms now that the idea of using them in an instructional capacity is much less foreign," explained Hamilton, who initiated and implemented the program for Eugene's School District 4J. "But three years ago it was a different story. It took a leap of faith on the school district's part, and then an extremely successful program to prove that Palm handhelds are about more than calendars and address books. It didn't take long before teachers and other innovative districts saw the potential."

"Upon reapplication, we started mentoring three partners -- Three Rivers, Creswell and Springfield school districts -- and built from there," said Lary. "This year we reapplied for the grant and added Fern Ridge, Glendale, Riddle and Hermiston school districts. Creswell, where I am project director, reapplied and brought on Fern Ridge school district as a partner. This model keeps the momentum going."

Schools Say Motivation Increased

At the student level, the benefits are clear. "Motivation is huge," said Gill. "We thought it would taper off, but kids are producing more and doing better work than they did with paper and pencils. Using a handheld keeps them on task and helps them to be more successful." Although he doesn't have proof that handheld use directly improves test scores, Gill says student achievement is up across the district.

Lary agrees that the handhelds increase motivation. "We had a teacher in middle school who offered an elective math class to interest kids in problem solving," she said. "Usually he has 17 to 20 kids each semester. Once he started using Palm handhelds, 50 kids wanted in. That's the kind of hook these tools are for kids. When it comes to handhelds, kids want access all the time."

Fifteen districts in the state received technology grants this year, and nearly half of them are focused on Palm handheld technology, according to Lary. Some districts, such as Creswell, have made one-to-one computing their goal. While schools implement their own plans for using the handhelds, all of them focus on core subject areas and on helping increase student achievement.

Gill's goal for South Lane is to increase access to technology and improve student achievement in science, math and language arts. One area where improvement is already evident is in writing. "They are writing more than ever before. With Palm

handhelds and keyboards, they do everything from brainstorming, outlining and developing paragraphs to editing and revising. One of our rural schools has a blended classroom of sixth, seventh and eighth grades. They do almost all their writing and editing on the Palm handheld. They upload the documents to a desktop computer and publish them in magazine format."

The successful use of handhelds in classrooms comes as no surprise to Gill. His district was the recipient of a 2001 Palm Education Pioneer (PEP) program grant, which gave handhelds to more than 100 K-12 classrooms and nine research hubs who conducted research on the effectiveness of Palm handhelds for learning and teaching in K-12 classrooms and in other learning environments. In exchange, grant recipients participated in a nationwide study by SRI International's Center for Technology in Learning in Menlo Park, Calif., which developed and conducted evaluations to study the uses, experiences and effectiveness of the handhelds for teaching and learning. Of the participants in the objective, large-scale study, 93 percent said they believe that handhelds can have a positive impact on students' learning, and 89 percent said they found the handhelds to be an effective instructional tool for teachers.

Staff Development is Cornerstone of Projects

Lary said the key to success is providing teachers with ongoing staff development. Each mentoring district has a project director who works with the other project directors to develop ongoing training throughout the school year and to organize a handheld summer camp. Each week, teachers also get Handheld Integration Project (HIP) eNews, which offers integration and classroom management tips contributed by mentor schools from the previous year. The Northwest Handheld Integration Project website (www.nwhandheld.org) provides lesson plans, news on teacher training, software reviews and links to other related sites.

"We try to offer everything a teacher needs for continued success in the classroom," said Lary. "I certainly think that when it comes to having a leadership model, this is it."

Schools can take advantage of the Palm Education Purchase Program. More information is available at <http://www.palm.com/education>.

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