

January 2003

# VITAL News

Virginia Initiative for Technology and Administrative Leadership



## Conference Bound in the New Year

*Happy New Year!* It's the second day of 2003, and I just registered for VSTE and FETC and NECC. What? I'm talking about three major technology conferences, one of which is held in our own backyard.

Conferences are valuable professional development opportunities both for you and your teachers. In particular, they offer the chance to meet with educators who share similar interest and issues.

Of course, the exhibit hall at a conference is an unmatched opportunity to glimpse the future and find out how you might start implementing it in your school. You can view software demos, play with the latest hardware, and discover new solutions. Plus you might pick up a free mouse pad or two!

VSTE is the **Virginia Society for Technology in Education Conference**. We featured the organization in the September 2002. The 17th Annual VSTE Statewide Technology Conference will be held at the Hyatt Regency Crystal City on March 9-11, 2003. The two and one-half day program includes breakout technology presentations, optional workshops, vendor exhibits, keynote and spotlight presentations, and award ceremonies. The conference offers single-day tickets. I encourage you to take a team to this conference: you and your teachers will come back excited and energized. For more information, visit the VSTE website: <http://www.vste.org>.

FETC is the **Florida Educational Technology Conference** which, for the past 22 years, has provided a forum for educators, media specialists, computer coordinators, and administrators to share the secrets of their

successful technology-integrated curriculum practices and strategies, as well as to present attendees with the latest technological trends and products available. Hundreds of concurrent sessions, workshops, and vendor exhibits will help you add new technologies to the teacher's "toolbox." This year, the conference is at the Orange County Convention Center in Orlando, Florida - February 4-6, 2003. If Orlando in early February sounds appealing, there's still time to register online:

<http://www.fetc.org/fetc2003/index.cfm>.

Finally, the 24<sup>th</sup> annual **National Educational Computing Conference**, or NECC will be held in Seattle, June 30 through July 2, 2003, at the Washington State Convention & Trade Center.

Presented by the International Society for Technology in Education, this is the premier national technology conference, featuring what they call "mission-critical" sessions on the full-range of ed tech issues. This year's theme—Vision and Reflections—encourages participants to think about how technology has shaped education over the past five years and how the needs of learners have changed because of technology. This will be my first NECC, and I am excited about going to Seattle. It would be nice to see some VITAL folks there: we'll be doing a VITAL presentation on Monday, June 30, at 2:00 PM. Come see us!

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# Want a Computer? Build It Yourself!

TechKnow, sponsored by Dell Computer, is a technology training program that teaches middle school students to take computers apart, put them back together, and at the end of the program take their computers home at no cost. Applications for the 2003 program will be available online beginning in January. For a complete description of criteria and to apply for the program, visit [www.dell.com/k12/techknow](http://www.dell.com/k12/techknow).

Dell TechKnow teaches middle

school students about computers by allowing them to take apart and reassemble computers, load software, set up and run printers, upgrade hardware, diagnose and correct basic hardware problems and use the Internet. Upon completion of the program, students take home the computer they build and receive one year of free Internet access. Besides providing computers, Dell is developing curriculum to help school districts and communities implement the program.

## Teachers and Machines: Larry Cuban Finds Answers in History

In 1986, Stanford University professor Larry Cuban wondered if history had any lessons to teach us about the progress of the fledgling educational technology. What had happened when film, radio, and instructional television had been introduced into schools? Had they transformed education the way they promised?

Cuban's research, detailed in his book *Teachers and Machines: The Classroom Use of Technology Since 1920*, revealed that each of these technologies followed predictable patterns of implementation beginning with a flurry of excitement over the potential of this new tool to revolutionize the classroom and ending some time later with a disappointed jab at teachers for failing to realize that potential. In between, something interesting happened to the new things that were going to "save" education: education absorbed them and made them part of its existing structure and culture. Rather than being reformed, according to Cuban, education did the reforming.

Classroom practice was not changed, nor, says Cuban, did it need to change. He defends the teachers who are so often accused of impeding progress and "offers a view from the classroom rather

than from the school board or superintendent's office. I do so consciously in an effort to correct an unhealthy imbalance in most writing about classroom reform, which ignores the teacher's perspective. Furthermore, I wish to underscore the persistent interplay between constancy and change in the nation's classrooms. In this process, perhaps respect can be restored for the notion that stability in teaching practice and the craft of instruction are positive forces in schools, maintaining a delicate balance amidst swiftly changing public expectations." (7)

As you might expect, Cuban concludes that educational technology will follow a similar implementation process. He recommends careful study of not only educational technology but also classroom instruction and how environmental changes might help realize the potential of computers. Meanwhile, he predicts that teachers will use computers for their own productivity and routine tasks like drill and practice but little further integration will be seen.

Cuban, Larry. *Teachers and Machines: The Classroom Use of Technology Since 1920*. New York: Teachers College Press, 1986.