

## Fulfilling Education's Promise for the 21st Century with Xerox DocuShare

There has been a lot of discussion praising the virtues of technology in education. A PC on a teacher's desktop aligns with everyone's vision of the 21st century classroom. But what people really like to hear about is an implementation of technology in the classroom that is making a measurable difference, one that teachers, administrators and students all are benefiting from. The usage of DocuShare for curriculum development at the Wayne Finger Lakes Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) and the school districts it serves is one such implementation.

In 1997, the state of New York posed a challenge for students and teachers alike, by raising the academic standards. Teachers were expected to teach with a higher level of expertise and students were expected to dramatically improve their academic performance. Curriculum had to be redesigned, teachers had to be trained, benchmarking strategies put in place and resources had to be combined. A project like this called for a tremendous amount of collaboration. For the Wayne Finger Lakes BOCES, covering 1700 square miles, in four counties, and serving 25 school districts of varying financial abilities, collaboration was a daunting task. Wayne Finger Lakes BOCES assembled a team and began to tackle the project, getting forty four thousand students and nearly six thousand educators prepared to not only embrace the new standards but ideally exceed them was the main goal. The role technology could play in this massive effort was obvious, but before that could happen appropriate infrastructure had to be put in place and delivery mechanisms had to be agreed upon.

The implementation team quickly recognized that any effective solution required the development of an advanced information sharing system. With the late 1997 installation of LAKE Net (Learning Access Knowledge Education Network), one of the largest wide area networks in New York State, incredible capabilities for students and educators alike opened up. "All of a sudden a twenty-four lane communication highway replaced what felt like a gravel road," said Dr. Joseph Marinelli, District Superintendent at Wayne Finger Lakes BOCES.

With the infrastructure in place, the team was ready to deploy a technology solution to facilitate upgrading curriculum; increase communication between teachers, administrators and students; train everyone on the new educational approaches; and help to evaluate results. Central to all of these activities were documents—spreadsheets, memos, policies, suggestions, requisitions, curriculum content—which had to be rapidly and cost-effectively shared throughout the BOCES. "When it came to the document management solution, DocuShare met our criteria. We needed something inexpensive and simple to use. We also wanted a 'community' component. Most of the document management solutions we looked at were group-based which meant it had to be controlled by a system administrator. DocuShare allows the users themselves to post a file, or create a bulletin board out on the Web. Not only is it expedient but it allows many new technology users to use a digital tool in ways that are meaningful and reinforcing to them, which encourages their readiness to use and integrate technology in the classroom," said Marinelli.



*Applications such as DocuShare are turning vision into reality by offering powerful, easy-to-use collaboration tools*



*Clicking on the DocuShare icon seamlessly takes users to the DocuShare site, where they can add and share files, type notes on bulletin-boards, or update their group calendars*

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DocuShare was first launched with a group of 270 teachers from most of the curriculum areas. Those who participated were interested in sharing their knowledge about classroom instruction but did not have a great deal of time to meet. They all worked together on establishing new standards for curriculum. DocuShare provided a simple-to-use, common platform for sharing information. "We started getting feedback from the teachers right away. They were impressed with how easy DocuShare was to use. They also liked the community component. They liked 'owning' the project by being able to set up their own shared areas and password to protect them. More than anything, the teachers liked being able to go to work together even though they were physically apart," said Jack McCabe, Associate Superintendent for Curriculum and Technology, Wayne Finger Lakes BOCES.

Marla Steele, Director of Staff Development and Instructional Technology for Wayne Finger Lakes BOCES described life before and after implementing DocuShare, "The old way of developing standards or curriculum was to bring people together for several days and 'thrash things out.' This was extremely expensive for all concerned. We would rent rooms in a hotel, provide lunches, reimburse mileage, and the schools would need to pay for substitute teachers. We would meet and write, someone would scribe it and then someone would type it up later. It would be mailed out to all of the districts and then revisions would have to be made. This process

was time consuming and sometimes the project would lose its momentum. Now, with DocuShare, changes can be made instantly, taking away the time and distance constraints. It puts a sense of choice and freedom into the process."

Wayne Finger Lakes has been able to connect students, teachers, administrative staff and other educational institutions through DocuShare. Teachers can look for lesson plan ideas posted by other teachers. Administrative offices can post information quickly to bulletin boards and students can work on projects with other students in different school districts. "We are even running meetings through DocuShare. Last week I was at a meeting and we brainstormed a list of goals for that group. Instead of going through the list reduction and all those other pieces, we put it up on DocuShare and did the list reduction there," explained McCabe.

As a solution, Xerox DocuShare merges the power of telecommunication technology with peer-to-peer collaboration. Students and teachers are now accessing the very best information available from the web while at the same time sharing information amongst their own talented staff in a secure, flexible way. "It has broken down barriers. It has given us opportunities to work with people we don't typically work with," said Steele.

Since DocuShare is a web-based virtual sharing environment, with server-based software, it requires minimal technical setup and no PC software addition. This allows the technical staff to focus more on the end user at thousands of



*Students and educators alike have instant, password-protected access to the latest information and schedules from any web browser*

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computers, in multiple locations. Additionally, DocuShare is immediate and technically trouble free. "DocuShare maps to the way people work today, sharing information across geographical, functional and system boundaries. In the spirit of the Web, DocuShare creates a common ground among users so regardless of their technology expertise, they can participate in the collaborative process of developing and sharing information," said Doug Mclean, vice president, sales and marketing, Xerox Internet and Software Solutions (XIIS).

DocuShare's collaborative nature and ease of use pulls people toward technology. Interestingly, it also pulls people past the technology itself, to the information on the site, the latest posting on the bulletin board, and the links to external sites containing more information. People who had not used the Web six months ago are now effortlessly surfing for more information, thanks to easy migration from DocuShare to the Internet. Most importantly, DocuShare pulls people together. It becomes a provocative solution when one considers that instead of delivering information to the user, it helps create responsibility by bringing people together to share knowledge and deliver solutions.

The hope for technology in education is that it helps students acquire the skills they need for their future, and helps teachers better impart those skills.

"There are new demands on students with respect to working in 21st century America. Also, society itself is becoming more complex. The ability to work effectively in a telecommunications oriented, high-tech world is the world that we need to prepare our students for," said Chuck DeVoe, Director of the Office of Technology Policy, New York State Education Department. By using technology such as DocuShare, raising education standards can be a collaborative and efficient process.

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Jack McCabe  
Associate Superintendent  
for Curriculum Technology  
Wayne Finger Lakes BOCES

## HOW THEY DO IT

Over 4,000 users access DocuShare using standard web browsers, from a variety of platforms and operating systems including Macintosh, Windows 3.1, Windows 95, Windows 98 and Windows NT.

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## FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO ORDER DOCUSHARE

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**United States: 1-800-428-2995**

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