

Report on Morphing of the DIMC

August 27, 2007, by Steven Vanek

After interviews with media specialists and teachers throughout the district that were frequent users of the DIMC, a number of general themes surfaced in discussions about the rightsizing and eventual digitized streaming of non-realia materials.

Most all agreed that the rightsizing of the DIMC was a real necessity and that keeping materials in high use areas like, human growth and development and social studies should be available throughout the process and that those materials including realia (kits, trunks, etc.) should be upgraded and updated with some consistency.

In so far as the district's move towards digitizing media materials and providing video streaming on demand, the general consensus could best be summed up by the words of Hung Lew: "If it is reliable, if it works, it will be awesome!" Yet, a majority of those interviewed had real concerns about the "ifs!" The four major areas of concern were: infrastructure, projector availability and ease of use, teacher training, and choice of materials.

Most interviewees felt that providing the infrastructure with adequate bandwidth to handle all of the districts' schools needs would be the most daunting of the problems that needed to be solved before any other steps could be taken. They all seemed to envision the necessity of 'big pipes' to all schools for this to really work and that this project should not proceed unless the 'big pipes' to all schools were in existence.

The next major concern focused on the classroom and the hardware issue that needed a solution, namely the projector. They all agreed that if this was to be successful that having a projector and screen in every classroom mounted and ready for use would be a necessity. Many brought up the need for the whole set up to be non time consuming for teachers, and this led to the next concern about teacher training.

Every teacher interviewed said teacher training would be integral to the successful use of the tools. They believed that every teacher would need detailed training on all aspects of the system so that even the most non tech teachers would feel comfortable downloading or streaming media materials. They also felt that easy access to tech help would ensure favorable outcomes.

The final concern, choosing materials, brought up the most questions.

- Who will be chosen to preview materials?
- How will materials be chosen, what will be the criterion?
- Will a concise number of materials for each grade be chosen?
- From where will materials come?
- What about approval for materials, who will choose?
- Will materials be directly tied to the curriculum in each subject?

- How do we insure quality?
- How do we handle new adoptions and the new materials that come with those adoptions?
- By what process do we update adopted materials when the adoption money leaves?
- What can teachers individually buy or keep?
- How do these materials get stored?
- Where do these materials get stored?
- How are these materials searched for and accessed?
- How do we insure culturally sensitive materials to be accurate in their presentation?
- Could some media be housed at schools and licensed for use?
- Will we be able to contact someone at the district if we have problems accessing materials?
- How do we limit accessibility to sensitive or restricted materials?

Obviously, all of these questions would have to be addressed to some extent before the system was up and running.

Each one of the educators interviewed gave their opinions from a sincere desire for this project to be done right and be successful. They all felt it a worthy endeavor which would necessitate commitment, time, and money to obtain the desired results. So from their discussions, a few final recommendations can be gleaned.

- 1) Make sure the infrastructure can handle the load and is fully in place.
- 2) Take whatever time it takes to complete the hardware and infrastructure implementation before proceeding with teacher training.
- 3) Ensure ease of use for teachers.
- 4) Provide adequate training for all users.
- 5) Incorporate teacher input on decisions about materials to be adopted.
- 6) Pilot the system at a few schools for some time to ensure its success.
- 7) Provide tech help to all schools when the system goes district wide.
- 8) Make sure it works!

Interviewees and Procedures

Teachers and media specialists were chosen for interviews based on their use of the district's media center during the last school year. The following list includes the teachers' and media specialists' names and their respective schools.

Kathi Freeman - Birch

Karen Mackie - Birch

Terri Clifford - Foothills

Jonathan Warshaw - Foothills

Jolie Kasynski - Heatherwood

Mary Jane Ransom - Heatherwood

Hung Lew - Ryan

Wendy Rochman - Crestview

Magi Evans - Crestview

After an explanation of the morphing procedure for the DIMC toward a media library that would be digitized and stored on district servers accessible 24/7, the interviewees were asked to elaborate on two main questions.

The first question dealt with communication concerns and expanded into procedural, hardware, software, and instructional concerns.

The second question asked about particular items or areas of study that were most important to keep as resources.

Other concerns and questions arose from discussions that stemmed from the original questions.

Most of the interviews were conducted in person. The two interviews with Birch teachers were conducted over the phone.

All of the information was gathered via note taking by myself.