



The Miller Institute for Learning with Technology

learningtech.org

Helping people use technology more effectively for learning

A 501(c)(3) California Nonprofit Public Benefit Corporation

Fall 2010 Newsletter

Did You Know?

You probably know that the mission of The Miller Institute for Learning with Technology (*Learningtech*) is to help people use technology more effectively for learning. You might even know us as your *E-Rate consultants*; but you might not realize that we also help schools and districts prepare *technology plans*. Or, you might know us as the folks who run the technology *summer camps* and *after school programs* at your middle school; but you might not realize that we also provide technology-related *professional development* for teachers and staff -- for topics ranging from interactive white boards, to server administration, to *PowerSchool*. Or, perhaps, you know us as your *IT support* folks; but you might not realize that we also offer web and email *hosting* services for schools and nonprofits.



Learningtech operates Cyber Café at the annual CCSA conference

Indeed, Learningtech offers a broad array of technology-related services, because synergies emerge when we help our school clients with more than one aspect of their technology needs. School technology can be challenging enough, without having IT contractors who are less than knowledgeable about E-Rate considerations, or professional development staff who have never even worked with children themselves. The list to the right illustrates some of the ways that we can help.

Technology Planning and Funding

- Develop technology plans
- Prepare technology grant proposals
- Conduct a competitive bidding process
- Successfully apply for E-Rate funding
- Evaluate new products and services
- Assess technology's impact on learning

Curriculum and Instruction

- Develop and deliver hands-on technology professional development for teachers and staff
- Integrate constructivist technology usage into standards-based curricula
- Deliver PowerSchool training, imports, exports and custom reports
- Lead inspiring student workshops
- Train the trainers

Design and Implementation

- Design local and wide area networks
- Install data wiring in new buildings
- Configure routers, switches and servers
- Ghost/clone desktops and laptops
- Set up robust wireless access
- Host web sites and email

We do not try to do *everything*, of course. We do not sell any products – so that clients can trust our purchasing advice. Nor do we bid on eligible services – for those clients pursuing E-Rate funding – to avoid conflicts of interest. Most importantly, though, we recognize that technology is merely the means to a greater end: improving student achievement. In this context, we are ready to help with *whatever is needed* to succeed with learning technology.



Please Welcome Greg Wood!



We are honored and delighted to announce that Mr. Greg Wood, Chief Business Officer of Palisades Charter High School, has joined our Board of Directors.

Greg has spent over 30 years in the field of Finance and Accounting, serving in various financial capacities with both public and private organizations, including Price Waterhouse, National Sanitary Supply, Unisource Worldwide and Georgia Pacific. Ten years ago, Greg saw the need for increased financial expertise in the emerging charter education movement and transitioned into management roles with ExED, a highly regarded provider of financial and accounting services for charter schools. He now serves as Chief Business Officer of the second-largest single-site charter school in California.

Greg also serves as a Board member and President-elect of the Pacific Palisades Chamber of Commerce.

For more information about our Board: learningtech.org/company/board.shtml

E-Rate Just Got Easier!

E-Rate is a major funding program run by the Federal Communications Commission [FCC]. It provides discounts on telecommunications, Internet access and related services for schools and libraries. Annual funding exceeds \$2.25B nationwide. Discounts are provided on a sliding scale ranging from 20% to 90% based on

measures of poverty in the community. FCC's *Sixth Report and Order*, issued 9/28/2010, introduced sweeping changes to E-Rate, making it less difficult to apply, effective for the upcoming funding year.

The changes focus on:

- a) Improving broadband access for students, teachers, librarians, and communities
- b) Streamlining and simplifying administrative requirements.

Some of the more dramatic changes include:

- ***Application deadline postponed to March!***
- ***Technology plans are now required only for Priority 2 services!*** (internal connections and basic maintenance)
- Leased dark fiber is now eligible
- Community use of services is now allowed
- Residential schools are now eligible
- The funding cap is now indexed to inflation
- There is a new pilot grant program for providing off campus Internet access.

Elimination of the tech plan requirement for applicants seeking only Priority 1 services (telecom and Internet access) removes a *significant* barrier to entry for smaller schools such as charters. Even without a plan, schools can now receive significant discounts on local and long distance service (including managed Voice over Internet Protocol [VoIP]), cellular service and Internet access (including Cable, DSL, T1, DS3 and fiber), and, in California, increase their discount levels from the California Teleconnect Fund.

For more information about changes to E-Rate: http://www.usac.org/_res/documents/about/pdf/fcc-orders/2010-fcc-orders/FCC-10-175.pdf

We have helped *many* schools successfully apply for E-Rate since the program's inception 13 years ago. In just the last 3 years, we have obtained over **\$3.7M** in committed funding, with considerably more pending. Let us help your school or district pursue E-Rate funding!

After School Programs

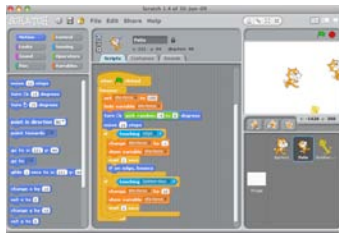
Inspired by repeated requests from students and parents familiar with our Summer Workshops, Learningtech has been expanding its *After School* offerings at local schools. Here are two examples.

The Robotics Club at St. Simon School in Los Altos, CA encourages students in grades 4-8 to learn science, technology, engineering and mathematics, motivated by the fun and challenge of robotics. Students develop higher order thinking skills such as planning and debugging. They also develop collaboration skills by working as part of a team to meet specific goals within a deadline. Last spring our 4th grade students amazed the crowds at *Maker Faire* by debugging the C programs driving their maze-navigating robots in real time with an audience.



For more information about Maker Faire: <http://makerfaire.com/bayarea/2010/>

Create Your Own Video Games From SCRATCH at Tierra Linda Middle School in San Carlos, CA encourages students to create video games for submission to a national contest emphasizing Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics [STEM]. Scratch is a student-friendly yet powerful graphical programming system developed at MIT. We pose this question to our students: “why settle for video games written by *grownups*, when you can create your own cool games that work the way you want?”



For more information about the national STEM contest for student video game programmers: <http://www.stemchallenge.org/>



Summit Prep Intersession Course

We are pleased to announce that Learningtech will be delivering an exciting new technology elective at Summit Public Schools. One of five charter management organizations featured in the movie, *Waiting for Superman*, Summit and its partner school, Everest, serve an ethnically diverse high school population in Redwood City, CA. During January and May, Summit operates an innovative program of intense electives for its 9th through 12th grade students, called *Intersession*. Learningtech will offer the following Intersession course.

A Hands-On Survey of Computer Science and Information Technology -- With Examples from Robotics, Artificial Intelligence, Troubleshooting and Computer Game Design

What is a byte, anyway? Why do we live in a place called, “Silicon Valley?” Must there always be a human to “drive” a robot? Is technology just a collection of “cool stuff,” or are there important ideas and unifying themes driving the “information age?”



Today’s high school students will graduate into a world in which nearly every job involves daily use of technology. It will also be a world in which some of the most exciting career opportunities will require extensive knowledge from the fields of Computer Science and Information Technology ... Through field trips and hands-on projects, we will strike a balance between the breadth of a survey course and the depth of a few specialized topics ... students will discover some of the central concepts in these fields, as well as a bit about themselves.

If your school is interested in technology-rich summer camps, after school programs, or other innovative offerings for students, please contact us at info@learningtech.org for a proposal.



Initiatives Being Planned



In cooperation with the University of New Orleans and New Beginnings School Foundation, we have been planning a 2-3 week summer camp for students in **New Orleans'** lower ninth ward. The objective is for 75 high school students to pass **CompTIA A+ certification**, a major milestone towards a career in IT. To date, 100 refurbished Dell computers and Belkin toolkits have been donated, as well as volunteer services, lodging for instructors, software and modest amounts of cash. However, additional support is still required for these deserving youngsters – who have survived the ravages of Hurricane Katrina and more – if we are to teach them to fish in the pond of high technology.



In cooperation with the **U.S.S. Hornet Museum**, we have been planning a **Robotics Summer Camp for inner city students** from Oakland, CA. For one week, underserved students who otherwise would not be able to afford this type of summer enrichment, will eat and sleep aboard the Hornet (the aircraft carrier that retrieved the Apollo space capsule). They will study science, technology, engineering and mathematics, motivated by naval aviation, space exploration and robotics. A guest speaker from NASA will demonstrate the Mars Rover prototype. Students will program their own robots using authentic examples from space exploration. Instead of “why do I have to learn this?” students will ask, “what classes should I take to pursue a career in this field?”

Microsoft Settlement Vouchers

The deadline for purchases using Microsoft Settlement Vouchers under the first *cy-près* has been extended until 9/25/2013. At least an additional \$25M (\$5.31/pupil) will soon become available. A second *cy-près* is also likely. A current E-Rate or EETT tech plan is required by 6/30/2011 to participate.

For more information about Vouchers:

- <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/et/st/etvrg.asp>
- <http://www.edtechk12vp.com/>

Learningtech is authorized to provide both IT Support and Professional Development services via the CA K-12 Voucher Program; we also help schools prepare technology plans.

How You Can Help

Help us make the world a better place by sharing the power tools of learning with all students. Expand our outreach: perhaps you might identify sponsors who would subsidize our efforts. You can also help by volunteering your time, sharing novel ideas for fund-raising, serving as a guest instructor, hosting a field trip, “liking” us on Facebook and spreading the word about our work among friends/colleagues.

Schools and nonprofits have been especially hard hit by the recession, so most of all we need philanthropic support. Please consider adding Learningtech to your list in this Season of Giving. Tax-deductible donations of any size are appreciated and make a tangible difference:

- \$10 could pay for a computer toolkit
- \$35 could pay for a half-hour or more of tech support for a teacher
- \$300 could pay for 1 robot kit or enable 1 disadvantaged student to attend a tech camp
- \$5,000 could pay for E-Rate consulting that nets over \$50,000 in discounts for a school
- \$15,000 could enable us to launch our A+ camp for 75 New Orleans students

For more information about donations:

<http://www.learningtech.org/donations/>.