

'Net School Web Sites Offer Advice on Technology

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School administrators facing decisions about education technology -- planning, infrastructure, funding, curriculum integration and other applications -- need help as they sift through blizzards of vendors' pitches and weigh conflicting recommendations on bandwidth and hardware standards and training and Internet filters and all the rest of it.

They get a lot of advice from each other, not just over hors d'oeuvres at expensive conferences, but also over the Internet at, for instance, a big site called NetDay Compass (netdaycompass.org). It's operated by NetDay, a nonprofit group with ties to North Carolina's Explornet (www.explornet.org), to assist schools in finding the educational results they want with the help of the Internet and other computer technology.

NetDay Compass has a directory of resources recommended by educators, evaluated by NetDay staff and rated by users who post their comments at the site. While most of these recommendations are aimed at edutech decision-makers, teachers and parents will find value here, too.

A page on Web guides for children, for example, points both to sites managed by cybermarketeers such as AOL, Lycos and Yahoo, and to nonprofit sites maintained by librarians: KidsClick! (www.kidsclick.org) and the Librarian's Guide to Cyberspace for Parents & Kids (www.ala.org/parentspage/greatsites/guide.html).

Some of the best reading at NetDay Compass comes under the heading of Best Practices and Real Stories. Here are lots of stories from some of the leading innovators in education technology: individual teachers, from California to Vermont, some with big budgets and some without, who show how they are getting results.

For more help in keeping up, you can sign up for an e-mail newsletter from NetDay Compass or read weekly news about K-12 technology at eSchoolNews (eschoolnews.com).