

**Palm Education Pioneers: Examining the
Potential of the Handheld Computer**

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Abstract

Handheld computers are showing up in classrooms across the country as school systems are searching for relevant technology that is affordable, versatile, and portable. The Research Center for Educational Technology (RCET) at Kent State University has been investigating the use of handheld computers since the Center became a research hub under the Palm Education Pioneer (PEP) Project in May 2001. As a result of this project, RCET created a CD-ROM that focuses on three of the participating teachers. The purpose of this session is to demonstrate the CD-ROM and engage conference participants in conversation about this emerging technology.

Palm Education Pioneers: Examining the Potential of the Handheld Computer

The purpose of this session is to demonstrate the CD-ROM, *Palm Education Pioneers: Examining the Potential of the Handheld Computer*. The Palm Education Pioneer (PEP) Project is a partnership between Palm Inc., SRI International, and several research hubs across the country. The Research Center for Educational Technology (RCET) at Kent State University was designated as one of these research hubs in May 2001.

Eleven teachers, all alumni of Kent State University's SBC Ameritech Classroom, agreed to participate in the PEP Project. They were each given class sets of Palm IIIc handheld computers (approximately 300 total). RCET staff provided both technical and curricular support throughout the year. An array of applications emerged as the teachers and students explored the potential of their Palm handhelds. Teachers soon discovered that a wealth of software exists to support handheld learning and the Palms became much more than personal calendars and information managers.

As a result of this project, RCET created a CD-ROM that focuses on three of the teachers who participated through their research hub. These veteran teachers have effectively and meaningfully integrated handheld computer technology into their curriculum. The presentation will take a look at the information on the CD-ROM, including the learning outcomes of the highlighted curriculum, the teachers' perspectives on how technology has changed the way that they teach, and how technology helps their students learn. The teachers are eloquent about their reasons for embracing technology at this point in their careers. One teacher is a middle school language arts teacher, the second teaches fifth grade, and the third teaches a multi-aged class of special needs children at the elementary level.

RCET researchers designed an evaluation study of the yearlong project. The evaluation results can be accessed on the CD-ROM. The presenter will discuss the evaluation findings and describe subsequent research that is taking place with the teachers and classrooms.

Elizabeth G. Pryor, Ph.D., Director of the Research Center for Educational Technology, has an extensive background in education that includes classroom teaching, professional staff development, curriculum design and supervision, and technology integration. Her role as Director of RCET includes vision and leadership in areas of pedagogy and the integration of technology into a constructivist classroom.

The CD-ROM will be made available at no charge to all those who attend the presentation.