7 THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT NETSUPPORT SCHOOL

SCENARIO

Ms. Smith is a professor at a university. She teaches her classes in a computer lab. While she lectures she can hear the students typing and clicking their mice. Some students are chatting, some are playing Solitaire, and others are on Facebook. She has to stop her lecture frequently and tell the students to pay attention. It cuts drastically into class time and she worries that the students are not fully grasping the material.

One day she attends a meeting about the new software that is being installed in computer labs. NetSupport School allows for monitoring and control of multiple PCs. With NetSupport School Ms. Smith can now take attendance, deliver lecture materials directly to computers, create student surveys for instant feedback, and supervise student computer activity.

Now during lectures Ms. Smith can restrict application usage to only those programs or websites that she wants the students to access. She can restrict their access to just Ferris' WebCT site. Additionally she can lock keyboards and mice when she wants them to not use the stations. She is now able to keep the students' full attention and keep them involved by having interactive presentations using NetSupport School. The students' grades have improved and Ms. Smith no longer worries that they're missing important information because they are distracted by the computers in front of them.

WHAT IS IT?

NetSupport School is a software program that allows professors to better instruct, monitor and support students in networked classrooms.

With NetSupport School, professors can improve the efficiency of classroom instruction by centrally instructing students on their computer, keep students on task by monitoring application and web usage, improve support through online help and chat requests, and save time by quickly polling the class and showing instant results. Professors can also record all screen, keyboard and mouse activity on a student workstation to review later or to replay to the class.

There are also many resources for greater involvement of students in the learning process; a student's desktop with their work or a website they've found can be shown to the entire class, for example. The student can automatically share that site with Ms. Smith by having her access the student's computer and sharing the site through the master console.

The professor also has the option of allowing students access to the full-featured whiteboard software.

Then there's still more: the professor can prevent student access to USB devices, CDs, copying files, and so on. He or she can transfer files, including multimedia clips, from the main computer to all student computers in the class, or "co-browse" with them, synchronizing a browser window with the students so they see the page—and even automatically scroll to the correct part—that the teacher is viewing.

WHO IS USING IT?

At Ferris, several computer classrooms have this software installed and ready to use.

Professors who hold their classes in computer labs use NetSupport School to improve interaction with students. Students who are in these classes use the software to follow the steps of a professor's lecture as well as to demonstrate their knowledge and ability to use the system. They can also collaborate interactively with a monitoring professor to share resources with the class. In some cases, professors can even use NetSupport School to implement class-wide tests. All of these

functions are controlled through a streamlined interface at the professor's terminal.

WHY IS IT SIGNIFICANT?

NetSupport School combines the presentation power of the multi-media classroom with the control factor that helps professors know that students are not wasting valuable class time surfing the internet or accessing chat programs. With NetSupport School, the professor is in control. This cuts down on cheating and distractions. In addition, many of the new features allow for greater student participation in the learning process.

WHAT ARE THE DOWNSIDES?

As with many "control" programs, NetSupport School is a target for students to attempt to bypass. While the software can control what a student can do at the workstation, it cannot force them to pay attention or provide learning incentive; all it can do is minimize distractions. While many of the software's basic functions are easy to understand, training is necessary to fully utilize the product. Also, students who are used to freedom and adult responsibility sometimes become disgruntled by such restrictions.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

NetSupport school clients are loaded onto the computer terminals in each computer lab. The professor's station has a master client loaded onto it. When the computers start up, the students are required to login to Netsupport School. (The professor can even set up custom fields so for students to fill in order to learn more about the class.) The professor sees a screen that shows small, frequently updated thumbnail images of each student's computer. Students who have not logged in or who are not engaged are very easily noticed.

The client contains an easy to follow series of menus that the professor can access in order to control various aspects of the students' computer usage. It's very easy to put websites or programs in the appropriate list to allow or restrict access. Even programs that are minimized or running in the background can be listed for the professor's approval.

During the class, the professor has complete control. With a simple command, student keyboards and mice can be locked and will not respond to student input. Anything on one computer can be shared with the class. The students can do as much or as little as the professor allows.

WHERE IS IT GOING?

As NetSupport School becomes more widespread on campus, professors will have more and more control over their classrooms. Every student in a computer lab will be able to work together under the oversight of a teacher in a way that was previously only possible with very small groups and constant supervision. Students will adjust more to the connected classroom and will appreciate the extra capabilities it affords them.

WHAT IMPLICATIONS ARE THERE FOR TEACHING?

The most immediate benefit of NetSupport School is knowing what students are doing when they are on lab computers. As a resource for faculty, it is second to none in demonstrating computer software operation techniques; professors simply have to take control of the student's computer and can literally show them all of the steps involved in using a software function. It also ensures that students are not wasting time browsing the web or chatting during lab time. This makes it easier for educators to plan computer centered activities and know that the computer will be focused on what the professor is demonstrating.

If you are interested in learning how to use the software, or have it installed in your classroom call the TAC. 231-591-4822