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# R E P O R T

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## When Computers Go to School

How Kent School Implemented  
Information Technology to Enrich  
Teaching and Learning

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## Summary

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The members of Kent School's Technology Committee envisioned information technology being used to enhance or extend the learning process when they recommended in 1995 that the school initiate its technology program. Since then, the school's experience with information technology has taught two broad lessons. The technology can be used to enrich teaching and learning. However, the degree to which faculty and students integrate it into their academic activities depends on its being implemented appropriately.

Typically, faculty reported that the technology helped them “energize” or “engage” students both during class and outside it. They reported that the technology provided rich resources that they used to illuminate lessons and develop “authentic” learning exercises for their students. Further, they reported that information technology reduced the investment of time and effort in activities that are peripheral to the learning process. Students' comments were consistent with those of the faculty.

Kent's experience demonstrates the importance of sound implementation practices to the successful integration of the technology into teaching and learning—it was found that the benefits of information technology are not likely to be obtained simply by putting computers into the hands of faculty and students. Some specific findings from Kent's experience follow:

- Proactive communication informed individuals of the true benefits to be gained from the technology and the true cost they would incur to use it.
- Training reduced the time and effort required to learn to use the technology successfully.
- Equipment was upgraded and, as a result, it was easier to use and more reliable than formerly.
- User support was enhanced to minimize the costs individuals incurred when components of the technology malfunctioned or were damaged.

Implementation at Kent is an ongoing activity. It aims to anticipate and proactively accommodate both technological advances and the evolving needs and preferences of faculty and students.

Although the overall advance of information technology can be predicted, not every situation affecting its use can be foreseen. Fortunately, Kent could draw on a reserve of human, technical, and financial resources to remedy problems before the negative outcomes compounded. To make corrections quickly and relatively inexpensively, and to limit the number of individuals who might be subjected to negative experiences with the technology, schools less favored than Kent might consider (1) scaling back technology programs that

would otherwise commit all available resources and thus provide a reserve that could be used to address unforeseen situations or (2) starting with a pilot program that would flush out unanticipated problems—and limit their scope so that they could be corrected with fewer resources—before initiating a fullscale program.