

# Quarterly

## Internationally-known author featured at conference

Alan November got his first glimpse of the power technology has to motivate students in 1981. Then, the noted author and educator was a history teacher at an alternative high school in Lexington, Massachusetts. He caught a student breaking into a computer lab. To his surprise, the student wasn't trying to steal or damage the equipment – he wanted to learn more about programming and the only computer available to him was at the school.

November let the student borrow a computer for the weekend and, to his surprise, the student returned to school on Monday having completed a semester's worth of study on computer programming. That incident taught November two lessons that guide his work today – students need to feel ownership of their learning to be successful and technology in the classroom, used properly, has the power to provide that ownership.

November was the keynote speaker at the district's Responsive Classroom Conference, held February 1 at Hornell High School. The conference was designed to help educators improve their teaching by integrating the latest technology into their instruction. November's address, *Creating a New Culture of Teaching and Learning*, challenged teachers to redefine their approach to education and technology.

After his first brush with the power of technology in 1981, November said he expected schools to change to keep up with changing learners. "But schools didn't change," he said.

"If I had to pick one over-arching theme that I want to get across today, it's that kids should be contributing solutions to their own learning," he said. "Schools that allow students to own their own learning have the highest test scores. If your school has passive learners, you have to change the environment."

Although November mentioned several forms of technology, his address primarily focused on the prominent role the Internet has come to play in the world's economy, and how its power could be harnessed for use in the classroom.

### Scenes from the conference...



November began the day by talking with students about their use of technology during breakfast.



November then addressed teachers and took time for individual questions.



Following the address, teachers attended four of 19 different technology-related workshops. Here, Tony DiMento of CDW-G shows teachers a netbook designed specifically for younger students.

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## Bryant teams with A+ Educators to create Academy

A team of Hornell educators is in the process of creating the Bryant Academy, literally from scratch. Once this unique school improvement initiative is up and running, it will be the first of its kind in the nation, said Principal Barb Kramer.

The premise behind the Academy is straightforward. Working with a business partner, a team of educators identifies the strengths and weaknesses of the school's instructional program. From there, the team creates goals and strategies to address the weaknesses and build on strengths.

The process is unique because it is funded by a business partner through a little-known section of the federal Taxpayer Relief Act of 1997 that created Qualified Zone Academy Bonds (QZABs). QZABs are federal non-interest bearing bonds that are available to eligible school districts for school renovations, repairs and other improvements.

To be eligible to use QZABs to fund school improvement projects, districts must secure a 10 percent matching grant from a business or non-profit partner. The match partner works with the district to set up a QZAB Academy that prepares students for college or the workforce.

Since the district applied for and received QZAB funding for the more than \$4 million in renovations that were recently completed at Bryant School, it is eligible for roughly \$400,000 in school improvement funding through its business partner, A+ Educators of Phoenix, Arizona. According to Kramer, A+ already has evaluated the school's strengths and weaknesses.

"We started the process by inviting teachers to volunteer to be risk-takers and to work hard to develop an Academy to improve achievement," Kramer said.

From those volunteers, Kramer assembled a cross grade-level team that includes Kindergarten Teacher Teri Mauro, First-Grade Teacher Jen Jones, Second-Grade Teacher Lynn Pollinger, Speech

Teacher Amy Wilkins, Inclusion/Interventionist Linda Weyand, Special Education Teacher Angie Conway and Instructional Support Specialist Lisa Zimar.

Then, using the information gathered by A+ Educators about the school's strengths and weaknesses, the group identified its goals for the Academy. The goals are designed to increase student engagement, use of existing technology, encourage more student discussion in instruction, and increase understanding of what's being taught.

Team members recently traveled to Phoenix to attend staff development training. The cost of the trip was covered by A+ Educators, Kramer said.

In Phoenix, team members learned about the

wide variety of resources available to them through A+ Educators. Among them is Digital Nation, a web site that gives teachers access to lesson plans that make use of interactive whiteboards. Also,

teachers now have access to the Now Channel, a live chat that allows them to ask specific questions and get an immediate answer.

"Think of it as a human search engine," Kramer said. "It's designed to give teachers immediate guidance while they're developing lesson plans."

The trip also introduced Bryant teachers to other educators from around the country. Using technology that is already available to them, Hornell teachers can participate in distance learning activities with some of these teachers, Kramer said.

"The resources that we have available to us through this relationship with A+ Educators will allow teachers to improve instruction and save them time," Kramer said.

The team began sharing information with other Bryant staff members at a faculty meeting in February. They plan to present a progress report on the Academy to the Board of Education in April.



Members of the Bryant Academy team during their recent trip to Phoenix.

## Capital construction update

Progress on the capital construction project approved by voters in March 2008 continues to be right on schedule. Here's a brief synopsis of what's happening with each portion of the project.

### Bryant School & District Wide Technology and Security, Phase I:

These projects are all but complete. Work at Bryant started as school ended last June and was substantially completed by the time school began. The District Wide Technology project started as spring recess began and was nearly complete as school began. The budget allowed us to complete all of the alternate upgrades included in the scope of the project.

### The High School:

Hunt Engineers and Architects submitted the plans and specifications for a building permit to the New York State Department of Education on August 28. The state Education Department reviewed the plans and requested some clarifications. Hunt responded to the architectural and engineering concerns and SED approved the plans in January. Bids will be opened on March 2, with Board of Education approval expected on March 15. Construction will begin during spring recess in April.

The "phasing" schedule has been finalized. A meeting with faculty will be scheduled immediately prior to the beginning of work to discuss how we will maintain a safe environment during the project.

### District Wide Technology and Security, Phase II:

Plans were submitted and the state Education Department reviewed them and requested some clarifications. Hunt was ready to resubmit revised documents when an issue with the electrical service at North Hornell was discovered. Once the cause was determined, Hunt resubmitted the plans. A building permit is expected by the end of February. Contracts will be awarded in April.

### Intermediate School:

Several weeks ago, we discovered that one of the walls of the pool had cracked in several places. A temporary support system was constructed and an application for a building permit submitted to rebuild the wall. SED expedited the request and a building permit was issued. We expect that bids will be opened in March, with work beginning in May.

Planning for the rest of the Intermediate School project with the faculty and staff resumed in September.

Meetings also were held with the principal and dean of students, with a final meeting to review the scope held in early January.

The core project will address the building's climate control systems and renovations to the cafeteria, together with other building conditions items that Superintendent of Buildings and Grounds

Luke Turek has prioritized. The renovation of one hallway and two classrooms on both the second and third floors will be recommended if the budget allows.

If the board approves the proposed scope of the project at its February meeting, Hunt will begin developing the plans and specifications and submit them to the state Education Department in September.

### Columbian School:

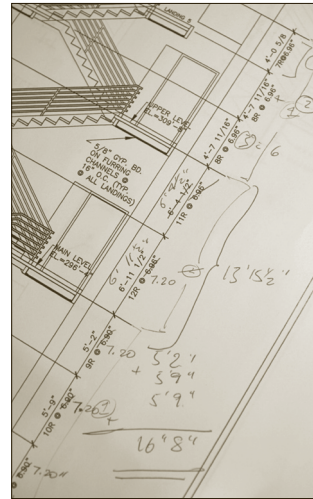
The Board of Education approved the scope of this project in December. Hunt is developing the plans and specifications, with submission to SED planned for March 15 and a building permit expected in September. The actual work at Columbian will be undertaken prior to the opening of school in September 2011. During the 2011-12 school year, third grade classes will be moved from the Intermediate School to Columbian so the project at the Intermediate School can be completed. Central administration offices will be consolidated at Columbian to accommodate the third grade.

### District Wide Technology and Security, Phase III:

Planning for this final phase of the overall technology project has been completed and plans will be submitted to SED on March 15. A building permit is expected in September. The major initiative in this phase is installation of a new telecommunications system.

### North Hornell:

Planning for the project with the faculty and staff will begin this June and be finalized by the end of October.



## Scenes, continued...



Steve Smith from GST BOCES Model Schools program teaches some basic computer skills.



Shawn Ward from GST BOCES Model Schools program explains WIKI use.



**Hornell**  
City School District  
25 Pearl Street  
Hornell, NY 14843

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## Conference, continued...

"There's a desperate urgency in countries like China and India to teach children how to work with other people from around the world," he said. "We don't do that in our country, but we should all be feeling that sense of urgency. We need to teach our children that there is a different point of view so they can develop empathy, one of the most important skills you can have in a global economy."

To that end, November recommended using the Internet to allow students to connect with other learners around the world. He advocated hosting debates on a particular topic between Hornell students and students from another country.

"I don't know if you've noticed, but high school students are social learners," he said. "Add social connections to a classroom project and you'll greatly increase their interest and involvement."

He also advocated teaching students how to use the Internet effectively for research. "If you don't know how to use it, you can be manipulated," he said. "We can teach critical thinking skills by teaching

our children to tear apart the Internet layer by layer so they can validate sources of information on their own."

Following the keynote address, teachers participated in four 50-minute workshops throughout the rest of the day. The conference offered 19 options for teachers to choose from on topics such as virtual classrooms, WIKIs, social networking sites and online databases.

November is the author of two books, *Empowering Students with Technology* and *Web Literacy for Educators*. He is believed to be the first major educator to embrace modern web technologies for instructional use. He was one of the initial five Christa McAuliffe Educators and founded the Institute for Education Leadership and Technology at Stanford University. November heads an educational consulting firm, November Learning, and hosts a popular annual conference, Building Learning Communities.