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Subject: K-12 outreach
Revision dates: Saturday, March 20, 1999, revised Thursday, November 18,
1999, Saturday, September 9, 2000



Kid's University

Technology is shaping our world. Today this is most apparent with the Internet, where access to information has become easier than ever before. Of the many uses for Internet, education seems to be a natural -- indeed, new developments in web based instruction are among the largest components of the Internet.

In the State of Arizona, there are many wonderful sites developed for all levels of instruction (though particularly for K-12), many of them connected to outreach projects that are hosted by higher education and industry. However, a basic, practical component is still missing: How does someone find the sites that address a particular instructor's need and how does a user judge the quality of the content?

It is clear that a cohesive method of exporting educational content (outreach) to the K-12 schools is needed. Currently there are several programs in the State that are exploring different methods of outreach. These programs generally fall into two categories, personal contact and web-based outreach. Feedback from existing individual outreach programs generally shows great interest by relatively small groups of students and instructors. However there is no linkage between the different projects that shows the full extent of the resources available, or encourages different programs to share contacts and collaborate, or that documents the real extent of public interest and use. In general, lacking a distribution network, these powerful outreach programs are prevented from reaching their full potential and the State misses out on many of the possibilities the web offers for augmenting education. What are the advantages and opportunities for creating such a network?

- Improve student scores at all levels (National and State Level Exams)
 - in all districts including metropolitan and rural areas
 - for home schooled and charter school students
- Provide challenging education opportunities
 - access for rural students to advanced topics
 - address the needs of gifted students by linking them to mentors
- Increase the skills of the students graduating from K-12
 - students are better prepared for advanced education
- Increase the quality of the students entering the workforce
 - better prepared students entering the universities allows more time and opportunity for teaching advanced skills in areas such as science, math, and biotechnology

We propose a central distribution hub that will act as a network hub for current outreach programs scattered across the State. Under this model, existing projects will be able to be linked via a central web hub called the Kid's University.

Why create a Kid's University?



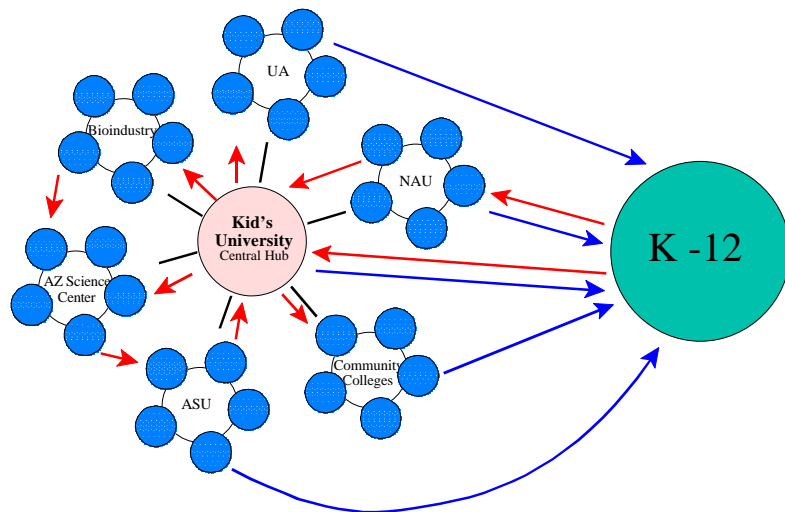
The most compelling reason for a Kid's University is much of the components already exist. In fact, the Kid's University will not be concerned with recreating content already being handled by the various K-12 outreach programs. Instead it will be able to focus on other important aspects of outreach.

- Provide links between resources
 - identify resource materials
- Provide a vehicle for interaction between project developers and K-12 instructors.
- Provide resources to port existing technology created by other projects to other programs thus reducing the need to “recreate the wheel.”
- Provide assistance to programs that want help developing K-12 materials that address current needs of instructors, such as lesson plans that address the AIMS standards.
- Provide a central network that instructors can use to collaborate, exchange teaching strategies and develop curriculum.
 - develop “best practice” guidelines
 - identify content experts and participatory faculty to initiate peer discussions.
- Provide a mechanism to assess individual outreach projects.


Besides these assets, the Kid's University gives a web identity that is not unlike a name brand. Outreach sites displaying the Kid's University logo shows that they can provide needed educational materials for the K-12 consumer.

How do we build the Kid's University?

We feel the time is right to make plans. Much of the content already exists for the Kid's University and the need to address current State teaching standards is apparent. Therefore, we propose that a committee should be formed to establish a plan of action, and develop a specific ASU proposal that can in turn be used to spur state-wide action. Since outreach programs exist throughout the State, participation from all areas, including higher education, non-profit organizations with educational components, the technology industry and bioindustry will be important. Preferably a State-supported plan could be put into place in a relatively short time.



Kid's University Logo by
Mike Hagelberg

 = individual outreach programs

General organization of Kid's University and potential interactions with K-12 schools.