

Panel: K-12 and Industry Partnering

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Abstract

Professional animators and digital effects artists and companies often work with high school teachers to explore relationships that can be developed and maintained between high schools and industry. The goals of this panel are to make more educators aware of the on-line and in person mentoring, sharing, and peer training that can occur in graphics, animation and related fields for 1) improving curricula and integrated technologies, 2) creating or furthering personal student interest or as a career vehicle and foundation, and 3) encouraging teachers to become involved in, and comfortable with, the new media.

When Josh Spector wrote "Studios drawn to CGI features" for the *Hollywood Reporter* [January 2, 2002], he noted the studios™ big interest in animation and computer graphics based on *Shrek*, *Monsters, Inc.* and the realization that there were audiences for the non-Disney animated feature. Youth of all ages, as well as adults, not only enjoy CGI, but can also create it themselves with the current technology on home computers.

Today's high school students, with the current technology available in home machines, are able to create products comparable to that of professionals, using computer technology that was very expensive just a few years ago. Although many students do not have access to the Internet or recent computer technology, those that do are producing programs for the Internet, their schools, and even, for sales. To gain and maintain the skill, one must practice. To give every child an even chance, the technology must be made available through education. Ideally, students would be given or lent computers with appropriate software for their classes, skills and academic or hobby interests.

In order to do that, administrators and teachers today must first recognize the convergence of electronic media, information technology, communication, and entertainment. Then plans must be made or programs adapted to further the educational needs and foundations of the student (at any age).

Therefore, it is imperative that teachers and administrators integrate 21st century technology into the curricula. However, we are sometimes afraid or hesitant to make changes we do not thoroughly understand, much less that are new to us. Many of today's educators are nearing retirement and there is a growing shortage of teachers. There is usually a shortage of funds in public education, too. Schools, therefore, often fall behind in the technology learning curve. New and exciting curriculum may be welcomed with open arms and with great desire but a lack of resources, combined with fear and trepidation by the very people who must learn and teach it, may negate its implementation.

1 Purpose and Premise

Where such integration is taking place, such as South Burlington High School in Vermont, exciting results are being seen. In many school districts, a lack of funds, fear of the technology, or a lack of knowledge prevent such improvements from being made. This panel addresses the continuum from school districts leading in technology to those not yet on the path. The professionals and the teachers will share their knowledge and experiences with the schools they are associated with as well as those they are aware

of. Where programs can be developed that includes staff training, peer tutoring, mentoring and business-education partnerships, the students are able to integrate their interests with required curricula. In such cases, software and hardware are frequently donated or sold at cost to the educational institutions for inclusion as educational resources. The use of students as peer teachers and mentors as both teachers and advisers to students and faculty enable great gains in the learning curve.

Many hardware and software manufacturers provide significant educational discounts to make their products available within the school system. Some will also give software in return for student evaluations and testimonials ? whether positive or not. Vendors realize that students and faculty will usually choose products with which they are familiar and comfortable. Some companies develop products to introduce students and faculty to the world of computer graphics. Other companies provide tutorials, videotape training, or manuals for self-paced learning. When educators and students can combine resources, products, and vehicles for education, a new world of technology opens to them.

2 The Panelists

Dr. Darlene Wolfe, [moderator] is the Television Production teacher at Dr. Phillips High School's Visual and Performing Arts School and has won two consecutive awards for connecting learning to earning. She was also a 2000 recipient of the Disney Teacherrific Awards.

Wolfe serves as a Valencia Community College [VCC] dual enrollment instructor with classes held at Florida's Orange County's (OCPS) "A"-rated Dr. Phillips High School TV studio and classrooms. She piloted the "2nd Unit" program with the Florida Motion Picture and Television Association (FMPTA). Traffic Productions is currently mentoring both 2nd Unit and M.E.D.I.A. (Mentoring Entrepreneurship by Direct Involvement in Activities) in a script-to-screen approach to a short film. In 20 years of teaching in Florida, Darlene has taught many subjects but gravitated to TV production due to the power of communication and electronic media in our society. She served on a SIGGRAPH panel in 1997 and has worked on SIGkids and Community Outreach at SIGGRAPH 1998. She has been fortunate enough to receive two SIGGRAPH Educators grants.

According to Wolfe, "Dr. Phillips High School is indebted to AIST and SCALA for their continued support and business partnership with our students. They have been most gracious and our students are learning on Iplay Studio, Info Channel Designer, Movie Pack, the earlier Media Mania, and now Movie 3-D. With these donated programs and the educationally priced LightWave 7.0 Educational Labpack, our students are able to learn with our mentors, as well as on their own."

With over 15 years in media production, **Jeff Scheetz** has amassed a thorough knowledge of visual storytelling through film, video and animation. He is a member of The Visual Effects Society and The Television Academy of Arts and Sciences. Prior to opening The DAVE School, Jeff worked for Foundation Imaging, NewTek

Inc., Nickelodeon Studios, Universal Studios Florida, Walt Disney Imagineering and The Disney MGM Studios. He and his wife founded the DAVE School (Digital animation and Visual Effects) located on the lot at Universal Studios Florida. Jeff not only serves as a guest speaker for high school students, he arranges tours and special classes to introduce and forward their interest in the digital world.

Roger Cotton is a professional 3D-character animator and instructor in San Diego, California. He graduated from the University of California at Los Angeles with a Bachelor degree in Theatre. He later attended the Musical Theatre M.F.A. Program at San Diego State University, studying concurrently at the Lehman Engal Musical Theatre Writing Workshop in Hollywood. Cotton worked as a multimedia content designer for five years before starting his 3D-animation career at Vision Scape Imaging, a 3D-production studio. He left to become a freelancer and was later appointed the Director of Multimedia at Platt College San Diego. There, he implemented and taught a twenty-week LightWave 3D training program. Cotton has created 3D art elements for various online game companies. He is currently a visiting professor, teaching 3D animation production at the DAVE School at Universal Studios in Orlando, Florida and consulting with nearby schools.

Timothy Comolli has been teaching at South Burlington High School in Vermont for 35 years. He came from a background in radio and television (he was the nation's youngest disc jockey in 1957) to teach Advertising, Video Production and Electronic Arts in the 90's. Because he was an English teacher by training, Tim's friends and colleagues find it hard to believe that he runs one of the best high school computer graphics facilities in New England. *Technology and Learning Magazine* and The Learning Company have named him National Technology Teacher of the Year. The Vermont State Legislature recently passed a resolution commending him for initiating the South Burlington Imaging Lab.

Tim has been awarded numerous other honors including: The Bill Gates "The Road Ahead" grant winner (1996), University of Vermont "Teacher of the Year" (1997), Who's Who Among Teachers (1997), The Henderson Foundation Grants winner (1999) and many others. Tim travels the country speaking to many technology conferences. You may reach him at Tim@sburl.k12.vt.us. He has presented at SIGGRAPH 96 and was on a panel at SIGGRAPH 97. His students have achieved recognition and brought money and equipment into the "Imaging Lab." You can probably get the best pictures of the students work off their web page: <http://www.sburl.k12.vt.us>.

Chris Stapleton (see his web page for details <http://www.christopher.stapleton.net/>) is currently the Director for Entertainment Research at the Institute for Simulation and Training and Instructor of Interactive Entertainment for the UCF Film & Digital Media Program. His present work is developing content and infrastructure for the future of experience-based digital media for art, entertainment, and education. He is a producer of experience-based media by training. He has over twenty years experience as a creative principal in developing experiences and environments for entertainment, marketing and education for companies such as Universal Studios, Nickelodeon, Disney and Sanrio. His positions include Producer, Entertainment Consultant, Creative Director, Artistic Director, Design Director, Art Director, Chairperson, Concept Designer, as well as Production and Scenic Designer. Projects were developed for film, television, theater, theme parks, museums, research and education, retail merchandising, corporate marketing and communications. Experiences include projects worldwide including New York, Los Angeles, Tokyo, Milan, Cincinnati,

Knoxville and Orlando. His education consists of a Master of Fine Arts in Film and a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Theater from New York University, Manhattan and London. He has contributed to several publications including the book *Digital Illusions*, entertaining the future with hi-technology. He was recently the keynote speaker for the 2001 National Junior Scientist and Humanities Symposium; guest speaker at a 2001 Science Defense Board (US) Panel; moderator for the SIGGRAPH 2000 panel on simulation and entertainment, the Featured Speaker for the Fall 1999 SISO Simulation Interoperability Workshop; and keynote speaker for the 1999 international ACM Multi-Media Conference. He has been on the Executive Board of the Simulation Interoperability Standards Organization (SISO), as well on the conference planning committee for the IEEE VR conference, SIGGRAPH 94 and 98.



A sample of a Dr. Phillips High School student's virtual set



From a student at South Burlington High School



VR Research, Institute For Simulation and Training Industrial Partner, courtesy Chris Stapleton