



**PRESS RELEASE**

**FOR IMMEDIATE PUBLICATION**

## **Eastern Townships School Board reveals exciting preliminary research results for laptop initiative**

**Magog, January 14, 2005** – The Eastern Townships School Board’s innovative and exciting Enhanced Learning Strategy (ELS) is now in its second year of implementation and progress in academic performance is being noted. At this time, more than 4 500 students are using and learning with Apple iBooks.

### **Research team monitoring progress**

Because of the scope of the project, several distinct research groups were assigned to follow and report on the integration of laptops in schools by both students and teachers. A Wireless Writing Project was designed and introduced by the Board’s Pedagogical Services to gather student data. The Students Services Department was in charge of studying the impact of the program on students with special needs. Finally, because technology is the means and not the end, a technical survey was conducted to highlight areas of concern for hardware, software and infrastructure.

### **Results show academic improvement from students**

A large majority of students from grades 5 and 6, the first group to receive laptops, taking part in the Wireless Writing Project (English and French) showed improvement. Grade 5 students’ English results were the most astonishing, where 90% of the sample maintained or improved all rubrics (scoring guidelines) in writing over the four-month study. In addition, the majority of students with “at risk” achievement levels showed the most improvement in all categories of the research. Pre and post surveys revealed that students are more comfortable with their laptops, 84% indicating that in some cases they prefer to use the computer for writing assignments. An average of 82% of six graders also feel that the computer can make them better writers.

### **Technology for students with special needs**

The significance of the use of technology by exceptional students was the focus point of the study. Recommendations include developing a process to assist schools in evaluating the need for adaptive technology. The key to continued progress in technology for special needs students requires administrators, professionals, teachers and support personnel working with these students, to be aware of the technology available, since specific requirements are involved. The study also concludes that students and parents must be involved in the awareness of adaptive technology.

### **Teachers' Involvement – a key role**

Teaching and learning being the intent of ELS initiative, 66% of teachers indicated they had received effective training. "Eastern Townships School Board teachers did an amazing job of integrating technology into their classroom practices. Evaluation forms show that there was an increase in the number of teachers implementing the Enhanced Learning Strategy, Balanced Literacy Strategies, and various components of the Quebec Education Program concurrently in both the French and English classes," concludes Ms Betty Krueger, consultant for the Eastern Townships School Board. There was an 18% increase in the number of teachers who were confident about using computer technology, as well a 25% increase in the number of teachers who encouraged their students to use their laptops for writing in the Wireless Writing Project (WWP). Teachers (grades 5 and 6) expressed enthusiasm and 99% rated WWP as a "3" or above on an overall 5-point rating scale.

### **Major achievements for North America's first laptop initiative at the elementary and secondary levels**

"Even though these results are quite preliminary, they will help us adjust immediately to the actual needs of users and guide us in assessing future priorities in order to improve efficiency," states Ronald Canuel, Director General. The School Board has already accomplished several key phases for technology integration to be successful. The rapid deployment of technology, extensive training of teachers and both awareness and growing enthusiasm for the use of technology for learning are essential achievements made by Eastern Townships School Board. What is most remarkable, although other laptop initiatives are taking place elsewhere in North America, the Dennis McCullough Initiative - Enhanced Learning Strategy - is the first North American project of this kind to integrate one-on-one computing for both elementary and secondary levels. In addition, students, the focus point of ELS, are overjoyed and universally make positive comments on the project. "Students say the laptops have changed the school year dramatically, helped them learn more, built stronger projects and achieved better marks," Mr. Canuel was pleased to state. "The future is promising and results are very encouraging," concludes Mr. Canuel.

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### **Source and information :**

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