

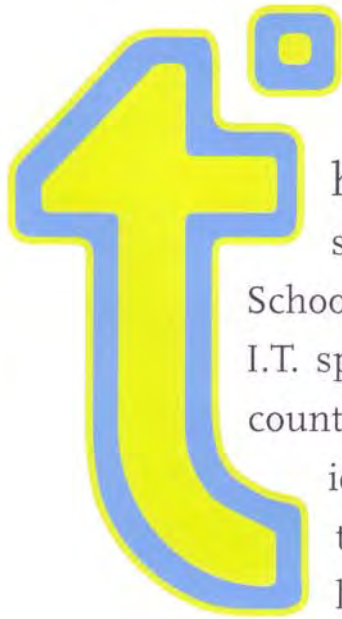
REPORT FROM THE FIELD

The

# iSummit

THE COALITION  
OF LIGHTHOUSE  
SCHOOLS AND  
1:1 LEARNING

BY JOE MORRIS



The Coalition of Lighthouse Schools held its sixth annual “iSummit” conference at the Ensworth School (Tennessee) last July. Teachers, administrators, and I.T. specialists from independent schools throughout the country came here to share educational technology lessons, ideas, strategies, problems, and solutions — all related to their common desire to develop highly successful laptop programs at their schools.

For those involved, the summit and the coalition have been a great help in their efforts to employ technology to leverage the sort of 21st-century curricular changes they believe are needed in order to prepare globally engaged citizens. “iSummit,” says Fred Austin, technology coordinator at The Oakwood School (North Carolina) and a conference veteran, “has been very important to me for several years now because, throughout the school year, we are so busy. When I’m at iSummit, I really get the opportunity to get the bigger picture of what other schools are doing. I get a sense of what they are experiencing with their successes and I learn from those successes.”

Speaking specifically about this year’s conference, Earl Hunter II, a fifth grade teacher at Echo Horizon School (California) and a former teacher in the Los Angeles Unified School District, says, “It was a wonderful experience” to be able to immerse himself in technology discussions and to learn new software programs that his students are now using. “There were

incredible speakers who really gave me an understanding of how technology can be integrated into the curriculum all day long. iSummit was the best professional growth experience of my teaching career.”

This year’s conference theme, “Computers, Community, and Con‘SERVE’ation,” focused on the vast environmental and social issues that impact both schools and the broader culture now and that will matter even more in the future. In particular, there were enlightening discussions on environmentalism, sustainability, the process of establishing green schools, and how technology can enhance and support the teaching of these concepts — including a keynote address by Tiffany Willmot, a pioneer in green building who has also assisted many schools with their green curricula.

The Coalition of Lighthouse Schools is a one-of-a-kind organization that grew out of Apple Computer’s Lighthouse Initiative, a late 1990s effort to help independent schools develop state-of-the-art technology



programs — specifically wireless, one-to-one laptop programs. Based on studies of previous successes in 1:1 learning, Apple began beta-testing to figure out what would constitute a successful 1:1 program. Out of this testing, Apple decided to implement the initiative with independent schools, given that these schools have both the autonomy to implement significant educational changes and the ability to fund such changes. For the schools that joined, the program was stringent and required a great deal of infrastructure, as well as administrative and staff development. For their part, participating schools received special discounts on equipment and training.

In 2003, at the time of the first iSummit, the participating schools agreed to become the founding members of The Coalition of Lighthouse Schools, a nonprofit organization with corporate sponsorship from Apple. The single goal has been to create a dynamic learning community of schools that use 1:1 computing — or, as the organization's website puts it, to explore

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Since forming the partnership with Apple, the Coalition of Lighthouse Schools Board of Trustees annually meets with Apple executives at Apple headquarters in Cupertino, California. For its part, Apple continues to value the independent school market, recognizing that innovative school reform often begins in independent schools. The partnership has given Apple greater perspective on the importance of independent schools, while giving the Coalition of Lighthouse Schools the ability to actually advise Apple on matters relating to independent schools. Amy Moody, the director of curriculum integration at St. Agnes Academy–St. Dominic School (Tennessee), an Apple Distinguished

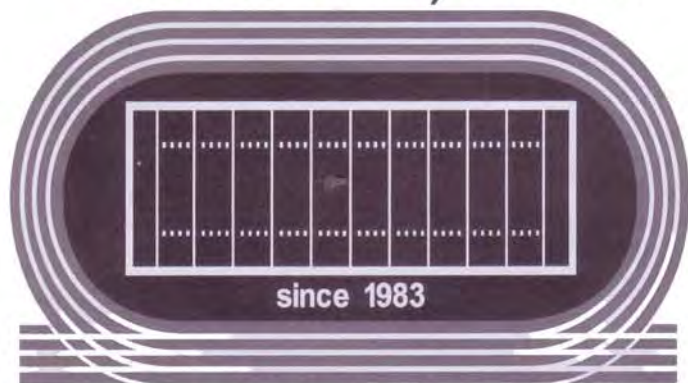
Educator, and an iSummit planner, says that this partnership has given the participating schools “a closer connection with Apple, a chance to learn from other lighthouse schools, and a chance to light the way for other schools. We are united by our similarities and enhanced by our differences.”

“We know that changing education takes more than just a laptop,” adds Ken Cheesman, chair of the coalition's board and head of school at St. Paul's Christian Academy (Tennessee). “Real change will come from a reliable infrastructure that provides continuous support and learning opportunity for students and teachers, lessons that engage and excite students, staff development to ensure the right instruction in the classroom, and leadership committed to making it all happen.” Schools can go it alone, but the coalition allows for a broader community of educators to share their ideas, successes, and failures.

Julene Reed, the director of academic technology at St. George's Independent School (Tennessee), an Apple Distinguished Educator, and co-planner of the recent iSummit, speaks particularly highly of the iSummit as a forum for sharing such ideas. “The part I like about iSummit the most,” says Reed, “is meeting new people and making new friends and then coming up with new ideas and collaborating on them. It's always interesting. You meet a group of people the first day. And then, by the end of the week, they're your friends. You hear lots of stories and you get lots of ideas from each other.... We can learn a lot from each other and that's of great benefit.”

*Joe Morris is a board member of the Coalition of Lighthouse Schools, a 2004 Apple Distinguished Educator, and director of educational technology at The Gillispie School (California). iSummit '09 will be held July 8–10 at St. Agnes Academy/St. Dominic School (Tennessee). For more information, visit [www.lighthousechools.com](http://www.lighthousechools.com).*

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