

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NORTH LOGAN, Utah / September, 25th, 2007 --

Ogden City School District (OGSD) announced today that it has partnered with thereNow®, Inc. to use Telepresence technology to enhance its teacher professional development efforts.

Telepresence, defined as the “feeling of actually being present somewhere you are not”, will be used to bring professional development consultants from around the country into Ogden high schools and professional development center so that they can model teach, observe, and coach teachers.

thereNow®, located on the Innovation Campus in Logan, Utah, has pioneered the use and research of Telepresence technology in teacher professional development. thereNow® consists of a diverse team of professionals with advanced degrees in Research and Evaluation Methodology, Psychology, Education, and Management Information Systems. This team is currently conducting scientific research to investigate the effectiveness of Telepresence applied to teacher training programs.

For the past several years OGSD has been working with the Southern Regional Educational Board's (SREB) “High Schools that Work” improvement initiative. However, as is often the case in teacher professional development, the practical limitations of travel has made frequent visits by SREB's staff difficult, time-consuming, and expensive.

ODSD and thereNow® will install Telepresence technology to enable SREB staff members from Kentucky and Ohio to be “telepresent” in Ogden City schools frequently and instantaneously.

Tom Shuster, Ph.D., co-founder and Vice-President of thereNow®, sums up the need for this technology, “The education research literature describes an effective model of professional development called Cognitive Apprenticeship. Ironically, it closely resembles historical apprenticeship -- the way that candle makers, silversmiths, and other artisans learned their craft in centuries past. A master models and explains effective practice for an apprentice, who then tries to emulate the master. As the apprentice works and learns, the master observes, providing corrective and directive feedback.”

Shawn Edmondson, Ph.D., co-founder and President of thereNow®, conducted his doctoral research on the application of Telepresence technology to teacher professional development. “Using this technology, a consultant who lives in Ohio can work with teachers in an elementary school in Utah in the morning, then follow up with teachers in Virginia, Maine, and Alabama in the afternoon—without ever leaving her desk. thereNow® makes Cognitive Apprenticeship practical.”

The Cognitive Apprenticeship model is like all effective training and mentoring in that it is a gradual, intensely personal process. It demands frequent, short, rich, and individual interactions. The physical and financial demands of travel have made this model impractical at best—impossible in reality.

Before the use of Telepresence technology, the benefits of apprenticeship were beyond educators' reach for financial and practical reasons. Distant consultants and other “experts” tend to be few in number and scattered across the United States. The demands and expenses of travel between their homes and schools across the country make it necessary for them to visit individual schools infrequently, briskly, and impersonally.

thereNow ® 's unique ability to provide rich interpersonal communication over a distance is the solution to a nationwide problem in education: providing educators with a cost-effective professional development experience that actually help them improve the way they teach.

Currently, thereNow ® technology is embodied in three pieces of equipment designed and built by Digital Video Enterprises, Incorporated (DVE) in Irvine, California: the Executive Telepresence Center, the Virtual Teacher, and the Virtual Observer.

- The Executive TelePresence Center supports personal, eye-to-eye interaction over a distance. People in widely separated locations can communicate naturally—as if sitting across a table in the same room. Every gesture, every expression, every nuance of interpersonal communication is shared.
- Using the Virtual Teacher, a presenter can address a distant audience as a “holographic-like” image from behind a podium. The audience sees the presenter, the presenter sees the audience. Both enjoy a rich, seamless communication experience.
- The Virtual Observer is a window into a distant location. A cameras in the unit allows the remote observer to watch a teacher in his or her classroom and provide immediate performance feedback through a Bluetooth headset.

These devices, and others, will be installed in Ogden City Schools district high schools and professional development center this Spring.

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For more information, photos, and videos of thereNow Telepresence technology, visit www.therenow.net.