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Enhancing Education Through STEP

Incorporating HPCC in high school curricula

by Melinda McDonald, G/S reporter



STEP participants with Kris Stewart (front left) during the 1994 summer program at SDSC, which focused on visualization tools.

Among the most successful educational programs at SDSC is the Supercomputer Teacher Enhancement Program (STEP), which helps local high school teachers incorporate high-performance computing into their curricula. The program relies upon participants like Doug Blackington, a physics teacher at Kearny High School, and Rick Corlett, a media technology teacher also at Kearny High, to educate other teachers in their schools, who will in turn share what they have learned with their students.

Blackington and Corlett, who have participated in the STEP program for the last two years, conducted a series of three workshops for the Kearny High School staff using the World Wide Web, the Internet, and several software programs to enhance their presentations.

Some of these teachers are showing the students how to use different types of software to create scientific images and 3D animations. Their long-term goal is to document the process of acquiring hardware and training other teachers and students to bring the technology into other departments on campus. The introductory workshop by Corlett and Blackington was so popular among the Kearny High School staff that they opened it up to 12 other schools. Twenty staff members representing eight of those schools attended. Another workshop is being planned for the near future.

The Principal of Kearny High School, Michael Lorch, spoke at the September Steering Committee meeting at SDSC about the success of the STEP program in his school. He said STEP brought many resources to the school that would have been difficult to obtain otherwise and will benefit 1,400 students from diverse backgrounds and minority groups.

Lorch has set a goal to provide Internet access to his students. "Immediate access to information for kids is an incredible breakthrough," he said. "The Internet is a valuable tool for students to share information regarding science projects and discuss their interests with other students across the nation."

