

# Digital Learning Commons

## 2006-07 Annual Report

July 1, 2006 to June 30, 2007

### ***Summary***

The 2006-07 school year—our fourth year in operation—was a time of continued growth for the Digital Learning Commons. We served 164 schools, a 70 percent increase over the previous school year, and 57,014 students and staff, a 36 percent increase. Usage numbers for DLC resources went up as well. We just keep growing!

Another area of growth was in fundraising. We were pleased to receive grants from the following foundations:

- Amgen Foundation
- Gibney Family Foundation
- Harvest Foundation
- Seattle Foundation
- Verizon Foundation

Grants help us diversify our funding as well as offer unique opportunities to students and educators. For example, the Verizon Foundation–Sponsored DLC Membership is a special two-year, reduced-price membership offered to schools that serve economically disadvantaged students.

This year, we also focused on deepening implementation through a number of teacher development opportunities. These hands-on, interactive, and collaborative programs are designed to help member-schools use technology, powerful teaching, and peer coaching to create innovative and engaging learning opportunities for their students.

### ***Making a difference***

The Digital Learning Commons works to help schools improve student achievement. This work takes a number of different forms, from providing access to resources that aren't otherwise available to providing in-depth implementation strategies to help schools address their specific challenges.

### **DLC provides access to resources that are not otherwise available**

One area where the DLC helps schools expand the range of resources available to students is online courses. In 2006-07, more schools than in previous years turned to the DLC to provide their students with courses that were not available at their schools.

### ***Reasons for taking online courses***

Course not available at the school	47.3%
Online course venue helps alleviate scheduling conflict	9.7%
Course helps student earn credit needed to graduate	13.8%
Course helps student make up failed credits needed to graduate	18.8%
Course helps student earn college credit	0.5%
Online learning environment perceived as better-meeting student's learning style	3.3%
Other	6.6%

(Responses gathered by the Registrar at the time of registration.)

### ***Online course registrations by level***

WASL prep courses were introduced for the first time in 2006-07. Previously, many schools used credit recovery courses for WASL preparation purposes.

Standard	51%
Credit Recovery	29%
WASL	13%
Advanced Placement	6%
Honors	1%
Pre-AP	1%
College	0%

### ***Online course registrations by subject***

The subject breakdown remains fairly steady from year-to-year. The popularity of mathematics courses reflects the continued emphasis placed on math.

Foreign Language	22%
Mathematics	21%
Language Arts	19%
Social Studies	16%
Science	7%
Technology	6%
Arts	4%
Lifeskills-Health	3%
Business	2%
CTE	0%
ESL	0%
Course completions rate	80.0%
Pass rate	63.0%

### **Impacting the classroom**

We continue to provide schools with resources that allow teachers to personalize and individualize education. The BERC Group's interim 2006-07 evaluation report states:

“In alternative school settings, building (school) leadership and teachers reported needing to meet the individual needs of students whose skills were at multiple levels. Because they individualized all of their course offerings to meet student graduation requirements, DLC allows flexibility in what they can offer. In one school, students in a math classroom who had not passed the WASL were taking courses below standard high school level coursework, while others who had met WASL standards were working on college preparation coursework.”

Feedback from educators at DLC member-schools support this:

“I’ve used a number of Catalyst tools now, and will redesign curriculum for next year (and in some cases, next semester) based on the use of those tools.” (From Innovative Retreat survey)

“I am now using these tools with about half of my students in some fashion. In some cases, the students are utilizing the ClassTools as their sole content for that subject area. I am being helped immeasurably in my ability to serve the diverse needs of my students.” (From Innovative Retreat survey)

When we surveyed teachers during the 2006-07 school year:

- About three-quarters stated that using DLC resources has had an impact on student achievement.
- Over half stated that students are showing a greater interest in learning when using DLC resources.
- And teachers also stated that a quarter of their students are accessing DLC resources and tools outside of the school day.

Another way the DLC has impacted the classroom is through our Student Mentors Program (since renamed “DLC Tutors”). During the 2006-07 school year, 65 students at 21 member-schools corresponded with their DLC mentors. Nearly 1,000 emails were exchanged throughout the year, as the students received help with their coursework.

## **Deepening implementation**

One of the best ways to impact student achievement is through teacher development. During the 2006-07 school year, we held three different teacher development events:

- Innovative Practices Retreat, November 14–15, 2006
- Teacher2Teacher Retreat, June 25–27, 2007
- Train the Trainer Workshop, August 5–6, 2007

Sixty educators attended the Innovative Retreat, which focused on integrating online resources into the classroom curriculum to support academic success. The retreat specifically addressed innovative uses of DLC resources and best practices that have made an impact on student achievement and align with powerful teaching. It also included a peer coaching workshop delivered by the Puget Sound Center for Teaching, Learning and Technology.

In follow-up surveys, 81.4 percent of respondents indicated that the retreat had a positive impact on their overall instructional practice. One-third felt that the impact was “considerable” or “major.”

Here are some quotes from participants that capture the success of the retreat:  
“When tools are put in the context of teaching practices, it is always the most powerful way to integrate them.”

“Peer Coaching is one of the most powerful models I’ve encountered, and I believe it is vital to increasing academic achievement through effective professional collaboration of teachers.”

Eighteen educators attended the Teacher2Teacher Retreat, where they learned to use peer coaching to create and sustain school-based professional development. Teacher2Teacher is based on the principles of the Peer Coaching Program (sponsored by Microsoft and developed by the Puget Sound Center for Teaching, Learning and Technology). Two follow-up Teacher2Teacher sessions are planned for the 2007-08 school year.

We also created a two-day Train the Trainer Workshop, which was delivered to 19 participants in summer 2007. Participants gained an understanding of DLC resources from a trainer’s perspective as well as how to use coaching and collaboration to promote the use of DLC resources in support of their schools’ academic goals. The aim of Train the Trainer is to help schools develop school-based support of DLC resources.

In addition to these retreats and workshops, we also provided training and consulting to school staff. During the year, the DLC completed:

- 38 online course support orientations for school staff that support students in online courses.
- 48 on-site implementation planning meetings.
- 132 resource trainings (on-site and online sessions); 95 percent of attendees rated the trainings either “good” or “excellent.”

Topics for resource trainings:

ClassTools	21%
College and Career Planning Tools	6%
Digital Tools	12%
DLC Library	14%
Online Course Overview	3%
Other	12%
Overview (all resources)	20%
Teaching Resources	11%

More than 78 percent of attendees felt equipped to use the DLC resources on their own after the training. Eighty-two percent felt they would use the DLC resources at least monthly in their classrooms.

## **Leader in the field**

The DLC is fast becoming a leader in the education field, sharing our expertise in improving student achievement through technology. Our staff members regularly present at conferences around the state.

Conference presentations this year:

- OSPI Summer Institute (Yakima), July 31–Aug. 1, 2006
- OSPI Summer Institute (Seattle), Aug. 15–16, 2006
- Microsoft Math/Science Puget Sound Project Conference, Aug. 24–25, 2006
- WLMA Conference (Seattle), Oct. 13, 2006
- WSASCD (Seattle), Nov. 3, 2006
- WALA Fall Conference (Chelan), Nov. 3–4, 2006
- WSSDA (Spokane), Nov. 17, 2006
- WERA (Seattle), Dec. 7, 2006
- OSPI January Conference, Jan. 11–12, 2007
- WASA Small Schools (Yakima), Mar. 5–6, 2007
- NCCE (Spokane), Mar. 7–9, 2007
- WALA Spring Conference (Vancouver), Mar. 8–9, 2007
- WA State GEAR UP Conference (TriCities), Mar. 12–13, 2007
- Collaboration Conference (Yakima), Mar. 28–30, 2007
- eLearning Showcase (PSESD), May 9, 2007
- OSPI Summer Institute (Spokane), June 22, 2007

## **Impacting the state**

Part of the DLC's mission is to provide resources to all students and teachers in the state, which means we do our best to support non-members too. We've always provided access to a number of free, high-quality, vetted resources via our website, but this year we took this one step further. We made ALPs (Accelerated Learning Plans) free to every school in the state; it was previously only available to DLC member-schools. ALPs is a WASL-prep tutorial resource created by Federal Way Internet Academy. This resource is quite popular and was accessed nearly 7,000 times in the two months leading up to the spring 2007 WASL.

We will continue to create tools that can be accessed by all teachers and students in the state, member-schools and non-members alike. One such tool, researchTutor, was completely revamped for the 2007-08 school year. researchTutor is designed to help students with the process of writing research papers, and includes tips for evaluating resources, creating a bibliography, paraphrasing, and more.

## Outreach

Outreach is one way we introduce school leaders to the DLC's offerings. During the second half of the 2006-07 school year, we held seven informational meetings around the state.

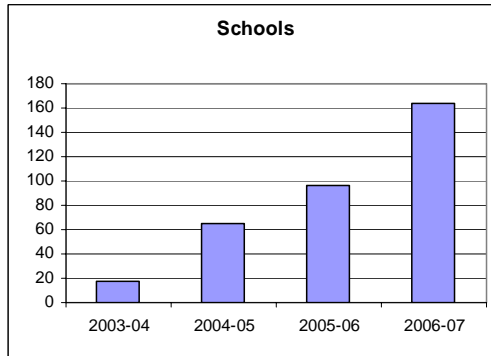
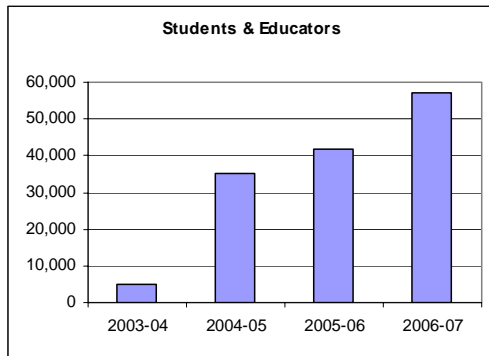
Another big part of outreach includes work with the various educational organizations and associations in the state. During 2006-07, DLC staff met more than 70 times with leaders from these organizations.

## Membership growth

### Serving more students, teachers, and schools

2006-07 was the DLC's second year of offering paid membership packages to schools (after our two-year proof of concept phase).

	2005-06	2006-07	% change
Students and Educators	41,990	<b>56,929</b>	35.6%
Students	39,236	<b>52,912</b>	34.9%
Schools	96	<b>164</b>	70.8%



### New membership options

The DLC has always been able to meet the needs of a variety of schools. However, some schools approached us with specialized needs and in response we created two new membership options in 2006-07.

Recognizing that many schools include groups that have specialized resource needs—such as remediation programs, special program populations, and dropout prevention programs—we introduced a package of resources designed especially for these subpopulations: the Targeted Achievement Package.

Since many schools don't need the DLC's complete package of resources but would benefit from online course options for their students, we also created the Courses-Only

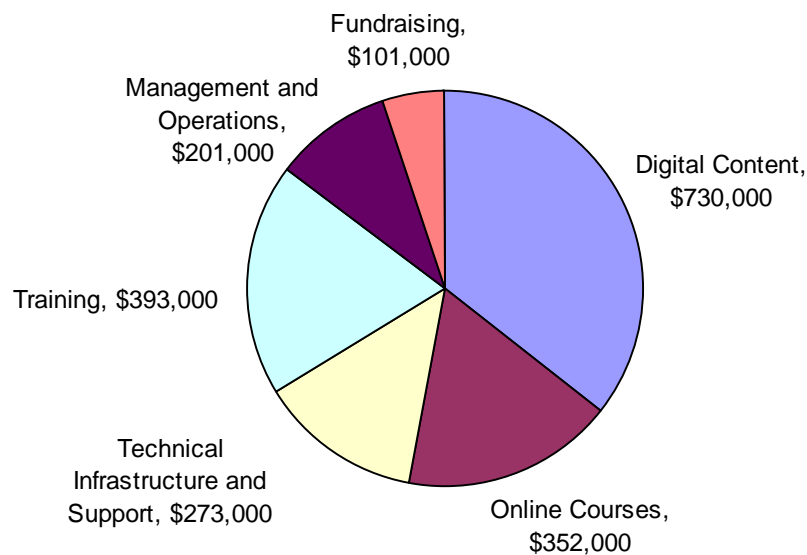
Membership. These members can take advantage of the DLC's discounted online course prices and move up to a full membership package in the future.

## ***Financial stability and growth***

### **2006-07 financial performance**

The total revenues were \$2,184,000 and the total expenses were \$2,050,000. Total net assets at the beginning of the year were \$342,500 and at June 30, 2007 were \$477,000. Total assets at June 30, 2007 were \$623,600.

The chart below details the actual expenses in the major program categories.



### **Fundraising**

In order to sustain and expand the resources and services the DLC provides, we launched a comprehensive fundraising program in 2006-07. These activities included the creation of a three-year fundraising plan and additional grant-writing. The DLC received \$165,000 in funds during 2006-07, including the following:

- The Amgen Foundation provided funding for online Advanced Placement science and math scholarships.
- The Harvest Foundation provided funding for educator training and school support.
- The Seattle Foundation provided general operating funding.
- The Verizon Foundation provided funding to help new schools join the DLC through a membership price reduction. The Verizon Foundation also funded the

Innovative Practices for Student Achievement Conference held in Western Washington.

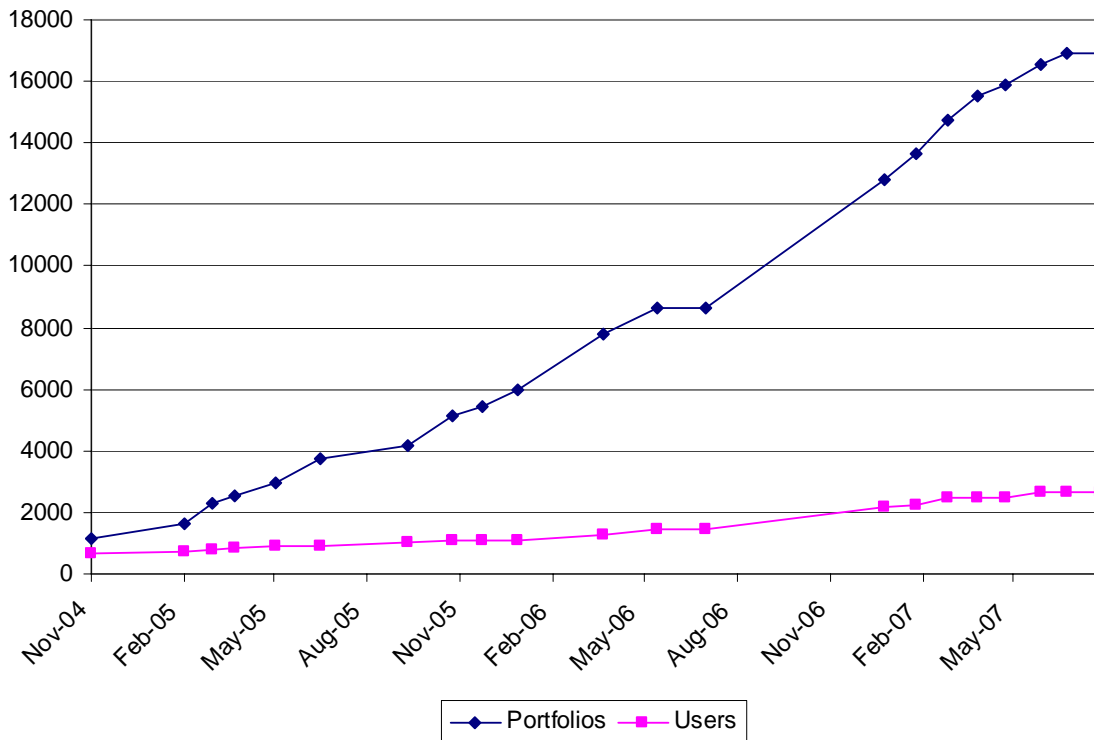
### Increasing resource usage

It's all in the numbers:

- Daily (and weekly) average clicks went up 29 percent over last year. This translates to an average of over 1,100 clicks per day and about 6,500 per week. (A “click” is a single user accessing one of the DLC resources.)
- The average number of schools accessing the DLC site per day has risen 24 percent. The weekly average number of schools shows a 33 percent gain.
- The daily average of users rose 30 percent to over 400 per day. The weekly average of users rose 25 percent.
- On our peak weeks, we're seeing well over 2,000 unique computers per week, or 400–500 per day.
- Searches remain popular. We saw an average of 273 searches per day, compared to 167 last year (a 63 percent change).

### Student portfolios

Our Catalyst Portfolio tool, which was developed by the University of Washington, continues to gain popularity among students and teachers, as the following graph shows. Portfolios = Number of distinct portfolios; Users = Number of users with at least one portfolio.



## ***Expanding resources and functionality***

Every year, we expand our resources and improve functionality of the website. This year we added one tool and improved another.

### **DLC bookmarking tool**

To help students and educators keep track of their favorite resources and organize them by, say, project, we created our very own bookmarking tool. The tool allows users to bookmark any resource on the Web, not just DLC resources. And it allows users to share their bookmarks with others.

### **Resource level differentiation**

In the library, we've made it easy for educators to access resources targeted to the level they teach: elementary, middle, or high. They simply choose a level before hitting the Search or Get Started button.

## ***Moving Forward***

Thanks to generous funding, once again, from the Washington State Legislature, the DLC will continue to stand on firm ground. Legislative funding has been secured for the 2007-08 and 2008-09 school years, a total of \$1.5 million each year.

The 2007-08 school year has already seen change and growth. We've created a new tool that allows educators to search for resources by state standard, and over 190 schools have joined to date. Onward!