

Computers for Learning Cyberspace Access to Math and Science Technology for K-12

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Introduction

Cyberspace technology shortens time and distance for computer tools to make their way into the K-12 classrooms of the 21st century. The Computers for Learning website makes it easier for schools and non-profit educational organizations to register for donations of surplus computers from federal agencies. For the first five months of calendar year 2001, Fernald Environmental Management Project (FEMP) Property Management Department has successfully distributed more than 250 federal surplus computer systems with acquisition value exceeding \$550,000. All systems were given to schools and non-profit educational agencies registered on the Computers for Learning (CFL) website.

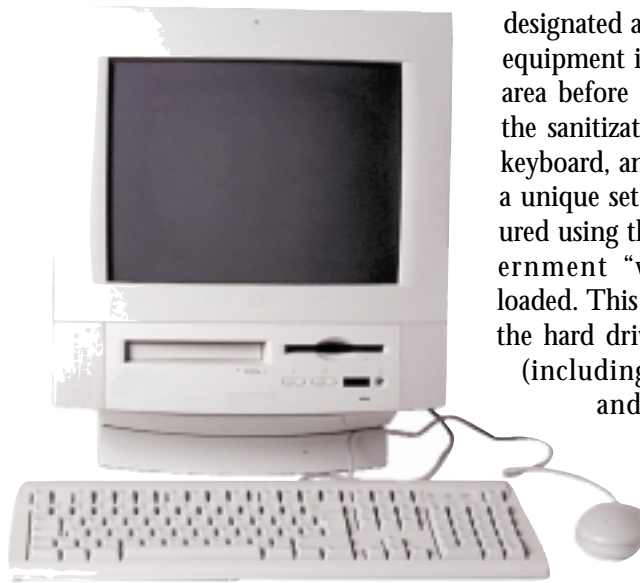
Other federal agencies have surplus computers that are eligible for the Computers for Learning Program. Many of the recipient schools are in empowerment zones and/or have an unfavorable student to computer ratio. Although the computers may not be powerful enough for the day-to-day work of federal agencies, they are more than adequate for students learning basic computing, typing, or other skills.

For more than six years, with the assistance of local math and scientific educational organizations, the FEMP has successfully distributed 2,148 computer sets with acquisition value of \$5,247,310 to local schools pursuant to the directives in Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 41 CFR 109-50.48 and 41 CFR 102-36.475.

With cyberspace universal access to schools and non-profit educational organizations, we have found the demand to be greater than the supply.

Sanitizing Computer Sets

The primary need for a successful CFL Program is the capability to sanitize sets to offer. When computers are



designated as surplus at the FEMP, the equipment is directed to a sanitization area before the system is reported. In the sanitization area a CPU, monitor, keyboard, and mouse are matched into a unique set. The hard drive is configured using the "FDISK" utility. A government "wipe" program is then loaded. This software completely wipes the hard drive of existing information (including classified information) and rewrites the hard drive format. To make the computers readily usable, an operating system is added to each system. A computer takes approxi-

mately two-and-one-half hours to prepare, sanitize, and reload. With adequate "wipe" software, more than one system can be loaded at any one time. Most of the per-unit time is time in which the software is working and no supervision or monitoring is necessary. A Standard Operating Procedure and On The Job (OJT) Training have been provided so that various members of the Property Management Department can perform sanitization. The Information Management Section (IM) performs quality oversight testing to assure that systems are properly sanitized and reloaded. When an aliquot of sets are available, the next step is to find recipients.

Computers for Learning Website

Federal agencies and schools register for Computers for Learning transfers at www.computers.fed.gov with individual registration and password identification. By following the Option Menu, agencies and schools can access the functions needed to register, select recipients, contact, and transfer surplus computers to recipients.

Inputting Year-End Data into CFL

The Computers for Learning website reports are based upon computers transferred, not just offered. Data entry is

time-consuming but worth the effort to accurately maintain donations, including dollar value, to obtain timely agency report summaries.

Statistical Reports

Statistical reports provide up-to-date listings of schools/non-profit agencies registered, number and total costs of donated equipment by agency, number of agencies donating, etc. for a year-end reporting to GSA.

Participation is the Key

Agency participation may vary, but the challenge remains to meet the needs of math and science technology in the future. There is room for individual agency organizational structure for managing the computer excess program. It is possible for IM rather than Property Personnel to complete the sanitization process. Sanitized sets may also be forwarded to GSA for distribution. Participation structure will be totally dependent on federal agency directives. As property professionals, it is our task to redistribute excess/surplus government property to qualified recipients.



Certification – The Success Catalyst

Certification is the catalyst for success for the property management team. The “cradle to grave” accountability for government property mandates becoming familiar with and understanding the fundamental laws and regulations related to management and disposition of government property.

The task can be very rewarding when a needed product is given to a thankful recipient. Each donated

computer set extends the life of the property and is a prudent use of taxpayer funds. Regularly received correspondence from recipients sharing how the computers are being used and how much the staff and students appreciate the gift attests to the merits of the CFL Program.

When providing computers for education, it is true that one man’s trash really is another man’s treasure. ♦

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