

## **Fast Times at Ballard High**

By Michael Chait

A number of schools have piloted programs trying to bring every student a laptop. With the price of a fully loaded laptop generally exceeding \$2,000, Ballard High is trying something else this semester.

Students in a number of test classes will be provided with Handspring Visor Deluxe handheld computers and educational software to use at school and at home.

Twenty-five of the Seattle high school's 1500 students, along with 10 teachers, will take part in the test program, using the Visors to take notes in class, track homework assignments, create outlines and write reports, share information, and record their grades. They can also read novels and news, use an electronic dictionary and thesaurus, and study for tests.

"The Ballard High program is an excellent example of how educators and organizations like PDA Verticals are integrating handheld computers into rich opportunities for students and teachers alike," stated Susan Yost, Education Markets Manager for Handspring.

"Handspring is excited about supporting dynamic classrooms that are embracing technology."

Dr. Engle, Ballard High Principal, anticipates that students using the computers will develop stronger organizational skills, improve academic achievement, and gain valuable proficiency with technology .

"I am committed to making technology available to all students," said Engle. "We need to introduce technology into education early and integrate it into the daily lives of students."

The pilot project is intended to generate data for a grant at the district level, then statewide.

Dr. Engle envisions having kiosks on campus for students to upload completed assignments, download new homework, and retrieve current information from a variety of sources. The infrastructure could then be replaced with wireless networks that take advantage of wireless Springboard modules available for the Visor.

Terry Bergeson, Superintendent of Public Instruction, recently stated that efforts like this "...are tremendous on a number of important levels. Students who become proficient with technology have a substantial advantage upon entering the working world."

The project has been made possible by the joint efforts of PDA Verticals and Handspring Inc., which donated half of the computers for the program, as well as education-related Palm OS developers, and The Ballard High School Foundation.

Seattle-based PDA Verticals publishes pda ED.com, which students and educators at Ballard High will use to share experiences in online discussion forums and publish assignments produced using their handhelds.