



NETSUPPORT SCHOOL 8

It hasn't gone unnoticed by schools and training establishments that networked PCs are the ideal platform for providing teaching and training aids to large groups of students.

Managing these environments has always been a challenge and NetSupport School (NSS) has traditionally provided an impressive range of tools for doing precisely that. However, NSS goes much further than this, as it also delivers modules for creating and managing classes, examinations and, collating the results.

This latest version adds plenty of new and welcome features to the mix, which include a student registration facility, alerting messages for pupils, automated lesson plans, and even more wizards. NSS is a simple product to use as it consists of a Tutor management component and a Student utility, which are loaded onto all PCs.

Installation doesn't get any easier than this, as the Tutor takes a minute or two to load and a useful tool is provided for deploying the Student utility. It scans workgroups, domains and IP subnets and compiles lists of available systems along with details of the installed OS.

The Tutor scans the network and populates the main window with icons for each discovered Student system. The interface has been nicely redesigned, and the Student icons can be moved

around to represent the PC's physical location in the classroom. The new registration tool presents each student with a form that requires details such as their surname, class and ID number, and this information is attached to the relevant icons so that you can easily see where your pupils are located. The Monitor screen shows what each student is doing with thumbnails of their screen, and this can be updated as often as every five seconds, while hovering the mouse pointer over a thumbnail calls up the new auto-zoom feature.

The Test Designer module is even slicker than the previous version, as it now allows you to automate a complete sequence of events. For an examination you could check that all Students are present, lock each keyboard and mouse, display an introduction and instructions, unlock the PC and then begin the test. Test creation is helped along by plenty of new wizards and you can incorporate video, text, pictures and sound file links in each question.

Once a test has been published to the class it can easily be controlled from a single interface. You can start and stop the test with a single click and, whilst it is running, you can easily see how each individual is progressing through the questions. Students get a timer on their screen and you can now add alerts to

lesson plans, allowing messages to be broadcast at specific times.

For general classroom environments you need some control over what pupils can do, and the application and web control modules can restrict access to specific applications and the Internet. At all times you can see what applications each PC has loaded, and which is currently active. You can also select applications, and add it to either approved or restricted lists.

The same applies to web sites being visited, and you can revoke all Internet access to the class at any time, and also include this command as part of a test plan. Both modules now allow specific restrictions to be applied to individual students as well.

NetSupport School is without doubt one of the top products in this field, and the new features make it even stronger. Lessons and examinations can be easily created, managed and monitored and, with NetSupport Manager at its foundation, you also have access to some of the best remote control tools on the market. **NC**

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Supplier: NetSupport Software Ltd

Tel: 01778 382270

Web site: www.netsupportsoftware.co.uk

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