

## Teddy in the 21st Century

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*Roosevelt Early Childhood Center #65  
Buffalo, New York*

Just as the school's namesake, President Theodore Roosevelt, guided America into the 20th Century, the Roosevelt Early Childhood Center is helping its families adapt to the 21st Century with a technology initiative. Teddy in the 21st Century is an attempt to improve communications between the school and its families, spearheaded by Roosevelt's Parent Involvement Action Team.

The school wants to go beyond the traditional communications tools, such as newsletters and phone trees, to get not only its teachers and students, but also its families plugged in to computers and the Internet.

With new technology in the classrooms and teachers trained to create their own websites, the action team did not want to leave families behind. So it created Teddy in the 21st Century. The initiative began with reading and math teachers surveying parents to determine their comfort level with computers and the Internet and their access to these tools. Teachers then invited parents to attend workshops, which covered Internet resources for parents and educational websites for children. Parents also learned how to navigate teachers' websites and contact teachers via e-mail. The teachers are using their websites to share information about homework, class activities, projects, and tests.

Staff developers from the Center for Applied Technologies in Education (CATE) at the State University of New York at Buffalo, which trained Roosevelt's teachers, continue to help with the program, and local libraries

provide Internet access for families who do not have computers.

The action team introduced Teddy in the 21st Century late in the school year, but plans to continue its efforts this year, building on what the team learned from the surveys and workshop participation and evaluation. The action team hopes that, with additional training, teachers will make their website even more useful. It would also like to involve students in the workshops, to give them more know-how, as well.

A grant and partnership with CATE provided teacher training and paid for the web hosting. The school paid only for supplies and refreshments at the workshops.

In addition to improving home-school communications, the action team has set two other goals for Teddy in the 21st Century: to increase family involvement in the learning process and to improve student performance in language arts, mathematics, and science.

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