



JOSIAH E. CARTWRIGHT/Standard-Speaker

Jack Hollis, a seventh-grade science teacher at the Valley Elementary/Middle School, points to a part of the school's weather station that he uses in the classroom.

Local weather information a few mouse clicks away

By **MARK KATCHUR**

mark.katchur@standardspeaker.com

For years, weather reporting in the Hazleton area was mostly cloudy.

Hazleton never had an official National Weather Service station, and still doesn't.

Locals often had to rely on data from the Wilkes-Barre/Scranton International Airport, and as many know, the weather in Avoca can be much different from the weather in Hazleton.

But times have changed, and thanks to the Internet, live weather conditions for at

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least three area locations are available online.

"As far as having current weather available locally, it's much better now than a few years ago," said Jack Hollis, a seventh-grade science teacher at Valley Elementary/Middle School, which has a live weather reporting station.

The most recent improvement came last week, when Penn State Hazleton's weather

station went into operation.

It is the latest local site to be offered on WeatherBug – a downloadable computer desktop program that provides up-to-the minute weather data and forecasts for 6,000 WeatherNet stations across the United States.

WeatherBug users can get live weather conditions – temperature, precipitation, wind speed, humidity and barometric pressure, among other readings – at Penn State Hazleton.

They can also view images

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from a weathercam atop the Kostos Classroom Building. Photos are taken every few minutes and uploaded to the WeatherBug system.

Internet users can also view Penn State Hazleton weather data without installing WeatherBug. Another site - http://weathercenter.weathernet.com/default.asp?btn=BTN_00W - is available through WeatherNet.

There, a time-lapse image captures cloud movement and changing weather conditions over the Sugarloaf and Butler valley.

The same system provides weather data for Channel 28's SchoolNet weather reports, which also records live data from Valley Elementary/Middle School and Hazleton Area High School.

The weather reporting stations at Valley and HAHS have been in use for several years and were added to the WeatherBug and WeatherNet systems, as well.

Equipment worth about \$15,000 on the Valley school's roof takes readings and sends information over the Internet and directly to a classroom.

"All of the students get familiar with the instrumentation," said Hollis, whose students learn about meteorology for one-fourth of the school year. "We have a team of students who come in and gather data ... and make weather reports that go out over the

intercom every morning."

Penn State Hazleton teachers and students will use their weather station for much of the same. The new system will provide current and past weather data for meteorology classes to study.

The campus' maintenance staff installed the weather station, performed work on the roof of the Kostos Building and strung wire to connect the station to the weather lab in one of the classrooms. The information technology staff connected the cables and installed the software.

The weather station was obtained through a matching grant from the Appalachian Regional Commission in cooperation with the Greater Hazleton Civic Partnership. Its director, Robert Skulsky, obtained the grant providing the equipment to Penn State Hazleton, HAHS and the Valley school.

Hollis, who was responsible for the first weather reporting station through Channel 28 at old Hazleton High School in 1997, credited WYLN-TV 35 for advancing Hazleton weather reporting by adding a weatherman, Joe Garbacik, to its evening news broadcasts.

On the Net:

WeatherBug:

<http://www.weatherbug.com>

Penn State Hazleton weather, past and current data:

http://weathercenter.weathernet.com/default.asp?btn=BTN_00W