Students at Lake-wood Elementary School get a glimpse to document learning. The portfolios (see sample below) are essentially electronic notebooks used to document learning.

By Miguel Strother

The technological revolution of the 90s has left many educators scrambling to keep pace with students exposed to computers all of their lives, but UVic’s Faculty of Education is helping teachers get up to speed.

“Technology permeates much of our everyday life now,” says Faculty of Education member Dr. Leslee Fran-cis-Pelton “It is import-ant for teachers to be aware of these developments.”

Dr. Francis-Pelton and her husband Tim Pelton, a PhD candidate at Brigham Young University, are developing a tool for creating Enhanced Instructional Videos (EIV). The tool will allow the transfer of regular educational videos into a digital format capable of turning a computer into a tutor that can challenge and help students of different abilities.

The program will rely on a database of recorded responses to the questions students typically have difficulty with. When students come to a question they can’t answer, a video-based explanation from a teacher is available at the click of a button.

Teachers with even a limited knowledge of computers can easily adjust the answers to the level of the class they are teaching. All of this is a very important transition in learning, says Francis-Pelton. “People need to feel confident that teachers are aware of new technologies and are seeking ways to use these to improve the education of the students that they teach,” says Francis-Pelton. “I don’t think that it is possible for the teacher to be an expert in every aspect of technology. Rather they need to have a firm grounding in the basics, a positive atti-tude toward evolving technologies, and a willingness to incorporate new learning technologies as they prove practical.”

According to Lakewood Ele-mentary School teachers Tod Warrning and Brian Potter, both UVic education graduates, their students are well past the stage where most adults consider computer literate. In fact, students in Pot-ter’s Grade 3 class have taught computer workshops at teacher professional development days.

Responding to the shift in technological capabilities, War-ring and Potter got the approval of the Victoria School District and then raised money on their own to develop two pilot classrooms equipped with advanced computers.

The idea was to fully incorporate technology into traditional methods of teaching, an ideal Potter (then 50 years old) explored while completing a master’s degree focusing on educational technology at UVic in 1994.

Now Lakewood has 15 internet-connected, high speed iMac loaded with educational software, and Warring and Potter juggled teaching time between a traditional classroom setting and computer-based learning.

“It’s teaching to prepare kids for the modern world,” says Warring.

Evaluation of individual stu-dents requires the use of a portfolio constructed on the computers. The CD-ROM portfolios are based on topics mandated by the B.C. curriculum and include everything from text and photos to audio and video clips loaded on to the computers by the students themselves.

Lakewood’s experiment has educators all over the province interested.