

Connecting Points Newsletter

Keeping you informed where technology and school district functions connect

December 2008

www.calhounisd.org

Student Services Connecting Points

Parent Connect – using email to keep parents informed

As part of keeping parents informed about their child's education, a district can activate the e-mail notification from Parent Connect. Turning this feature on allows a parent to optionally receive a daily e-mail summarizing data about their child that is available in Parent Connect. This data can include food service balance, attendance, assignments, behavior, class and district news, among others. While many districts use ParentConnect, currently only 2 districts are taking advantage of this email feature. Please contact helpdesk@calhounisd.org if you are interested in implementing this feature.

Focus and December 1

We were able to import SRSD data for Special Ed from Focus and plan to do the same for Dec 1. The Special ED staff in your district should verify all the data in FOCUS and then let us know when the data is ready. Once they have contacted us the data will be imported into Zangle/PowerSchool and ready for SRSD or Dec 1 reporting. If any special education data needs to be corrected, it should be corrected in FOCUS and then it will be re-imported into Zangle. General Education data should be corrected in Zangle/Power School. This will help ensure that the source for the data is always correct. The A&B worksheets should be pulled from FOCUS and the Alpha Roster should be pulled from Zangle.

Farewell to Deb Mueller

We will miss Deb Muller, Student Service Consultant, who is retiring on December 31, 2008. Deb has been a wonderful asset to the Calhoun ISD where she has spent 32 years of her career. Congratulations, Deb and thanks for a job well done.

Business Office Connecting Points

FID Submissions are Done!

All our districts successfully submitted their 2007/2008 Financial Information to CEPI's Financial Information Database before the 11/17/08 11:59 PM deadline. Congratulations to each of our districts for getting their information processed in a timely matter. Several districts took advantage of assistance from our Finance Consultant. Each year, districts have the option to have the Finance Consultant come to their district to work directly with them. Districts can also bring their information to CDOT and work with the Finance Consultant. The latter is useful because in addition to one-on-one, there are not the normal interruptions the district personnel may encounter in their own offices.

Zangle: Did You Know?

- Zangle has 10,577 users; 7,045 of which are parents
- Zangle services 26,576 active students
- Parents have viewed Zangle Parent Connect 193,970 times in the last year
- Districts can now use the web report writer to deploy their own custom web reports to staff

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Electronic Requisition Module of SMART

Using the electronic requisition/PO module makes it much easier to keep track of district expenditures, and virtually eliminates the need to go to a paper copy to see why an item was ordered.

The electronic requisition module is the requisition/PO module available in the SMART Financial package. Currently, eleven out of the sixteen school districts serviced by the SMART Financial package are actively using the Electronic Requisition/PO Module! Of these 11 districts, three are currently running it from the central office, 7 have rolled it out to the building level, and one district has rolled it out to the teacher level!

Feedback from districts has been positive. Having your purchase orders encumbered so they are decrementing the available budget really helps a district to keep track of their budgets and stay on top of budgets. This works even before the requisition has become a Purchase Order. While it is a requisition it is 'reserved' against the available budget, and once it is a Purchase Order, it is an 'encumbrance' against the available budget. For those that use the Transaction Analysis Module of SMART to keep track of their line items, they can see the Current Budget, Year-to-Date Actual Expended, Encumbrances, Reserves, and Remaining Balance for each account.

If your district is not yet using this great program, please contact Finance Consultant, Joy Sommers at sommersj@calhounisd.org.

Cyborg Users Meetings

<http://www.calhounisd.org/departments/technologyremc/finance/financemeetingsfordistricts/>

Finance Users Meetings

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Cyborg: Did you know?

- Over the past year, CDOT Helped districts use Cyborg to:
 - Process 21,000 paychecks
 - Process 6,800 W2s
- [You can create your own reports](#) by using decision analyzer? We will be offering Decision Analyzer classes in February of 2009. Decision is a tool that can be used to create your own reports based on whatever information you need.
- In the upcoming months, [you will be able to access your fiscal year attendance history on your intranet?](#) This new feature will work in the same manner as the eVoucher and will give the option to select either all of your attendance records or to select by type (e.g. sick, vacation, or personal for the current fiscal year). For more information, please contact Carole McNamara or Sherry Williams, CDOT Consultants.

Finance: Did You Know?

- Over the past year, CDOT Helped districts process 500 1099s
- \$361M of funds are managed using SMART by districts/ISDs in the Calhoun/Branch consortium
- [HOST is retiring!](#) By the time we're done running 1099's for 2008 (late January), all CDOT districts will be migrated to the SMART Finance Package, and there will be no more 'HOST' constraints for finance. We'll be able to develop custom reports right through the SMART program for Finance. RESA is already working on an equivalent of the GL300 that several districts use. 2009 is going to be exciting for Finance!

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Teaching and Learning Connecting Points

Universal Service Fund (USF – eRate)

Don't forget - If you apply for internal connections and then decide not to continue, be sure to cancel the application or it counts against the 2 in 5 rule. Also, a new rule this year is that teaching students online safety is required for districts receiving USF – Broadband Data Improvement Act - www.eratecentral.com. As a REMC service, see Andy Mann for more information on how to incorporate online safety in your district discussions. The FY2009 application filing window will **open** at noon EST on Tuesday, **December 2, 2008** and will **close** at 11:59 p.m. EST on Thursday, **February 12, 2009**. The filing window will be open for 73 days. See www.universalservice.org/sl for details.

Netbook Storm

In the last year a new category of laptop has sprouted and grown in popularity, the “netbook”. A netbook is a smaller, lighter, often times less expensive version of a laptop computer with the ability to wireless connect to the Internet to browse websites and do simple office applications. To save weight and costs, a netbook does not include an optical drive and utilizes a smaller keyboard and display. Battle Creek Public Schools purchases one of the first netbooks, the Asus EeePC 701 computers, for all of their 6th grade students.



As more districts consider one-to-one computers, netbook computers are an option to consider. To save costs netbooks often times offer a version running on the open source operating system, Linux along with bundled open source applications such as Open Office and Tux Paint. Every laptop manufacture now offers a netbook, priced from \$350 - \$550. For more information on netbook computers, visit: <http://computershopper.com/laptops/netbooks/top-5-netbooks>. Netbooks are growing in popularity and as the price continues to drop, students are starting to purchase their own. And when students bring their netbook to school and request access to the wireless network, printers, and file system – how should the district respond? Andy Mann, CISD Educational Technology Consultant is available to help districts as they consider one-to-one solutions including netbooks. manna@calhounisd.org.

Open Source Choices

CISD districts are increasingly considering the use of open source applications to compliment or replace commercial applications. Open source means that users have the option to “get under the hood” of a program and modify operating code, with an understanding that improvements to the program are shared with the global community. By sharing improvements, a program keeps getting better and better. One of the most popular open source applications is the Microsoft Office alternative, Open Office, available as a free download at: www.openoffice.org. Battle Creek Public Schools is using Open Office on over 500 sixth grade computers and Athens Area Schools has transitioned to Open Office throughout their district. Open Office is ideal for installing at home as it's available for free, and documents created in Open Office can be saved and opened in Microsoft Office. Another popular open source application designed for ages 5 – 12 is TuxPaint (www.tuxpaint.org) (download and install both the program and the stamps.) This kid-friendly painting program provides a wide number of easy-to-use tools and picture stamps. A number of CISD districts have installed Tux Paint on all of their elementary level computers.

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While open source applications may be available for no charge, there are issues to consider. Open Office provides less bundled clipart or templates when compared to Microsoft Office. Open source applications provide no bundled support. And occasionally MDE will design a document which uses embedded macros requiring the use of Microsoft Office. As a result, the REMC Association of Michigan continues to work with vendors to get deeply discounted pricing for Microsoft products for use at school and in the homes of educators and students. See www.remc bids.org for more information. CISD Educational Technology Consultant, Andy Mann, manna@calhounisd.org has worked with districts as they consider these options and is available to assist with the integration of these applications into instruction.

Data for Student Success

Data Director and Data4SS Inquiry – how do they complement each other? Answer – think of curriculum

The collective curriculum of a school district has specific areas of study (math, social studies, art, etc.). These areas are separate, but also integrated. Art in Social Studies, Mathematics in Science and Technology in Language Arts are just a few examples. Though they are each separate curriculum, they are all used together to provide the best education for students.

Data Director: Did You Know?

- The 2,157 users of Data Director in Barry, Branch and Calhoun counties have logged in 28,876 times in the past year

Now think of data warehousing and data mining tools. Data Director is a data warehouse due to its ability to upload current assessment data and incorporate it with historical state data. Data for Student Success Inquires are data mining tools as they use historical data submitted to the state (SRSD and MEAP). However, just like individual curriculum working together to educate students, these data tools are critical resources to use together in order design instructional strategies based on data. The primary uses:

- Data for Student Success Inquiry tools are used to mine historical state demographic and state assessment data
- Data Director is a data warehouse used to mine current and historical state and local demographic and assessment data

The Data for Student Success professional development modules (www.data4ss.org) are designed to help educators not only use data tools, but ask the right questions of the data. While Calhoun works with others in Michigan (currently 26 other ISDs) in using the Data4SS model, we are hosting our own Data4SS Cohort sessions that take the work of the Data4SS modules and also incorporate using professional learning communities (PLCs). Area superintendents are also studying PLCs and using data in their monthly meetings.

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What does Data for Student Success Inquiry mine?

- Historical data:
 - State, District, School and student level
- Inquiry tools:
 - MEAP
 - MEAP Cohort Comparison
 - MEAP Strand, GLCE, Item Analysis
 - Students Near MEAP Proficiency
 - Student History
 - *MIACCESS – 2009*
 - *ELPA – 2009*
 - *MME – 2009*

What does Data Director mine?

- Current data:
 - Consortium, district, school, grade, teacher and student level
- Inquiry tools:
 - MEAP
 - Cohort (Pivot) Comparison for MEAP, grades, test series
 - MEAP Strand, GLCE Analysis
 - MEAP and MME Percent Proficient
 - Student Profile
 - DIBELS
 - Local Assessments
 - Administer exams (bubble sheets and online)

For more information, please contact Mike Oswalt (oswaltm@calhounisd.org) or Tim Hall (hallt@calhounisd.org)

Did You Know between November 2007 and October 2008, CISD's Technology department:

- Hosts the email filtering system that protected district domains from 45,340,625 potentially harmful/annoying emails – that's 90.99% of emails blocked for district staff
- Ensured the Fiber network was up 99.996% of the time
- Continues to manage 167 miles of fiber
- is the entire Technology Department for 2 of our local districts

Calhoun ISD Connecting Points

The Calhoun ISD provides this "Connecting Points" newsletter to provide the districts we serve relevant and timely information about technology-related topics within school district functions. We call the cross section of technology-related topics and school district functions 'connecting points.'

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact us:

Mike Oswalt Assistant Superintendent	Regional Technology Services (REMC, Educational Technology, Data Director/Data for Student Success)	oswaltm@calhounisd.org 269.789.2439
Sam Lutgring Director	Informational Technology Services (Zangle, Fiber, Technology Support)	lutgrins@calhounisd.org 269.789.2433
Doug Smith, Director	Organizational Technology Services (Cyborg, SMART, CISD Technologies)	smithde@calhounisd.org 269.789.2424
Help Desk		helpdesk@calhounisd.org

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2008/9 Meeting Dates

December 10, 2008

1 – 3 Media Council

January 8, 2009

8:30 - 9:30 Blackboard User Group

9:30 - 12 Regional Instructional
Technology Committee

12 - 1:30 Technology Leadership Council
Lunch and Learn

1:30 - 2:30 Open Meeting for Technology
Discussions

January 15, 2009

8:30 – 11:30 Zangle Planning

12 – 3 Data Director Key Contacts

February 11, 2009

1 – 3 Media Council

March 11, 2009

8:30 – 11:30 Zangle Planning

12 – 3 Data Director Key Contacts

March 12, 2009

8:30 – 9:30 Blackboard User Group

9:30 – 12 Regional Instructional
Technology Committee

12 - 1:30 Technology Leadership Council
Lunch and Learn

1:30 - 2:30 Open Meeting for Technology
Discussions

May 13, 2009

1 – 3 Media Council

May 21, 2009

8:30 – 9:30 Blackboard User Group

9:30 – 12 Regional Instructional
Technology Committee

12 – 1:30 Technology Leadership Council
Lunch and Learn

1:30 – 3:30 Data Director Key Contacts

3:30 – 4:30 Open Meeting for Technology
Discussions

June 5, 2009

8:30 – 11:30 Zangle Planning

Other Dates:

Macul 2009: March 18 – 20, 2009; Detroit, MI

MSBO 2009: April 28 – 30, 2009; Detroit, MI

NECC 2009: June 28 – July 1, 2009; Washington D. C.