

Connecting Points Newsletter

Keeping you informed where technology and school district functions connect

May 2007

www.calhounisd.org

Teaching and Learning Connecting Points

Blackboard

A Learning Management System is a tool that uses the Internet to facilitate an online learning experience. That could be in the form of a class of students collaboratively working on an assignment with other students (in and out of the district), engaging in an online discussion on a relevant topic, or simply having access to classroom materials outside of the classroom. There are several systems available.

Calhoun ISD, along with Branch ISD, will have access to Blackboard. We will have access through a partnership with Genesee ISD who will provide a 'server' to host the system that we will utilize. Calhoun is purchasing the access, along with Branch helping with maintenance costs, so that there is no license cost to the local schools. All districts have indicated intent to use the system, except Athens and Quincy who utilize a different system that they have already installed (Moodle).

Genesee has been a great partner as they have set up accounts and also sent their Educational Technology Consultant here for training with 30 key district staff in attendance. A second training is being set up for the first part of June so that these staff can plan their own summer training and implementation plans.

This project supports the collaboratively written 2005 – 2010 Regional Technology Vision, which is:

The use of technology will

- advance the learning experiences of every learner;
- support education with tools to collect, access, analyze, and utilize information meaningfully;
- and promote efficiency of the organization

Mark Your Calendars – 2007 Macul/AT&T Student Showcase

K-12 schools from across Michigan are invited to participate in the seventh annual AT&T/MACUL Student Technology Showcase, held on Wednesday, September 26, from 9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m., at the State Capitol Building in Lansing. Student groups set up computers and other peripherals to show Michigan state legislators how technology is being used in the classroom to facilitate learning during one of two separate demonstration sessions in the morning and afternoon.

The Student Technology Showcase, sponsored by AT&T and the Michigan Association for Computer Users in Learning (MACUL), is free and open to the public. To register for the event, or for further information, visit the MACUL website at www.macul.org.

Online Courses

Don't miss the chance for kids to take some summer courses online! Credit recovery, advanced placement, and extended learning opportunities are abundant. Information on the wide variety of options available for students to take online courses has been presented to various groups, including high school principals and counselors. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me. Here is a quick reference for some of the resources available:

- Michigan Virtual High School, www.mivhs.org, Bob Currie, (800) 393-6052
- REMC Online Learning through Genesee ISD, www.gennet.us, Mike Oswalt (269) 789-2439
- NovaNet, <http://www.pearsondigital.com/novanet/>

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Video Conferencing Grant

We are working with the districts of Branch and Calhoun to apply for a video conferencing grant that will put one video conferencing unit in each district. The purpose is to connect schools to otherwise unavailable resources (authors, museums, experts, other classrooms, etc.) without leaving their building. The grant application is due in June.

One example is the students from Pennfield who visited Calhoun ISD recently to participate in a video conference called "Where in Michigan." Four classrooms from around the state took turns in presenting information about their city to each other, without revealing where they were actually located. Each class then had to take the presented information and use computers and each other to research and identify the locations. It was a fun activity that engaged kids in a fun learning activity. Paul Moore from Calhoun ISD did a great job in arranging the technical needs here at the ISD. Berrien ISD coordinated the four sites.



REMC \$ave Program

New to the \$ave program (new name for 'Cooperative Bid Program') is the ability to have a shopping list created online. Go to www.remcbid.org, choose the items you want, add them to the shopping list, and print your list at the end. This does not send the order to the vendor, but provides a print out by vendor that you can attach to your district's requisition/purchase order. This is a great tool to have your teachers identify the items they need and submit them to you for approval/purchase.

The REMC \$ave program saved the schools of Calhoun and Branch over \$1.1 million in 2006.

Webcast of Gerda Klein Event

While 1900 students were present for this presentation, the high speed connection in the districts and through the fiber network made it possible for the Gerda Klein (holocaust survivor) event to be seen live over the Internet. The Webcast will be archived and available on the Merit site at <http://www.merit.edu/events/kleinwebcast/index.php>. Teachers in Maine and New York contacted Gigi Lincoln at Lakeview about watching the presentation live.

This event was made possible with the support of Merit Network, Internet2, Battle Creek Public Schools, Lakeview School District, Calhoun Intermediate School District, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, the Klein Foundation, and the University of Pennsylvania.

Educational Technology Consultant

We are creating a new position for 2007/2008 – Educational Technology Consultant. The Educational Technology Consultant will be funded through current allocations for instructional technology support at CATC and funds from a recently vacated position in the REMC department, resulting in no additional costs to districts. This person will report directly to Mike and would be part of the REMC department, spending half of their time the first year working side by side with CATC staff. The remaining time would be focused on providing instructional technology consultation services to our constituent districts in Calhoun and Branch. In following years, this person will continue to spend at least a day a week with CATC staff.

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This position will be charged with empowering teachers to teach and leaders to lead using media and technology resources. Key areas of support and benefit to the local districts are:

- In classroom support for CATC staff as they incorporate current and new media and technology resources (laptops, video conferencing, online learning)
- Facilitation of workshops (centrally located and in district) for district staff (key leaders as well as teachers) on relevant and meaningful topics in media and technology resources including online learning, video conferencing, video streaming, and handheld technology
- Individual support to your instructional and technology leadership in empowering them with ideas on how to incorporate media and technology resources into school – from leadership to classroom.

The next TLC Meeting is May 17 at 11:30 a.m. CISD

Business Office Connecting Points

Finance – Did you know?

Conversion of the consortium's financial package from the mainframe-centric system to the new client-server based system (called SMART) took a big step forward in April as the Quincy school district became the first consortium member to totally run their business through SMART. Quincy does not use the old system at all. Additional implementations of SMART in April include the Coldwater school district moving to the SMART Electronic Requisition and the CISD moving to the SMART Accounts Receivable. The May and June timeframe will see additional districts implementing new SMART modules, including the SMART Electronic Requisition and Accounts Receivable modules.

The next Finance Users Meeting will be June 14, 2007. The meeting will be held at the CISD at 2:00 PM in Marshall, in Conference Rooms A and B. The topics are fiscal year end and a preview of the new SMART financial package.

Visit our new web site to find information about past and future Finance User Meetings as well as important documents. Remember www.calhounisd.org and then Departments, Technology/REMC and Finance.

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Student Services Connecting Points

Zangle Update

- Zangle - We are working with Wayne on a Grade Book extract that will allow you to extract all teacher grade book data into a file for storage. This will help with those teachers who forget to extract the grade book data before leaving for the summer. The user interface is not done, but if you contact CISD we can run the program for you.
- New year processing is complete for all Zangle districts (next year's track is available for scheduling)
- Single Record Student Database (SRSD) data gathering is complete and submitted to the state

Some of the new features that C-Innovations has added to Zangle for next year:

- Textbook Inventory - They have added an application to allow districts to track textbook inventory and check books out to students (including scanner support). This is not a library system but provides a way to track textbooks and equipment.
- Email Notifications - Parent connect will now optionally send e-mails to parents about updated attendance/food service balance/behavior/grades/news. This new feature will also allow us to send notifications by e-mail for events that we define, e.g., when a student has 2 tardies.
- Grade book Standards - We can now link an assignment to a standard. This allows the "standard/benchmark" to be calculated based on how the student performs on an assignment or test.
- Online Payments - Food service is the first and only module at this time, more to possibly come. CI has worked with Pay Pal to process the online payments for food service.
- LDAP - LDAP authentication for both faculty and students has been enhanced to accommodate E-Directory. This has been a Calhoun request that CI has done specifically for us. What this means is that the password (authentication) of students and faculty can now be managed by your network operating system.
- Student Body Accounting - Nothing is ready or programmed, but they are going to work on this feature. This will allow end users to track student fines and costs in the Zangle system in a variety of ways.

The next Zangle Planning meeting will be June 7 from 8 – 11 at CISD

Data Driven Connecting Points

Data – Did You Know?

- Achieve! is in the development stages of creating pre-built Dibels assessments (elementary assessment) that teachers can access via Data Director. They are also creating pre-built Dibels reports that are tied directly to the assessments and provide instant feedback on a student, classroom, or district's performance.
- The CISD will be reviewing the "quality" of the data being pulled into Data Director from the Zangle and PowerSchool districts. We will be contacting districts technology key contacts to let them know if there are any holes/discrepancies in their data.
- As requested by the Data Director key contacts, Special Education data for 05-06 and 06-07 is populated in Data Director from the SRSD files.
- We are working with Achieve to design the next prebuilt – GLCE Prebuilt

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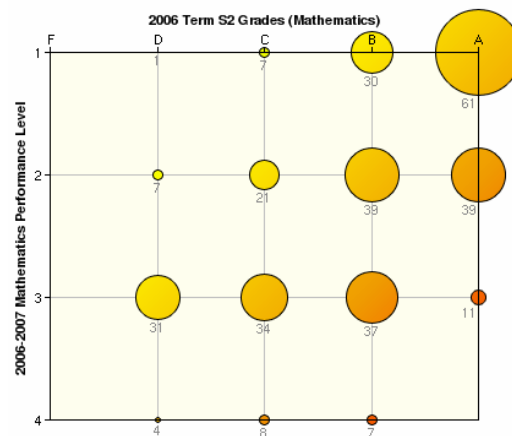
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- Item Bank – will soon be populated with many more math items thanks to the IMMAP grant funds.
- Exam results can now be viewed by administrators not typically associated with students.
- Michigan Merit Exam results will be populated in Data Director this summer.

Data Director – Did You Know?

Once your district has matched their course names and terms with subjects, a report can be generated comparing grades with MEAP scores. Here is an example of this year's 7th grade students' fall 2006 Math MEAP score compared to the last year's second semester 6th grade Mathematics grade given. Note that, for example, 37 students received a B in class, yet were not proficient (level 3). Additionally, 30 received a B, yet received a 1 on MEAP.



The next Data Director Key Contacts meeting will be May 16 at 1 p.m. at CISD.
August 6 – 9 – Data for Student Success Workshops. More information to follow.

Fiber Network Connecting Points

During the 2006/2007 school year there was expansion of the Fiber Network that supports the February 2006 Plan for Sale of Excess Capacity – which outlines the need to promote redundancy and cost reduction of maintenance of the network:

- We expanded the fiber count by 12 strands between CISD and Athens
 - An over lash agreement was made with Millennium Digital to add 24 additional strands to the fiber network at no charge to the CISD. In return Millennium was sold the right to use 12 of those strands.
- Added a link between Marshall CISD and Olivet for redundancy and additional efficiencies
 - The use of 2 strands of fiber between Olivet and Bellevue was granted to Millennium Digital in return for 2 strands of fiber from Olivet to CISD in Marshall. This added link allows for redundancy in the event of a cable failure in the northwest part of the county. It also provides some routing efficiencies to the network, making it a shorter route from Bellevue and Olivet to the CISD.
- We expanded the fiber count by 12 strands from Battle Creek Central to CATC (June)
 - This agreement allowed for Climax Telephone Service to attach strands to our fiber, giving us access to 12 of those strands. In addition, they gave us, for a reasonable fee, access to fiber to DKDC, significantly increasing their connectivity.

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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.'

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