

USING ONLINE TECHNOLOGIES TO IMPROVE  
COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN SCHOOL AND HOME:  
AN INTERNSHIP REPORT

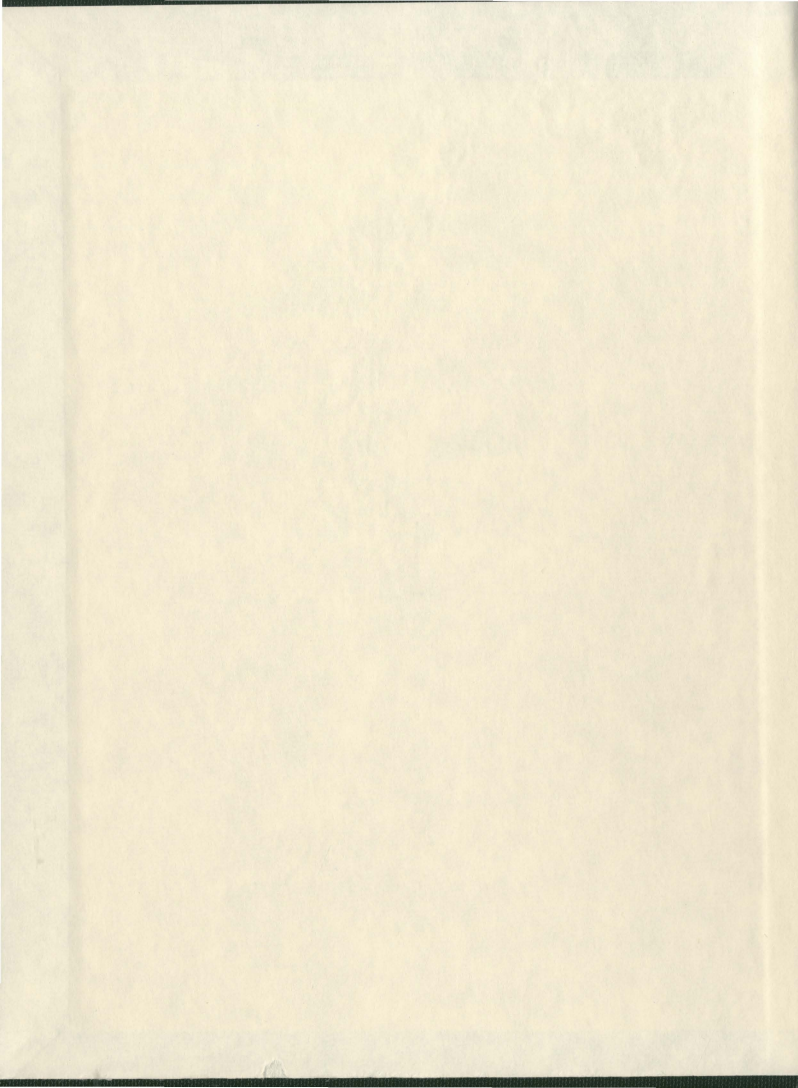
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**Using Online Technologies to Improve Communications  
Between School and Home:  
An Internship Report**

**By**

**Tony Hillier, B.A., B.Ed.**

**An internship report submitted to the School of Graduate Studies in  
partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of  
Education**

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## ABSTRACT

The most significant challenge for schools in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is to keep parents and students connected with the learning community. An overwhelming amount of research agrees that parental involvement is essential for enhancing achievement in schools. The research also agrees that parents are not able to be involved in their children's education due to the stresses of single parenthood and two career families. The development of online technologies to enhance the communication between home and school has become a viable option. This internship report provides a literature review on the topic of online technologies and it chronicles the implementation of this type of technology.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to offer my sincere thanks to Dr. Jerome Delaney for his encouragement and patience during my internship and for being a mentor to me during most of my Master's program.

I am sincerely grateful for the manner in which my field supervisor made me welcome in his school. He willingly shared his experiences and supported me in all aspects of my internship. This gratitude is also extended to the staff and students of the school.

Most importantly, I am sincerely thankful for my wife Jackie and my son Adam. They showed tremendous patience and support during the internship and during my graduate program.

## ORGANIZATION OF THIS REPORT

This report is organized in a logical manner and is divided into three chapters. In Chapter One the stage is set with a rationale for the internship option in the Masters in Education program and my personal rationale for choosing this route. It introduces the reader to the internship setting, discusses issues of supervision and provides a summary of key activities and experiences during the internship. Finally, Chapter One provides detail on the fieldwork self evaluation; a short summary of the research component of the report and provides some perceived limitations of the report. Chapter Two of the report provides a literature review on the potential of asynchronous web-based communications between school and home and provides a short review of several options that are available to schools who wish to employ such a service. Chapter Three provides a chronology of the process involved in implementing K-12 Planet during my internship and some general reflection on my fieldwork experience.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT.....	i
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	ii
ORGANIZATION OF THIS REPORT .....	iii
CHAPTER ONE: SUMMARY OF THE INTERNSHIP .....	1
Rationale for Internship Option .....	1
The Internship Setting .....	2
On-site Supervision .....	3
Internship Activities and Experiences .....	4
Method of Self Evaluation .....	5
Research Component .....	6
Limitations of the Report .....	6
CHAPTER TWO: ASYNCHRONOUS ONLINE TECHNOLOGIES AS STUDENT INFORMATION SYSTEMS: A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE .....	7
Introduction .....	7
Parental Involvement .....	8
The Trend Toward Online Web-Based Interaction .....	10
Software Solutions for Online Asynchronous Communication .....	14
CHAPTER THREE: IMPLEMENTATION OF K-12 PLANET: A REFLECTION OF THE INTERNSHIP PROJECT.....	18
Introduction .....	18
Setting The Stage: Pre-internship Preparation .....	18
Planning the Service Implementation .....	19



Technical Setup .....	21
User Account Distribution .....	22
Parent Orientation .....	24
In-service Opportunities for Teachers .....	24
Training for Parents .....	26
Providing Support for All Users .....	27
Challenges with K-12 Planet .....	28
Early Indicators of Success .....	29
General Reflections on the Internship Experience .....	31
Conclusion .....	33

## REFERENCES

## APPENDIX

## CHAPTER ONE

### SUMMARY OF THE INTERNSHIP

#### Rationale for the Internship Option

School administrator preparation programs all over North America are adding practica or internships to their requirements. The argument is that in order to develop effective school administrators it is essential to have a partnership between school districts and universities. Browne-Ferrigno & Muth (2004) argue that effective internships provide students with the opportunities to develop technical expertise and professional behaviors. Administrative fieldwork can stimulate changes in the perspectives, concepts, language, and skills of aspiring principals. They also provide school districts with a pool of administrators that have already been oriented to the administrative routines in their district. School districts are given the opportunity to invest in their own pool of future leaders.

During the application process for the Master of Education (Educational Leadership program) at Memorial University of Newfoundland, I was presented with a variety of program options, all of which provided rewarding possibilities for graduate studies. I could have applied for the all course route, the course and internship\project route or the course and thesis route. I made the choice to do the internship route because it was the most practical path for a person who aspires for advancement in the administrative field within the education system. Upon reflection, I acknowledge that there is exceptional value in actually becoming oriented to the high pressure, multi-faceted job that challenges the school administrative team daily. Through the internship,

I would experience the systems, policies and routines that maintain effective schools and I would observe the intricacies of the human interaction between students, staff and administration.

The internship is an exceptional opportunity to transform the theory into practice. Throughout my time in the Master's program I have, through course work, read about, researched and debated the variety of emerging theories in educational administration. The internship is a prime opportunity to observe the administrative process through that theoretical lens.

My background is in technology and I have spent most of the last ten years implementing technological advances in schools and teaching Technology Education at the high school level. Many of the daily challenges for administrators are either directly or indirectly associated with technology.

### **The Internship Setting**

The ten week internship took place at a suburban high school 20 kilometers outside of St. John's Newfoundland. The school has 520 students and 33 staff members. The physical building is large and is capable of accommodating nearly twice the number of enrolled students. This school was adversely affected by the denominational restructuring of the 1990s in that its enrollment has been declining consistently since that restructuring. Regardless of adversity, this school continues to be a pioneer in initiatives to enhance student achievement.

This school was chosen for the internship for several key reasons. Firstly, it was ready to start an initiative that would see parents and students become connected to school through online technologies. The school planned to launch a service called K-12

Planet in September 2004 that would provide all students and parents with internet access to school data. They would have access to information such as attendance, marks, homework, report cards and conduct documentation from wherever they could get internet access. Taking part in fieldwork at this school and playing a leadership role in the implementation of this technology, was an exceptional opportunity. This is a topic that I had already completed research on and was my chosen focus for my internship. Secondly, the administrators are mid-career teachers and are both relatively new to the administrative field. The assistant principal is in her second year in an administrative position and the principal is in his fifth year as an administrator. Both are dedicated readers of the latest educational research and are constantly developing strategies to transform theory into practice. Finally, the school has a well articulated plan for school development that includes the use of online technologies to enhance the communication between home and school.

### **On-site Supervision**

The principal and vice-principal both supervised me during my internship. The principal tended to play a larger roll in my day to day activities since we both collaborated heavily on the implementation of K-12 Planet and other technologies in the school. As my university supervisor, Dr. Jerome Delaney provided constant reinforcement and guidance. We kept in touch mostly through e-mail and meetings on campus.



### **Internship Activities and Experiences**

The main focus for my internship was to provide leadership in the implementation of K-12 Planet in a high school setting. My main goal was to track the process of implementation of this online technology and assess, where possible, its initial impact on students, parents and teachers. In addition, my overall goal was to be involved with as many other aspects of the school administrator's job as time permitted. It is worth mentioning at this time, that from the first day of my internship, I was treated as part of the administrative team. I was invited to collaborate on the most routine along with the most challenging issues that faced the school administration. I participated in activities that challenged my abilities to work as an administrator and to communicate effectively with teachers, support staff, students and parents. Specifically, my activities included:

1. Participating, prior to the first week of school, in a planning breakfast where I was introduced to department heads. I was instantly made part of the planning process and contributed actively to discussions.
2. Collaborating with the principal during the first week of my internship to plan out the implementation of K-12 Planet. I also started getting to know the staff and students of the school.
3. Shadowing the principal and assistant principal in their day to day activities.
4. Delivering a presentation to parents on K-12 Planet during curriculum night.
5. Attending an in-service with the principal about the new district communication system.
6. Providing evening training opportunities for parents on K-12 Planet.
7. Delivering training sessions to staff on the use of K-12 Planet.

8. Delivering training session to school staff on new district communications system.
9. Generating and distributing K-12 Planet login accounts for students in the school.
10. Providing technology support and account information to parents who call the school in search of assistance with K-12 Planet.
11. Resolving discipline issues with students. I worked on several discipline challenges and acted as a mediator in conflicts between teachers and students and between students and their peers.
12. Managing student locker distribution system.
13. Supervising school dances.
14. Planning staff and department head meetings with principal and assistant principal.  
This included making presentations to department heads on new technologies.
15. Collaborating with parents to help solve their children's discipline and attendance problems.
16. Visiting regular classrooms with the principal to establish rapport with students and teachers.
17. Traveling with student groups on field trips and other community activities.

#### **Method of Self Evaluation**

The main goal for my internship was to take part in as many activities as possible to gain an understanding of the job of school administrator. My project for the internship was to lead the implementation of K-12 Planet. Each day I took time for reflection. I kept notes on new things I had learned and experienced. In addition, through routine conversations with the principal, I maintained my focus on the goals and objectives of the internship.

### **Research Component**

The research component of this internship report is a literature review on the use of online asynchronous technologies to enhance communications between home and school. This literature review will also provide a short introduction to some of the products that are available to school administrators who identify this service as an option for their schools. The discussion of the implementation of K-12 Planet during my internship will include comments from parents and some of the preliminary findings of a survey administered to students by the school administrator.

### **Limitations of the Report**

Chapter Three of this report chronicles the implementation of K-12 Planet during my internship. Although there is tremendous potential to carry out primary clinical research on this technology, the timing of my internship did not provide that opportunity. It will probably take a year before impact of this service can truly be evaluated. It can be argued that a research project on the impact of K-12 Planet could be started September 2005.

My general reflections on the internship must take into account that although I had a tremendous learning experience, my interaction with students and teachers was affected by the fact that my term in the school was temporary.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **ASYNCHRONOUS ONLINE TECHNOLOGIES AS STUDENT INFORMATION SYSTEMS A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

#### **Introduction**

One of the criticisms of schools in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is that regardless of the wide range of societal changes that have happened over the last forty years, schools are still based on a 1950's model. They are often criticized for not changing to meet the demands of the family in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Over the past twenty-five years parents have become less involved in their children's education. This can be attributed to the emergence of the two income family where both parents work. Parents cannot be involved as easily due to incompatible work schedules with the schools (Bauch, 1998). Parents depend more and more on their children to inform them of the news from their school. One momentous development over the last ten years is the development of online internet-based communications systems that allow parents to remotely keep in touch with their children's school. With these systems parents can get information on everything from grades on the latest test to class tardiness. It can be argued that these systems are the key to enhancing parental involvement, improving schools and enhancing levels of school achievement.

This chapter explores some of the literature on parental involvement in schools. It will investigate the trends toward online web based portals for interaction between teachers, parents and students. The merits of online asynchronous interaction will be examined. Finally, it will review some of the alternatives that are available for schools as they attempt to get parents involved in their children's education.



## Parental Involvement

The literature is in agreement that parental involvement in children's learning is the key to enhancing achievement in schools. For example, a synthesis of 2,575 empirical studies of academic learning, show that parental involvement, either directly or indirectly, influences the chief determinants of cognitive, affective, and behavioral learning (Walberg, 1984). Walberg argues that since children spend a significant amount of time at home or under the control of their parents, enhancing the relationship between home and school should produce large effects on learning. In his review of 29 studies of school-parent programs, he found that family participation in education was twice as predictive of academic success as socio-economic status. Epstein (1995) agrees with Walberg when he says that parents who help encourage their children to learn at home, and who help develop positive attitudes toward school, contribute to the personal and academic growth of their children. Henderson and Berla (1997) also endorse this view. This analysis of more than 85 different clinical studies concluded that:

The most accurate predictor of student achievement in school is not income or social status but the extent to which that student's family can:

- create a home environment that encourages learning.
- express high (not unrealistic) expectations for their children's achievement and future careers; and
- become involved in their children's education at school and in the community. (pp. 160)

When parents get involved in education, children try harder and achieve better at school. Research is showing that home environments are conducive to learning and the relationship between the home and school has deteriorated in recent decades (Walberg, 1984).

The lack of participation by parents does not necessarily indicate that parents have a lack of interest in what their children are doing in school. Research conducted by the United States National Parent Teacher Association (USNPTA) indicates that parents are quite aware of the importance of being involved in schools. The poll<sup>1</sup> revealed that 94% of respondents agreed that educational progress depended on involving parents in the process (Bauch, 1998). In this study the respondents were parents of school-age children. Meanwhile, a Gallup Poll of the general public revealed that 86% of respondents believed that support from parents is the most important way to improve schools. Similarly, as far back as 1984, a Gallup Poll revealed that a lack of parental involvement is the largest problem facing public schools (Ost, 1988). It certainly appears that the importance of parent involvement is not a surprise to anyone. What then is the problem? Why are parents not as involved as they used to be?

Modern life and the pressures of both parents working or single parenthood has placed severe restrictions on parents. Parents are stretched for time to be involved in their children's educational experience (Keel, 2000). Bauch (1998) similarly discussed the notion that parents have significant limitations on:

...time, schedules, distance and resources that prevent school-home communication from being neither universal nor comprehensive... When parents ask their child "What did you do in school today?" it is because they sincerely want to know. It also shows that there is no easy access to the information from any other source. (p. 225)

What is needed then is advancement in communications so that parents can be involved in their children's education when it is convenient. They need an information system so that instead of asking general questions about school, they can ask subject specific questions about their children's learning environment.

In 1995 the American Business Collaboration for Quality Dependent Care (ABC) adopted a program called Transparent Schools. ABC is a consortium of the largest corporations in the United States including IBM, Exxon, and Allstate (Bauch, 1998). These large employers wanted a program that would improve school success while helping working parents increase their positive roles with their children. The program was a way for employers to spend employee benefit funds to reduce family stress and contribute to local education. The program was based on a voice messaging telephone system controlled at the school level by computer technology. In the pilot, 102 schools received \$15,000 each to set up the infrastructure. After the first year, 87% of employee families used the system and 78% were satisfied or very satisfied with how the system kept them in contact with their children's school. 89% of participants wanted to keep the service as a regular way for schools to keep parents informed (Bauch, 1998).

### **The trend toward online web-based interaction**

There is an information technology solution emerging that promises to enhance parents' connection with their children's learning community. Virtual communities can be defined as a web-based communication forum. In the education environment web forums can be as basic as an e-mail system with a homework listing page, or it can be more advanced, allowing parents to track student attendance and grades and to collaborate with teachers or other parents through an online portal. In these virtual communities, diverse individuals with common concerns can raise questions, share ideas and plan activities (Beghetto, 2001).

Beghetto (2001) maintains that the most significant element of these virtual communities is asynchronous conferencing. This is delayed conferencing which is not

affected by time or geographic location. Parents can contribute to a forum with a particular topic strand from wherever they are and on their own time. It can be argued that the time and space independent nature of asynchronous communications offers major advantages to face to face communications. Walther (1996) holds that participants can more mindfully and purposefully plan, compose, and edit comments. He states that these systems have the capacity to be more socially desirable for users. With this technology users have the time to concentrate on the construction of their messages and they do not have to worry about the stresses of face to face communications.

Recent studies have revealed some encouraging connections between the availability of online asynchronous communications between home and school and children's academic achievement (Sonak, Suen, Zappe, & Hunter, 2002; Hampton, Anderson, & Sigman, 2002).

Sonak et al. (2002) found that there was a direct link between academic achievement and student/parent use of an online asynchronous communications program. This research took place in the 1999/2000 school year at a junior high school in Pennsylvania. The communication system was based on a software product called TigerNet which was able to serve out a database of schoolwork, assignments and progress reports. Through the use of this system, students were able to log on at school and track their own academic progress. Meanwhile, parents were able to log on from home and receive information specific to their children from the system's world wide web portal (Sonak et al., 2002).

Qualitative analysis of 460 parent surveys revealed some promising feedback. 81% of parents who returned the survey said they accessed TigerNet from home internet



connections; 47.6% revealed they accessed TigerNet at least once a week. Under the comments section of the survey, 248 comments were judged to be positive. These comments alluded to the fact that they saw positive change in their children related to increased responsibility, increased organization, more informed and grade improvement. 197 comments were judged to be negative. 87 of them were related to teachers not updating the system regularly and 79 were related to technical problems. It is also important to note that there were 123 suggestions to improve the system. Path analysis for students revealed that there was higher academic achievement as a result of using TigerNet and a direct relationship between the amounts of time spent on TigerNet and increased academic achievement (Sonak, 2002).

Hampton et al. (2002) conducted an action research project that involved 137 sixth grade children. The school was using a software product called PowerSchool. It was similar to TigerNet in that it provided easy access to information by students at school and also provided an internet portal for parents. The research involved tracking grade point averages for three quarters of a school year. During the first quarter teachers took students into the computer lab to log on to the system and its use was compulsory for the students. In the second quarter there was no requirement for students to use the system and time was not provided in class. During the third quarter, system use was required and lab access was provided in class. During the first quarter the average grade point average in the sample was 2.18. In the second quarter, the grade point average dropped to 1.83. Meanwhile, the grade point average went up to 2.33 in the third quarter. It was concluded that the third quarter saw an increase of grade point averages because the students were more comfortable with the reporting system and its use was mandated by the classroom

teacher through the use of the computer lab during class time. Students made supportive comments on the system. All the students' comments alluded to the surprise they felt as they saw their marks increase while watching their progress on Power School. 80% of the students surveyed felt that checking the online grading program helped them earn better grades (Hampton et al., 2002).

The research also provided some positive feedback from parents. During the first quarter the average number of parent accesses per day was 46.7. In the second quarter this dropped to 35.6. In the meantime, third quarter results showed that there were 47.6 parent accesses per day. This shows a relationship between the children's use of the system and the parents taking the time to access the data online. The most revealing element of the parent feedback is from the survey (Hampton et al., 2002).

- 69% of parents knew child's grades before report cards were released
  - 44% said that they check child's grades weekly.
  - 43% said that the child and the parent check the grades together.
  - 59% said they felt there was a direct link between access to system and student achievement; and
  - 54% said that the child's communication concerning school improved.
- (p.14)

The findings of these research projects in the United States support the argument that asynchronous web-based communications systems are vital in the movement to enhance collaboration and improve student achievement. Public school districts all over the United States and Canada have either installed these systems or are currently researching their options.

Recently, the United States government released their No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation. This legislation attempts to fix the United States public school system by giving parents more choices regarding where their children are educated

(United States Department of Education, 2004). It calls on educators to use proven practices and programs to enhance student achievement. It gives more freedom to local school districts and state legislatures and it increases the amount of accountability for teachers, schools, districts and state governments. Essentially, it is a decentralized initiative that gives the professional educators the money, freedom and motivation to increase achievement with proven initiatives. Large companies such as Apple, IBM and Microsoft are hoping to jump on the bandwagon as these asynchronous communication products are gaining momentum. In addition, many software companies are emerging with the objective of breaking into this lucrative market. It can be argued that the NCLB initiative will increase the demand for many of these products.

### **Software Solutions for Online Asynchronous Communications**

When administrators are considering a student information system that provides online asynchronous communications it is essential that they do their homework. Most of these systems are expensive and require expensive training and support contracts. There are several general issues that must be considered:

1. Does your current database management software have a product that can act as an online portal?
2. Does the company that you are going to deal with have a good history in this business?
3. Are there other schools using this software?
4. Can the sales representative provide references of schools that are using this software?
5. Does the company offer training and support agreements with the software?

The market is currently flooded with options. Administrators can choose from expensive products developed by large well known companies or they can experiment

with free options that are considered open source. The following are a few that are worthy of consideration.

**Apple PowerSchool** – This is a full service web-based student information system. It takes care of all aspects of student record keeping and because it is web-based it can be accessed by parents from home. PowerSchool is an Apple product but is platform independent. This means that anyone using an Apple or PC can access PowerSchool with a web browser without any special plugins. The literature is not clear on whether or not PowerSchool requires an Apple-based server to manage the database. Through PowerSchool parents can access real-time student data; communicate with teachers and track their child's assignments and attendance. Students can track their academic performance and access homework assignments online. Apple is currently marketing this product as a tool in the implementation initiatives under the No Child Left Behind legislation (PowerSchool Student Information System 2004).

**Moodle** – Moodle is a software package for producing internet based courses and websites. Moodle is completely open source which means that it is copyrighted but can be used and copied freely. It can run on any computer that can run the PHP programming language and can support many types of databases. It is designed to promote social constructivist pedagogy and is suitable for online courses or supplementing face to face learning (Moodle, 2003). Although this software has many more features than a regular school will need, it does have the ability to provide an online portal for parents to view student grades and homework and to collaborate with teachers and other parents in an asynchronous community. Moodle requires nothing more on the user end than a PC with a web browser, yet it provides strong security options. It does not provide the all



inclusive multi-modular environment of some products; however, it is free and is well supported by an extensive support website. Moodle does require its own onsite server to run. There are several schools in the Eastern School District currently experimenting with Moodle.

**K-12 Planet** – Of all the student information system and online portals, K-12 has perhaps been in business the longest. K-12 Planet is a product developed by Chancery Student Management Solutions. It is a web-based communication system that is intended to interface with their database system, Winschool. K-12 Planet is different from PowerSchool in that it does not require a server to run. It gets its data from servers already running Winschool. It basically uploads the schools Winschool data to a web server in Vancouver, British Columbia. This K-12 planet web server then serves the information out to those who log on to their accounts. Through the web portal parents can access student grades, homework assignments, schedules, attendance and conduct details (Chancery Student Management Solutions, 2003). One of its significant strengths is that it allows parents to see data already entered into the Winschool database; therefore, there is no duplication of data entry. Even though K-12 Planet is a very powerful tool schools will still have to rely on e-mail for asynchronous communications. K-12 Planet does not offer the same potential for online collaboration as Moodle does.

From the few examples provided, it can be concluded that the price of the software solution is not necessarily the issue. Administrators have to weigh the negatives and positives of each potential solution. PowerSchool and K-12 Planet are powerful systems but are expensive. Moodle is free and will meet the needs of any school to

provide online asynchronous communications to parents. In the area of student data accessibility it is not however, as powerful as PowerSchool and K-12 Planet.

This investigation has provided a starting point for administrators who wish to propose an online asynchronous communication system for their schools. It has identified the problem that parents are not as involved in the school lives of their children as they once were. It provided an overview of the argument that parent involvement is essential for maintaining a high level of student achievement and that parent involvement is perhaps a more significant determiner of school achievement than socioeconomic status. This chapter has investigated the trend that is taking place toward the use of asynchronous online communications to keep parents in touch with school. Finally, this chapter has provided three possible software solutions for the development of an online portal so that parents can be more involved in their children's education.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **IMPLEMENTATION OF K-12 PLANET: REFLECTIONS OF THE INTERNSHIP PROJECT**

#### **Introduction**

Many schools in Newfoundland and Labrador who have a student data management system are using Winschool from Chancery Student Management Solutions. This stems from an initiative in the late 1990s by the provincial Department of Education to have Winschool placed in every school in the province. As stated in chapter two, it is logical that schools currently using Winschool would purchase K-12 Planet. This product is the add-on that allow parents and students to view student specific data through a world wide web portal.

This type of project affects every stakeholder in the school community; therefore, it can be argued that its initial success is based on the process that is followed for its introduction into the school. This chapter chronicles my experiences in the implementation of K-12 Planet during my internship.

#### **Setting the Stage: Pre-internship Preparations**

During the Winter and Spring of 2004 my cooperating principal spent a tremendous amount of energy researching the best possible alternatives for a communication system that gives parents an internet portal to access their children's school data. After analyzing several options, the administrative team and the department heads decided that K-12 Planet was the most viable alternative. This was no surprise considering the school had already been using Winschool for several years. Once this decision was made, it became important to inform staff and parents of the plans for the

following school year. Staff and parents were encouraged to log onto the K-12 Planet website and try out the demo so that they could develop an appreciation for the capabilities of the service. Chancery was contacted at this time and it was decided that the school would purchase the K-12 Planet service at a cost of \$2.00 per student.

I think this approach to the project was an essential element for its ultimate success. Stakeholders became familiar with the name of the service and had at least an introductory knowledge of its capabilities. The name K-12 Planet was used in school correspondents, public service announcements, parent meetings, staff meetings and student assemblies. When I started my internship in September, it seemed that the momentum had already begun.

In the June prior to the service role out in September, the school purchased the subscription from Chancery. District service agreements were signed and payment had to be received by Chancery before any materials were mailed out to the school.

### **Planning the Service Implementation**

When I arrived at the school in September, the school had received the necessary documentation to start the service. This package included:

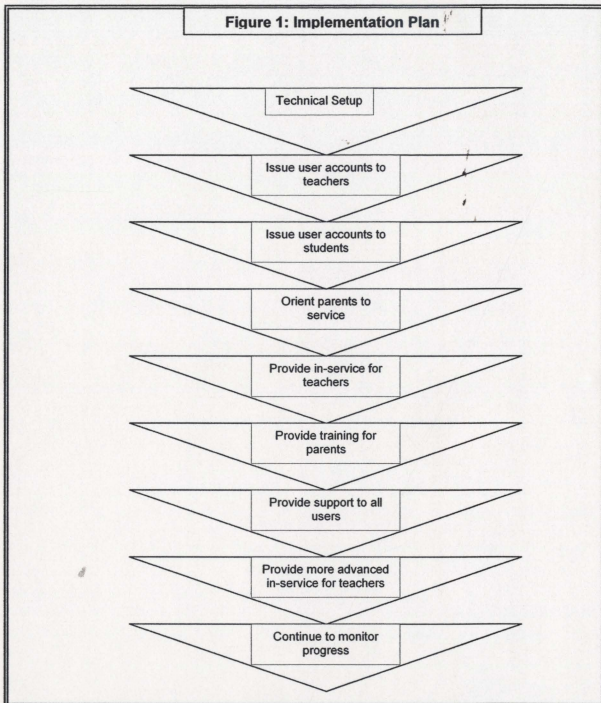
1. Reference materials for the account and system administrators.
2. Reference materials for parents and students (Appendix A).
3. Reference materials for teachers (Appendix B).
4. Communications materials such as sample letters, public service announcements, news releases, and parent release forms.
5. Detailed instructions on how to set up the service (Appendix C).



When planning the role out of a project such as this, it is essential to collaborate with the administrative team to ensure that all points of view are represented. There are many diverse philosophies associated with any decisions in the school environment and there are many key questions to be answered. It is essential that the implementation plan be well thought out and should include answers to the following questions:

- Who is going to be the onsite manager of the service?
- What computer in the school will take on the responsibility of data upload to the K-12 Planet website?
- In what order do stakeholders start using the service?
- How are you going to inform parents that service is up and running?
- How are you going to provide in-service opportunities to the teachers?
- How are you going to provide training to parents?
- How are user accounts going to be distributed?
- What are the basic expectations for teacher use?

In the case of this school, the principal assumed the responsibility of onsite manager, known in the K-12 Planet setup as the system administrator. The school technology person was appointed the accounts manager. This is significant because these positions have a specific set of permissions in K-12 Planet that give them more access than teachers, students or parents. The flowchart in figure 1 provides the plan for the service role out.



### **Technical Setup**

The setup of K-12 Planet is relatively straight forward. Appendix D provides some of the technical notes that I took when configuring K-12 Planet. Essentially, Winschool version 4.3.3 is installed on one computer system in the school and during the installation there is a module added to the shell that is configured to upload a copy of the

data from the Winschool database already in use in the school. This link is programmed to upload the school data to the K-12 Planet server in Vancouver, British Columbia at whatever time of the day is chosen by the system administrator. It is important to highlight here that this data is uploaded every day without user intervention. The only change is that teachers have to export their marks a little differently in the Winschool grade software. They also have to export their grades whenever they make changes to them. When that first upload is complete, users can then log onto the service with any internet browser. Subsequent uploads are incremental – meaning that only the information that has changed since the last upload will be uploaded to K-12 Planet. This is significant because the first upload takes about 30 minutes but after that uploads will only take 2-5 minutes.

### **User Account Distribution**

When the service was set up, teachers were eager to get their user accounts. Many teachers started immediately getting organized even before students received their login information or there was any formal in-service provided.

The method of distributing user accounts and determining who gets those accounts became a critical decision in the early success of the service. The administrative team had to explore issues such as: who the service is intended for; and how the service is to be perceived by students. Some may argue that the login information should be mailed out to the parent and the student should not get an account at all. Others may argue that the student and the parent should get their own separate accounts. The administrative team decided that we should distribute the account information to the students only, and the parents should use their children's login information to access the portal. It was felt

that increasing student achievement with the help of this service was based on several key issues:

1. The student has to see it primarily as a service to help them.
2. Students should not see the system as a punitive measure.
3. The service has to be seen as being for all students not just those who are not performing well in school.
4. Students should not feel that the school is going behind their back so that their parents or guardians could spy on them.

All student user accounts were printed and organized by homeroom. The accounts were then distributed with a memo to parents explaining the service and the quick reference card for parents and students (Appendix A). Students were told that they had to take the account information home and share it with their parents. During the evening of the day that login information was distributed, there was an orientation session for parents included on the agenda of the regular meet the teacher night. Is it naïve to think that the login information got home to parents? I would argue that in many cases the information did not get home right away and many did not get home at all. There was however, tremendous value in having students included in the process. I agree with the approach of Sonak et al. (2002). I think that maximum benefits will come from having students use this service as a tool to stay organized and track their own progress. The byproduct is that parents are able to stay in contact with what their children are doing in school and support them when it is necessary.



### **Parent Orientation**

Any parent who reads school correspondence or follows the local media would already be aware of the school's plans to introduce K-12 Planet. As was mentioned earlier, there was an orientation session provided to parents during the regular meet the teacher night in September. The principal spent about 30 minutes demonstrating the capabilities of K-12 Planet. He discussed grades, attendance, messages and homework. He highlighted the fact that this is new and there will be technical difficulties. He also reinforced the fact that it will take some time for teachers to get familiar with the service and start using it as a teaching and learning tool. I spent about 30 minutes discussing some of the technical features of the service (Appendix E). I gave an overview on some of the research findings of this type of service; computer and internet requirements; the importance of password security and the secure features in place for data transfer over the internet.

### **In-service Opportunities for Teachers**

In any school setting, the introduction of a service such as this can present many challenges. Most school faculty members can be divided into one of three groups when learning a new technology. There are those who will embrace the technology and independently learn how to use it. They are the first people to use the new technology and usually become the informal leaders in the orientation of other teachers. There are those who move forward cautiously. They start using the technology over time and actively search out help from the informal leaders. The third group will not likely use the technology until it is mandated by the administration and will not begin using the tools

until there is some sort of formal in-service offered. K-12 Planet is not a difficult technology to learn. Any teacher who has used the internet can, with a few reference materials, start using K-12 Planet very quickly.

The administrative team decided that most of the teachers in their school fell into the first two groups. They then planned their approach accordingly. They decided to initially, before any in-service, give teachers login accounts and reference materials and let them use K-12 Planet without any expectations for its use. Over the period of a couple of weeks most teachers at least logged in and started getting familiar with manipulating their space on the system. Several teachers started getting themselves organized right away and started using the more advanced features of the service. After about two weeks, a half day in-service was delivered. The principal and I were the presenters and all teachers attended. It became obvious that a tremendous knowledge base had developed informally even before the in-service took place. I am convinced this informal knowledge base was the key to making the best of the short period of time we had for training. A key component of the in-service was a separate laboratory based training session for both experienced users and less experienced users.

After the teacher training session there were several expectations for teachers' use of K-12 Planet. First, teachers were expected to start exporting their grades from the Winschool grade program to K-12 Planet. This included exporting their marks after each piece of evaluation was graded. Secondly, teachers were expected to begin posting homework assignments online. Finally, teachers were expected to promote and encourage its use in their classes. Many teachers advanced beyond this and started posting web resources for their course and in some cases even developing curricular web-sites. Two

months after this initial in-service and after K-12 Planet performed successfully in distributing report cards, another in-service day was provided to all teachers in the school. A popular session during this training day was on the advanced use of K-12 Planet.

It is critical that the needs and the day to day demands of teachers are taken into account in all aspects of the introduction of this type of advancement. It is important that administrators are patient with their staff members while setting realistic goals for its use. Giving extra work to teachers is not currently popular in schools; therefore, the introduction of this service needs to be perceived as an alternate way of doing things that have always been done. It must be viewed as an innovation that will become a time saving tool for teachers.

### Training for Parents

K-12 Planet is very easy to navigate and manipulate from the parents' perspective. It requires less technical savvy than using online banking. Parents do not have any editing abilities; therefore they need only be able to log on and navigate through the various web-pages displaying data specific to their children. In spite of this, it was important to offer a training session for any parents who needed guidance using the portal. I provided a laboratory-based training session for parents about a month after the system was rolled out. Several parents attended the session which consisted of about 30 minutes of general orientation and 60 minutes of questions and answers on specific issues. The feedback from parents was positive. They felt that they could finally be confident that they knew what their child was doing in school.

### **Providing Support to All Users**

While I worked in the office I was fortunate to be included in nearly all situations that the principal and assistant principal were involved in. I was included in all meetings of the administrative team and my opinions were actively sought on key issues.

While I shadowed the principal and worked in the office, my main responsibility was to provide K-12 Planet technical support for students, parents and teachers. This role however, was not a demanding one. Most contact with students was concerning the loss of login information. Contact with parents did require some working through problem situations on the telephone; however, password information was generally the most common challenge. It is significant to indicate here that login information was not given out over the telephone. If a parent requested a login, they were asked to get their child to pick up the information at the office the next day. This served two purposes, first it indicated to parents that the school was serious about maintaining a strict level of security. Secondly, it maintained the philosophy that students had to be a part of the process. We felt that it would be counter productive to go behind the student's back to issue a username and password. In one or two cases the student initially refused to give the password to the parent; however, once they were informed of the seriousness of withholding the information, they gave their parents the necessary documents. Technical support to teachers was a little more demanding. On this level there were problems with marks getting uploaded properly to K-12 Planet. Some of these problems occurred because of configuration problems when the service was first getting set up. Other mark uploading problems originated with the server in Vancouver, British Columbia. Any



school wide technical issues not associated with configuration problems in the school required me to contact technical support at Chancery Student Management Solutions.

### **Challenges with K-12 Planet**

Before I discuss any of the problems with the K-12 Planet service, it is essential to reinforce a major point. As a concept, the use of web portals and related asynchronous technologies to connect students and parents with school is arguably one of the best technical advancements the education system has ever experienced. Although there is a limited amount of primary research supporting this statement, I do not think any educator can argue against the opportunities it offers for increasing student achievement through its power to enhance communications among stakeholders in the school community.

K-12 Planet, as a software solution, has a few weaknesses that need to be addressed. Firstly, Chancery Student Management Solutions has a large technical support office in Vancouver, British Columbia. Chancery has its products in all time zones all over the world, therefore, in Newfoundland it is nearly 1:30 P.M. before a technician can be reached by telephone. In addition to this, the technical unit does not seem to have sufficient numbers of seasoned technical personnel for the demand on their services. Secondly, the literature on K-12 Planet will make misleading statements that there is very little technical ability needed to set up the product and the developers claim that it essentially runs itself. It is my experience that someone with a moderate to advanced technical knowledge of the logic used by the software will need to be in the school to assist with solving problems. It is essential that someone is in the school to at least ask the technical support people the correct questions. Thirdly, Chancery is going to need to add more infrastructures to its operations to effectively handle the demands of

subscribers. As more schools purchase this service, the demand is increasing and causing upload problems. Chancery has had a message about upload problems on its site for two months. It is time these problems were fixed and the message was erased. Finally, in future upgrades, there are issues with the website interface that will need to be fixed. Currently, the space for teachers to post homework is limited to just 500 characters per posting; course offerings listed on the site do not provide space for short descriptions of courses; and conduct information uploaded from the school database does not upload the line where teachers write notes on the specifics of the disciplinary infraction. When parents see conduct information through the web portal they get vague conduct descriptions selected from a preprogrammed list. They do not get any specifics on the discipline problem.

### **Early Indicators of Success**

It is much too early to do any kind of primary research to ascertain the success or failure of the K-12 Planet service. It can be argued that it would take about a year before its success could be evaluated and even then true success could only be measured in an increase of student achievement. For now, we must find support in the volumes of research that conclude that the key to student achievement is including parents in the process and improving the lines of communication between home and school. Following this logic, it is more important that parents and students are using the technology to enhance communication because we know that communication is the key for student achievement (Henderson & Berla, 1997).

There have been some indicators that students and parents are actively using the service. The school principal (personal communication, Nov 1, 2004) did a survey of

every child in the school. A random selection of 200 of those surveys showed that 39% of students do not use K-12 Planet; 49% indicated that they use K12 Planet 1 – 3 times per week; and 14% indicated they use K-12 Planet more than 3 times per week. This is significant because it shows that after only about two months of use, K-12 Planet is being used by 63% of the school population (personal communication, Nov 1, 2004). It is also interesting to note that a large number of those students who did not use K-12 Planet made a comment that they were doing well and did not feel they needed to use it. This survey was conducted prior to midterm report cards. It is possible that since midterm reports went home, K-12 Planet is being used more than ever by students and parents.

There has been a tremendous amount of feedback from parents and all of it has been supportive. Teachers have been challenged to cope with an increase in e-mails from parents. The amount of correspondence has been increasing weekly. The following are two comments made by parents who will remain anonymous. I will name them Cathy and Dayna:

Cathy (personal communication, October 10, 2004) said the following:

I think it is wonderful for a couple of reasons. First of all I am able to keep track of my son's assignments and when they are due. If he is missing any classes that I don't know about, or receiving any grades that I haven't been told about. More importantly, it is an excellent tool to open up communication between my son and myself. For example instead of the usual, "what did you do today, honey", "not much", I can say "well I know you had a test in Physics, how did you find it." It gives us more of a chance to discuss what is going on in school which leads to other discussions as well. I wish this was available in my daughter's school as well.

Dayna (personal communication, October 2, 2004) expressed similar feelings in the following statement:

I have accessed the Web site. I am thrilled! Tonight when I ask \_\_\_\_ if he has any homework or upcoming tests, and I receive the usual answer, "No," ...I will pull out the printed sheet with the assigned study and say "excuse me, I think otherwise" ...you gotta love it!

### **General Reflections of the Internship Experience**

The internship experience has been incredible. I have been fortunate on the one hand to job shadow the principal and observe him work through the daily challenges that make up his job and on the other hand take on a project which I have been interested in for some time. I was fortunate that the implementation of K-12 Planet did not monopolize my time and I had opportunities to work with students, teachers and even the guidance counselor on a variety of issues.

The implementation of K-12 Planet did more than just let me work on a project that I have been interested in. It gave me the real life experience of initiating change in the school setting. This, I would argue, is one of the most significant challenges currently facing administrators. Shrinking budgets, the cutting of teaching units, and increasing demands from all stakeholders, sometimes make the job of promoting change impossible.

Throughout the internship I have had time to reflect on the role of school administrator. The following are a list of some guiding principles that I have learned:

- Put students' needs first. Do not lose focus of the overall goals of public education.
- Plan well and articulate realistic goals for your school. Celebrate successes and even when you experience failure, celebrate the opportunity to learn from it.



- Never stop learning. Take the opportunity to read the policies, latest research and new trends in teaching and learning. Listen to people around you and learn from them.
- Develop informal advisors on your staff and enlist their advice on critical decisions. Welcome diverse perspectives from everyone on staff. Never work in a vacuum.
- Never make a decision on impulse even when you are under strict deadlines. Take the time to think it through and trust your intuition.
- Take the time to get to know your students. Be visible in the school; identify with them and treat them all with respect. You will get the respect back even under the most challenging conditions.
- Get to know your staff. Respect them and value their wisdom. Always try to be accessible to them. Be sensitive of the challenges faced by the classroom teachers.
- Do not ask your staff to do anything that you are not prepared to do yourself.
- Be a good role model for your staff but know your boundaries. Administrators who do not have balance in their lives make teachers nervous.
- Maintain a sense of humor. Find the humor in even the most challenging situations.
- When dealing with parents, always try to imagine what it would be like to be in their situation.
- Admit to your mistakes. To do so demonstrates that you are human.

### **Conclusion**

The ten week internship has been a tremendous culminating activity for my graduate program. My experiences have been varied and my new learning has been immeasurable. I had the opportunity to work with a progressive, dedicated administrative team, a talented, dedicated staff and a group of students that are second to none anywhere in the province. I was able to do this within the context of implementing a project that is within my area of expertise. This school was the first school in their district to offer the K-12 Planet service to students and parents. It is hoped that our experience and this report will help to foster the use of similar technologies in other schools in the province.

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## Viewing Alerts and Messages

Alerts are timely, important information, such as a reminder to return a permission slip. Messages are less urgent, such as a football team victory.

School staff can post alerts and messages for an individual student, a class, or the entire school.

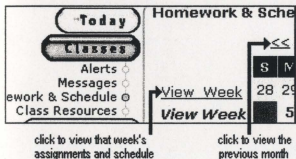
- 1 If you are a student, click My Info; if you are a parent/guardian, click My Student (this button name differs, depending on who logs on).

Your Alerts display.

- 2 To display your messages, click Messages.
- 3 To view alerts for your classes, click Classes.
- 4 To display class messages, click Messages.

## Viewing Homework & Schedule

- 1 If you are a student, click My Info; if you are a parent/guardian, click My Student.
  - 2 Click Classes, then click Homework & Schedule.
- Homework displays along with a daily class schedule.



## Viewing Class Resources

You can view web sites that teachers post as resources for a class.

- 1 If you are a student, click My Info; if you are a parent/guardian, click My Student.
  - 2 Click Classes, and then click Class Resources.
  - 3 To display a web site in a new browser window, click an underlined class resource name.
- If a security alert displays, click Yes or OK.
- 4 To return to K12Planet, close the browser window.

## Viewing Attendance

After the school updates K12Planet, you can see today's attendance.

If a date is blank, the school has not updated that attendance information yet.

- 1 If you are a student, click My Info; if you are a parent/guardian, click My Student.
- 2 Click Attendance.

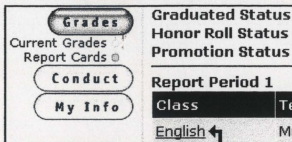
## Viewing Grades and Report Cards

In Current Grades, you can view a progress report for the present term or all terms.

In Report Cards, you can view report cards online.

- 1 If you are a student, click My Info; if you are a parent/guardian, click My Student.
- 2 Click Grades. Current Grades display.

- 3 To display report cards, click Report Cards.



## Viewing Conduct

Conduct shows a short description of a student's behavior and the school's response.

To view conduct information, parents/guardians must have custody of a child.

Your school must choose to publish Conduct for this button to display.

- 1 If you are a student, click My Info; if you are a parent/guardian, click My Student.
- 2 Click Conduct. The last incident displays.
- 3 To display the previous three or all incidents, choose an option from the popup menu.

## Viewing Activities and Events

Activities are ongoing, such as school clubs and teams; whereas, events only happen once, such as a drama presentation or football game.

- Click My School, and then click Activities or click Events.

## Sending Email

When you see an underlined name, you can click it to email that person. If a name is not underlined, that person has not set up an email address in K12Planet.

For more information on sending email, see your browser's online Help.

## Viewing the Course Catalog

- 1 Click Planning.
  - 2 From the popup menu, choose a department.
- A list of courses for each grade displays.

## Viewing General Resources

K12Planet provides links to educational web sites.

- 1 Click Resources.
- Student Resources display.
- 2 Click Parent (PARENTS ONLY), or click K12Planet Resources.

## Getting Help

- 1 At the top of any K12Planet page, click Help.
- 2 To return to K12Planet, close the Help window.

## Exiting

- 1 When you finish using K12Planet, click Exit.
- 2 For added security, we recommend you also close your browser.



## Quick Reference Card

for parents and students

K12Planet displays a copy of some of the information your school stores in its computer system. Students can view their own information; authorized parents and guardians can see their children's information.

If you are unable to view information described in this card, your school might not yet have posted it to K12Planet or have chosen not to display that page.

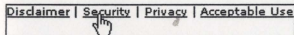
### Understanding Security

K12Planet uses the most powerful security available.

Information transferred between your computer, or the school's computer, and the K12Planet server cannot be read or changed while in transit. Only you and your school can view your information.

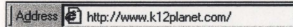
Your school has implemented policies to protect the privacy of everyone that uses K12Planet.

- For more information, at the bottom of every K12Planet web page, click Disclaimer, Security, Privacy, or Acceptable Use.



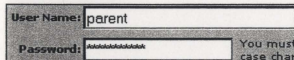
### Starting K12Planet

- In your browser's Location or Address field, type **www.k12planet.com** and press Enter or Return.



Depending on your browser setup, a security alert might display. If it does, click Yes or OK.

- On the K12Planet public web site, click Log on.
- On the Log On page, type your user name and password. Your school's account manager gives you your first user name and password.



If you cannot remember your password, click Request Password. To receive a password, you must have already entered an email address in K12Planet.

If you cannot remember your user name, ask your school's Account Manager to assist you.

- Click Log On. K12Planet information displays.

The first time, the Change Password page displays; subsequent times, the Today page displays.

### Changing Your User Name and Password

After you first log on, change your password and user name immediately. After that, change your password regularly.

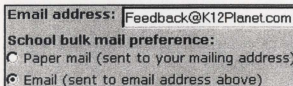
Treat your password as carefully as you would a bank personal identification number (PIN).

- Click My Settings.
- To change your user name, highlight it, and then type a new user name. (To highlight, click at the start and drag your mouse pointer over the text.)
- In the Password field, highlight your old password, and then type a new password (you must type the correct uppercase or lowercase letters).
- In the Retype password field, type your new password again.
- Click Save.

### Setting Up Your Email

We recommend you enter an email address, so you can communicate with school staff using email.

- Click My Settings, and then click Change Email.
- In the Email address field, type your email address.  
To change an existing email address, highlight your old address, and then type your new email address.
- To specify the way you prefer to receive bulk mail from your school, select a radio button.



- Click Save.

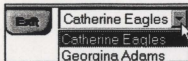
### Creating a Family Account (PARENTS ONLY)

If you have custody of several children attending the **same** school, you can create one account to view all your children's information.

- Log on to K12Planet by entering the user name and password of the account you received for one of your children.
- Click My Settings, and then click My Family.
- Type the user name and password of the account you received for another child, and then click Find Account.
- Confirm the account is correct, and then click Merge Accounts.

Your children's names now display in a popup menu on every K12Planet page.

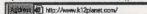
- To view each child's information, click the down arrow and select their name.



- To merge the account you received for another child, repeat the steps above.

## Starting K12Planet

For K12Planet navigation details, see the Quick Tour for Parents, Students, and Teachers.  
In your browser's Location or Address field, type [www.k12planet.com](http://www.k12planet.com), and then press Enter or Return.



Depending on your browser setup, a security alert might display. If it does, click Yes or OK.

On the K12Planet web site, click Log On.

On the Log On page, type your user name and password.

Your school's account manager gives you your first user name and password, which you should periodically change.

If you cannot remember your password, click Request Password to receive a password, or you must have already entered an email address in K12Planet.

If you cannot remember your user name, ask your school's account manager to assist you.

The first time you log on, click Continue. The Change Password page displays.

Subsequent times, click Log On. The Messages page displays.

## Changing Your User Name and Password

After you log on the first time, change your user name and password immediately. After that, change your password regularly.

For your password as carefully as you would your bank personal identification number (PIN).

Click My Settings.

To change your user name, highlight it, and then type a new user name.

(To highlight, click at the start of the text and drag your mouse pointer over the text.)

In the Password field, highlight your old password, and then type a new password (you must type the correct uppercase and lowercase letters).

In the Password field, type your new password again.

Click Save.

## Setting Up Your Email

We recommend you enter an email address, so you can communicate with your school community.

Click My Settings, and then click Change Email.

In the Email address field, type your email address.

To change an existing email address, highlight the old email address, and then type a new email address.

Specify how you receive school bulk mail: to your postal or email address.

Email address:	<input type="text" value="Feedback@K12Planet.com"/>
School bulk mail preference:	<input type="radio"/> Paper mail (sent to your mailing address) <input checked="" type="radio"/> Email (sent to email address above)
<input type="button" value="Sign up to receive K12Planet newsletter"/>	

To receive a newsletter about K12Planet activities by email, select the "Sign up to receive K12Planet newsletter" checkbox.

Click Save.

## Viewing a Student's Information

To view information about a student and their contacts, find a student and navigate that student's page.

If your school chooses to restrict access to other teachers' rosters, you can only display information for students in your class rosters.

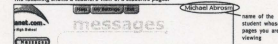
**Finding a Student**

- 1 Click My Students, and then click Find Student.
- 2 Type one or more characters in one or more fields, and then click Search.

**Displaying a Student's Pages**

- 1 In the search results, click a student's name to display that student's pages.

The following shows a teacher's view of a student's pages:



For details and procedures on how to view a student's pages, see the Quick Reference Card for Parents and Students.

- 2 To return to your pages, click Back to Teacher.

## Viewing a Class Roster

- 1 Click My Students, click My Classes, and then click Roster.
- 2 From the popup menu, select a term.
- 3 To view a class roster, click a class name.

The following shows a teacher's view of a class roster:

Bulk Mail		To view a student's contact information, click the Contact icon.			
Number	Name	Street Address	Phone	Contact	
600998	Robert Berra	123 Holly Ct	(209) 555-1802		
600999	Marcelo Berra	77 Jewel St	Undated		
600530	Kennedy Chh	9876 Winway Rd	(200) 555-0218		

**Displaying a Student's Pages**

- 1 In the class roster, click a student's name.
- 2 To return to your pages, click Back to Teacher.

## Sending Email

On any page, except the Find Student and Roster pages, when you see an underlined name, you can click it to email that person. For example, click My School, click Staff, and then click a teacher's name.

If a name is not underlined, that person has not set up an email address in K12Planet.

For more information on sending email, see your email program or browser's online help.

## Posting Messages

You can post messages for students and their contacts, or the entire school, such as a reminder to return a field trip permission slip or an announcement of a football game victory.

- 1 Click My Students, and then click Message.
- 2 To create a message, click New Message, and then follow the onscreen instructions.

## Posting Activities and Events

To notify students and their contacts about a one-time event, such as a drama presentation or a football game, post an event.

To notify students and their contacts about an on-going activity, such as school clubs and teams, post an activity.

- 1 Click My Students, and then click Announce.
- 2 To post an event, click Events, click New Event, and then follow the onscreen instructions.  
OR
- 3 To post an activity, click Activities, click New Activity, and then follow the onscreen instructions.

## Sending Bulk Mail

To notify one or more school staff, contacts, and students, create and send bulk mail.

For each bulk mail, an email is automatically sent to those people who entered an email address and selected the email preference in K12Planet. At the same time, a mail merge document is created for you to print and distribute to those people that requested bulk mail be sent to their mailing address.

- 1 Click My Students, and then click Bulk Mail.
- 2 Read the onscreen instructions.
- 3 Click New Bulk Mail, and then follow the onscreen instructions.

## Assigning Homework

To keep students and contacts informed of class assignments, create and post homework.

To assign similar homework to your classes next year, copy and paste the assignments into a word processing program and save them in one or more files.

- 1 Click My Students, and then click My Classes.
- 2 From the popup menu, select a term, and then select a class.
- 3 Click New Homework, and then follow the onscreen instructions.

At the bottom of the form, if you select the Post "... days before due date" radio button to post repeating homework, ALL assignments will be posted the specified number of calendar days before the FIRST due date of the repeating period.

To repeat the homework list, click an underlined column title, such as Due.

To select all homework assignments, select the checkbox below the Select column title.

To delete homework, select one or more homework assignment checkboxes, and then click Delete Selected Homework.



## Exporting Grades

When using K12Planet, set up to post grades using an eClass Grades export file, the K12Planet form, or both. You can use eClass Grades, enter and export grades. You can use the K12Planet form, enter grades in K12Planet.

### Exporting the Grades Source(s) for Each Class

Click My Students, click My Classes, and then click Grades.

On the popup menu, select a term.

(The Source column, click "eClass Grades," "K12Planet," or "eClass and K12 Grades".)

Class Name	Class Number	Class Period
CLASS 606.12	606.12	606.12
GRADE 6	606.12	606.12
Class Grades	Math Principles, 9120, MA 12, 12, Section 7, Period Par 1	

In the Edit Source page, select this checkbox:

K12Planet... to enter grades in K12Planet and NOT use eClass Grades  
eClass Grades and K12Planet... to enter some grades in eClass Grades and other grades in K12Planet  
eClass Grades... to use eClass Grades and display only those exported grades  
ick Save.

For each class, repeat steps 3 to 5.

### Exporting eClass Grades

When using eClass Grades in K12Planet, you must first export class grades to files in the same folder as your files, \*.XML files, and class files. K12Planet can only import the data if the files are saved in appropriate class folders.

eClass Grades, open the class whose grades you want to export.

Click File, select Export, and then select K12Planet Grades Export.

Click OK.  
(The folder set up for you by the system administrator, save the export file in the format name.extension, based on the Class Information window. For example, 606.12, where the name number is 606 and the section number is 12. It is important that you save the export file in your own folder.)

At eClass Grades, (If you prompted to save a class, click OK or Yes.)

At eClass Grades, if you need time your school copies to Win School or Mac School data to K12Planet, eClass Grades will help you on the K12Planet Current Grades page.

### Exporting Grades in K12Planet

At school doesn't use eClass Grades, you can enter students' grades in K12Planet.

Click My Students, click My Classes, and then click Grades.

Click an underlined class name. If a class name is not underlined, it has not been set up to use K12Planet Grades as the source.

Click New Grades, and follow the onscreen instructions. You might find it helpful to include the date in the Title field.

## Setting Your Class Schedule

When your school uses the Win School or Mac School Scheduler module, class schedules are automatically set for you. Ask your administrator whether you should create a class schedule in K12Planet.

Click a class schedule.

Click My Students, click My Classes, and then click Class Schedule.

Follow the onscreen instructions.

## Making Resources Available to Students

You can post web sites for students' find their contacts to use as resources for a class.

1. Click My Students, click My Classes, and then click Class Resources.
2. From the popup menu, select a term, and then select a class.
3. Click New Resource, and then follow the onscreen instructions.

## Getting Help

1. On the navigation bar at the top of any K12Planet page, click Help.

2. To find additional topics, on the Search tab, type a question or keyword, and then click Search.
3. To display a topic description, click an underlined topic.
4. To print a topic, click Print-Friendly Version, click Print, and then close the window.
5. To return to K12Planet, minimize or close the Help window.

## Getting Resources

K12Planet provides links to educational web sites. To access search engines, research, news, class subjects, and college/career links.

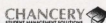
- Click Resources, and then click My Libraries or click Research.

## Exiting

- When you finish using K12Planet, click Exit.
- For added security, we recommend you also close your browser.

## Providing Feedback

We are working on new features and ways to make K12Planet even better. Please email your comments to: feedback@k12planet.com.



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For up-to-date information, please contact our service at 1-800-999-9999.

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Ch-043



K12Planet provides the tools you need to increase communication between your school and its community, and to help students succeed.

K12Planet displays a copy of some of the information you enter in Chancery SMS™, Win School®, or Mac School® and, if you use eClass® Grades, you can also enter messages, events, activities, bulk mail, homework, grades, a class schedule, and online class resources using K12Planet. This gives you an opportunity to increase your involvement with parents and their children's academic progress and success.

K12Planet uses the most powerful security available. Information transferred between your school's computer and the K12Planet server cannot be read or changed while in transit. Your school has also implemented policies to protect the privacy of everyone that uses K12Planet.

To view K12Planet, you must have Microsoft® Internet Explorer 5.0 or higher, or Netscape® Navigator 4.0. To post eClass Grades in K12Planet, you must have eClass Grades 6.8.4 or higher.

## Publishing Information

You and your school control who sees what information and when they see it in K12Planet.

Your school can choose not to publish certain information, such as student conduct.

Similarly, you can save your work and not show it to students and contacts (parents and guardians) until you are ready. Before students and contacts can view information you enter in K12Planet, you must select the Publish checkbox (at the bottom of the Class Schedule form) or the Post radio button (at the bottom of the Homework form), and then click Save.

You can view and edit K12Planet forms, regardless of whether you have posted the information.

Display to specified students and their contacts when saved.

Do NOT display to specified students and their contacts when saved.

Display to specified students and their contacts this number of days before the information is due when saved.

Do NOT display to specified students and their contacts when saved.

Display to specified students and their contacts this number of days before the information is due when saved.

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# K12Planet.com™

## Quick Reference Card For Account Managers

This card outlines everything you need to print, distribute, and manage your school's K12Planet user accounts.

### Software Requirements

To view K12Planet, you must have:

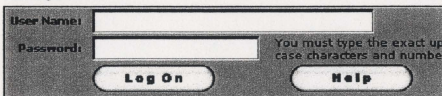
- Microsoft® Internet Explorer 4.0 or higher, or
- Netscape® Navigator 4.0 or higher

To print user accounts, you must have:

- For PC, Microsoft Word 2000 or higher, or  
Microsoft Windows® 95/98/NT and a Microsoft Word document viewer (to download a viewer, go to:  
[www.officeupdate.microsoft.com/2000/downloaddetails/wdg7vwr32.htm](http://www.officeupdate.microsoft.com/2000/downloaddetails/wdg7vwr32.htm))
- For Macintosh, Microsoft Word 98 or higher

### Starting K12Planet

- 1 Point your browser to [www.K12Planet.com](http://www.K12Planet.com).
- 2 Click Log on.



The login form has a dark background. It contains two input fields: 'User Name:' and 'Password:'. To the right of the password field is a note: 'You must type the exact uppercase characters and numbers'. Below the fields are two buttons: 'Log On' and 'Help'.

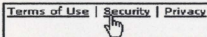
- 3 If a security alert displays, click Yes or OK.
- 4 Type your user name and password, and then click Log On.
- 5 The first time you log on, read the welcome message, and then click Continue. The Change Password page displays.  
On subsequent times, the User Accounts page displays.

## Understanding Internet Security

While working in K12Planet, you are protected by the most powerful security available. Data transferred between your computer and the K12Planet server cannot be read or changed while in transit.

To protect everyone that uses K12Planet, help your school establish privacy and security strategies and create an acceptable use policy, and then educate school staff and the school community. For more information, see the K12Planet System Administrator Guide.

For details about Internet security, at the bottom of any K12Planet page, click Security.



## Changing Your User Name and Password

After you first log on, change the user name and password you received from Chancery immediately. After that, change your password regularly.

- 1 Click **My Settings**.
- 2 On the Change Password page, change the appropriate information, and then click **Save**.

## Setting Up Your Email

To print user names and passwords for your school community, enter an email address in K12Planet. Entering an email address also lets you communicate with school staff and Chancery.

- 1 Click **My Settings**, and then click **Change Email**.
- 2 Type your email address.
- 3 Specify where you would like to receive school bulk mail: at your postal or email address.
- 4 To receive a newsletter about K12Planet activities, select "Sign up to receive K12Planet newsletter".

Email address:	<input type="text" value="Feedback@K12Planet.com"/> e.g. john@home.com
School bulk mail preference:	<input type="radio"/> Paper mail (sent to your mailing address) <input checked="" type="radio"/> Email (sent to email address above)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Sign up to receive K12Planet newsletter</b>	

- 5 Click **Save**.

## Sending Email

On any page, except the User Accounts Results page, when a person's name is underlined, you can click it to email that person. When a name is not underlined, that person has not set up their email address in K12Planet.

## Printing User Accounts

To distribute user accounts to each person in your school's database, print a Logon Report. A Logon Report is a mail merge document that contains a random 10-digit user name and 10-digit password for each person to log on to K12Planet the first time.

You can also generate a mail merge document for one person or a group of people in your school's database. For example, small groups are staff and school system administrators; large groups are students and contacts. We recommend you chunk large groups into several mail merge documents.

If you would like to print one large Logon Report, you must schedule the process with Chancery Technical Support (phone 1-800-688-9939).

## Printing All User Accounts

- 1 Click Accounts. The User Accounts page displays.
- 2 Click "Group Search & Print".
- 3 Choose a user group, and choose a sort order (if desired).
- 4 Click Print All.

You will receive a webmaster@K12Planet.com email containing a link to a mail merge document. It could be any time from a few minutes to a few days before you receive it, depending on the number of documents already in the K12Planet server queue.

- 5 To print, open the email and follow its instructions.

The mail merge document looks similar to this:

<https://secure.k12planet.com/mailmerge/B42C>

School Description: Chancery High School	
User Name:	5871275927
Password:	0216676400
Last Name:	Abrosimof
First Name:	Carl
Mailing Address 1:	8701 Pickle Ave
Mailing Address 2:	
Mailing City:	Bellevue
Mailing State:	OR
Mailing Zip:	97639

If you want, create a header and footer for the document.

- 6 Repeat the steps above for the remaining user groups.

## Printing One or Several User Accounts

- 1 Click Accounts. The User Accounts page displays.
- 2 Click "Group Search & Print".
- 3 Choose a user group, and choose a sort order (if desired).
- 4 Click Display All.
- 5 Click Select All to select all the user accounts on the current page, or select one or more user account checkboxes. If it is a large list of accounts, to display the next page, click Next 100.
- 6 At the top of the list, from the "For selected accounts" popup menu, select:
  - "Quick Print (No Update Last Printed)" to print the Print Report document and not update the date in the Last Printed column. For example, to not update this date when an account is only being printed for school records.
  - "Print And Update Last Printed" to print the Print Report document and update the date in the Last Printed column. For example, when accounts are being distributed. The Last Printed column displays the date each account was last printed using "Print And Update Last Printed".
- 7 To print, open the webmaster@K12Planet.com email and follow its instructions.  
If you want, create a header and footer for the document.
- 8 Repeat steps 5 through 7 above for other accounts in this group (if applicable).
- 9 Repeat the steps above for the remaining user groups.

## Distributing User Accounts

After printing the necessary mail merge document(s), ensure you have parental or school consent before you display information about students who are under 13 years of age. You can only distribute user accounts to a student and their contacts after verifiable, informed consent has been granted.

Determine the most effective method to safely provide user names and passwords to your school community. Face-to-face meetings are the best. Other methods include sending registered mail, or placing an acknowledgment of receipt form with each user account in a sealed envelope and having students take it home.

## Helping Users Log On

If a user remembers their user name and password, but is having trouble logging on:

- Ensure he or she is typing the exact uppercase and lowercase characters. Are the user name and password spelled correctly?
- Check that their user account status is active. For procedures, see "Setting Up Access to K12Planet."

If a user remembers their user name, but can't remember their password:

- If the user has previously entered an email address in K12Planet, tell them to open the Logon page, click Request Password, and then follow the onscreen instructions.

### Forgot your log on information?

To have your password emailed to you, click [Request Password](#).  
For information about this page, click the Help button.

If a user can't remember their user name:

- In K12Planet, change the user name and password, and then notify the user. For procedures, see "Changing User Accounts" below.

## Changing User Accounts

Only you and the school system administrator can change another person's user name, password, email address, and school bulk mail preference. Each user can also change his or her own account information.

To change user account information:

- 1 Click Accounts. The User Accounts page displays.
- 2 To search for a user account by group, click "Group Search & Print", choose a user group, choose a sort order (if desired), and then click Display All.  
Or, to search for an individual user account, click Search, type one or more characters in one or more fields, choose a sort order (if desired), and then click Search.
- 3 From the Results, click a user name. That person's user account details display.
- 4 Click Logon Info.
- 5 Change the appropriate information.
- 6 Click "Save My Changes". Notify the user of any changes to their account.

To print the user account summary:

- 1 Click Accounts. The User Accounts page displays.
- 2 To search for a user account by group, click "Group Search & Print", choose a user group, choose a sort order (if desired), and then click Display All.  
Or, to search for an individual user account, click Search, type one or more characters in one or more fields, choose a sort order (if desired), and then click Search.
- 3 From Results, click a user name. That person's user account details display.
- 4 Click the Export Report link, and then click Export Report.
- 5 Open the email from webmaster@K12Planet.com and follow its instructions.



## Setting Up Access to K12Planet

Only you and the school system administrator can change a user account's access. Choose:

- **Active .....** to let the user access K12Planet (when a user account is printed, the status is set to Active by default)
- **Inactive ..** to not let that user access K12Planet even though the user account is enabled, pending some action, such as getting parental consent to let a child use K12Planet
- **Onhold ...** to not let that user access K12Planet when the user account is not enabled, pending some action, such as reattaching an orphan account

### To change the status of one user account:

- 1 Click Accounts.
- 2 Click "Group Search & Print", choose a user group, choose a sort order (if desired), and then click Display All.  
Or, click Search, type one or more characters in one or more fields, choose a sort order (if desired), and then click Search.
- 3 From the Results, click a user name.
- 4 Click Logon Info.
- 5 From the Account popup menu, select the access.
- 6 Click "Save My Changes".
- 7 Notify the user of the changes to his or her account.

### To change the status of several user accounts:

- 1 Click Accounts.
- 2 Click "Group Search & Print", choose a user group, choose a sort order (if desired), and then click Display All.  
Or, click Search, type one or more characters in one or more fields, choose a sort order (if desired), and then click Search.
- 3 From the Results, select the user accounts' checkboxes.
- 4 From the "For selected accounts" popup menu at the top of the list, select:
  - Activate to allow users to access K12Planet, or
  - Inactivate to prevent user access to K12Planet.
- 5 Notify the users of the changes to their accounts.

## Merging User Accounts

You can merge contact accounts, so a parent or guardian only need enter one user name and password to view all his or her children's information.

To merge user accounts, the contacts must have the same custody rights selected in Win School or Mac School and their children must be enrolled in the **same school**.

Parents and guardians can also merge or separate their own user accounts.

- 1 Click Accounts, and then click Manage Contacts.
- 2 Type the contact user name that the parent or guardian will enter to log on and view all his or her accounts at one time. This will be the master account.
- 3 Click Find Account.
- 4 In the Merge User Account section, type another contact user name. When this account joins with the master account, it is called the associated account.
- 5 Click Add Account.
- 6 Click "Yes, Merge Accounts".
- 7 To attach additional accounts, repeat steps 4 through 6 above.  
After a user account has been merged, that account no longer displays in the Results page.
- 8 Notify the contact that the accounts have been merged, and describe how he or she can use the new popup menu in every K12Planet page.



## Separating Merged User Accounts

You can separate merged accounts, for example, if a contact's custody rights change.

- 1 Click Accounts, and then click Manage Contacts.
- 2 In the User Name field, type the master account user name, and then click Find Account.
- 3 In the Associated User Accounts list, below the "Select to Separate" title, select the checkboxes of those accounts you no longer want merged.
- 4 Click "Separate Selected Users".
- 5 Click "Yes, Separate Accounts".
- 6 Notify the contact that the accounts have been separated.

## Managing Orphan Accounts

Each time your school's data is fully replicated to K12Planet, check for orphan accounts. An orphan account is a user account that previously existed in K12Planet, but no longer exists in Win School® or Mac School®.

Orphan accounts are generated when your school copies its entire database to K12Planet – not when it replicates only database changes. Ask your school's system administrator to notify you when doing a full replication to K12Planet.

You can reattach an orphan account to an existing account, as well as put an orphan account on hold, set it to inactive, or delete it. Inactive orphan accounts are permanently deleted during the next full replication.

For procedures, see the K12Planet System Administrator Guide.

## Exiting

When you finish using K12Planet, click Exit. For added security, we recommend you close your browser.

## Getting More Information

Documentation

- See the K12Planet System Administrator Guide.

Online Help

- On the top of every K12Planet page, click Help.

Chancery Technical Support

- Email [techsupp@chancery.com](mailto:techsupp@chancery.com).
- At the bottom of the K12Planet online Help window, click Technical Support, and then follow the onscreen instructions.
- Phone Technical Support at 1-800-688-9939.

Chancery's knowledgebase

- Go to [support.chancery.com](http://support.chancery.com), type your Chancery Support (not K12Planet) user name and password, click OK, and then click the K12Planet.com icon.

## Providing Feedback

We encourage you to help make the K12Planet web site even better by emailing your suggestions to [feedback@K12Planet.com](mailto:feedback@K12Planet.com).



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CSL-11084

## Appendix D

### Set up of K-12 Planet

1. Uninstall Win School from workstation which is designated as uploading workstation for K-12 Planet
2. In the winschool 4.33 folder on the program\$ drive select the 4.33 client folder and select disk 1 and setup.
3. Install the central install application into the same folder in the program folder on the server.
4. Using the central install utility, install a fresh install of Win School Version 4.3.3 on Workstation. Chose the typical install.
5. Point icon toward the winschool data on the server as you would any other winschool icon.
6. Reinstall Win School 4.33 on the workstation, this time select custom and be sure to lace an X in the box next to K-12 planet.
7. If you get a data error during the custom install reboot the computer and start with the custom install again. You should not get the error on the second attempt to install.
8. Once the software is installed, reboot the computer.
9. After rebooting, start winschool. Click on the K-12 planet icon. The software should connect with the remote K12 planet server and upload the data.
10. Once the data is uploaded you need to program the upload to take place at the same time each day.

### Programming uploading to K-12 Planet Site

1. Open the winschool shell
2. Click on shell on the main menu
3. Select Auto launch setup from the drop menu
4. Place a check in the box next to autolaunch
5. Select time of day that you wish to upload winschool data to the k-12 planet site.

**Notes to parents:**

**Introduction:**

- I have been doing some research on this type of service as part of my masters program at Memorial University.
- K-12 planet has been available for several years. Queen Elizabeth is the first school to start using the service in this school district. It is expected that more schools will start using it over the next few weeks and months.
- I met with a colleague at the university a few days ago who said she was using K-12 Planet a year ago in Cairo Egypt.

**Research is showing that:**

- When parents and students use this service, there is an increase in school achievement
- Parents use the service because
  - It keeps them closely tied to their child's school environment but do not require them to be at any specific place at any specific time.
  - Parents can be connected wherever there is an internet connection and at what ever time is convenient for them
- Students use the service because
  - It keeps them organized with homework.
  - It allows them to see their grades as soon as they are available.

**What do you need to get started?**

1. The Quick Reference Card for parents and students (provided).
2. There will only be one login per family. The login is a student account. Parents and students are to share the same logon.
3. There is no need for the latest greatest computer to use this. You need only have a system that is capable of connecting to and browsing the internet.
4. The computer has to be using a browser
  - i. Microsoft Internet Explorer (minimum version 4.0)
  - ii. Netscape Navigator (minimum version 4.3)



## Security

### How does this work:

1. A copy of the information on our server is uploaded to a secure server in Vancouver each morning at 9 a.m. Then it can be viewed on the internet.
2. What is seen on the internet is a copy of what is kept at the school. Even though you can see the information online the data is securely kept on the school server.
3. Even if a password is compromised, the worse could happen is that someone could see information that is not theirs. Student accounts do not have access to change anything.
4. Chancery, the company who sells this service has the highest level of security available outside the defense industry.
5. They have teams of technicians who are hired to do nothing else only test the security of information on their servers.

Your security responsibility is limited to ensuring that your username and password is as secure as possible.

Your input is greatly appreciated... The school will need your feedback on this service to ensure its effectiveness. After using the service for a couple of weeks please e-mail me with some feedback.

[ahillier@cdli.ca](mailto:ahillier@cdli.ca)

