

Bytes without Bugs: Technology

Making tracks

Visitors to Katy campuses were met by a new high-tech "greeter" during the spring semester. Funded by the November 2006 bond authorization, the Raptor system screens all visitors, including parents, volunteers and contractors, who go anywhere beyond the school's front office. Visitors are required to present a valid i.d., which is scanned. The Raptor system compares the person's name, date of birth and photo to a national database of registered sex offenders. If no match is made, the system prints out a photo badge that the visitor wears while on campus. Raptor was piloted at Exley Elementary, West Memorial Junior High and Mayde Creek High School in January, with the remainder of the schools brought on line in March and April. To prepare parents and community members for the change, the district created a multi-media information campaign that included news releases, postcards, fliers, signage, e-news reminders and web postings.

Virtual lunch money

At the end of May the district piloted MealpayPlus, an online-based payment system that allows parents to make deposits by credit or debit card into a child's meal account via the web. Links are provided to MealpayPlus from campus homepages and the food services page on the district website. E-mail reminders can be set up to remind parents when a child's balance gets low, and parents can view a student's balance or purchasing history. The system also has a feature that allows parents to set a minimum amount that automatically replenishes an account from a credit card. MealpayPlus was scheduled for districtwide implementation in 2007-08.

Equipped for learning

Schools have come a long way from the days when copiers and overhead projectors were standard-issue equipment. During the year, the district convened a committee of teachers, curriculum specialists, librarians, instructional technology facilitators and technology staff to review campus technology standards and recommend changes. The committee surveyed more than 2,000 teachers and reviewed equipment standards of neighboring and comparable school districts. The result was a plan for technology standard changes designed to update equipment at all campuses for the coming school year. Included in the recommendations were science lab equipment, document cameras and a multimedia cart for each elementary school; science scopes, a multimedia cart and a foreign language lab at each junior high; and science scopes and a foreign language lab for each high school. The standards changes were funded by technology allocations in the 2006 bond package.



Distance learning capabilities allowed students from Kilpatrick Elementary to share in a national celebration of Constitution Day organized by Philadelphia's National Constitution Center. The group was part of a national reading of the U.S. Constitution by elementary students across the country in September. Kicking off the event was former Secretary of State Colin Powell, who read the preamble.

Student transfer requests moved online in the spring when the district set up a **website for applications and parent information**. The hard-copy process was still available to families without Internet access.

Seven Lakes High School UIL sponsor Scotty Johnson earned statewide recognition as a winner of the 2006 **University Interscholastic League Sponsor Excellence Award**.

Four teams representing three Katy high schools — Cinco Ranch, Seven Lakes and Taylor High Schools — placed in the top 10 in the **Texas Computer Education Association High School Computer Programming competition**.

Raymond McDonald, who heads the technology help desk, was named a **Help Desk Analyst of the Year finalist** by the Houston Chapter of the Help Desk Institute (HDI).

A team of teachers from Pattison Elementary was selected from a national pool of candidates to participate in the 2006 **Microsoft U.S. Innovative Teachers forum**.

