

The Web and Accountability

A Web site can be the unifying force among schools with in a district. Many approaches work. Anyone who examines a few school district Web sites will appreciate the variation in content and design each provides. For example, Des Moines Iowa Public Schools, a district in which many in the community speak a second language, provides Web content in both English and Spanish to keep parents informed. (*Editor's note:* For this and other URLs, see Resources on p. 33.) Sue Palfrey, Webmaster for the Falmouth School District in Maine, indicated that its site showcases student writing, art, newspapers, and communications from principals and provides K–12 learning outcomes in all curricular areas. The district posts committee agendas and minutes.

United States legislation affecting schools has forced states and school districts that desire federal funds to examine how they are aligning academic standards, curricula, assessments, and accountability. Highly qualified teachers, who are expected to use instructional strategies based on effective products, policies, practices, and programs, will teach children. As a result, teachers will need ongoing professional development, and all stakeholders will need access

By Patricia Deubel

Subject: Administration

Grades: K–12 (Ages 5–18)

Technology: Web design

Standards: NETS•T II, IV–VI;
NETS•A II, III, V, VI (<http://www.iste.org/nets/>)

The screenshot shows the Des Moines Public Schools website. At the top, there is a navigation menu with links for 'Programas', 'Directorio de Escuelas', 'Escuelas Primero', 'Directorio de Personal', 'Mesa Directiva', and 'Oportunidades de Trabajo'. Below the menu, there is a search bar and a list of links in Spanish: 'Calendario (en inglés)', 'Juntas de la Mesa Directiva (en inglés)', 'Expedientes Académicos', and 'Preguntas Frecuentes | En Inglés'. The main content area is divided into three columns. The left column, 'Información Rápida', lists links for 'Educación Educativa', 'Calendario (en inglés)', 'Mesa del Distrito (en inglés)', 'Mesa del Almorzo', 'Política y Procedimientos', 'Plan de Estudios Esenciales (en inglés)', 'Boletín Anual del Distrito (en inglés)', and 'Historia del Distrito: 1816-1976'. The middle column, '¡Bienvenido!', contains a welcome message in Spanish and a section titled '¿Qué pasa?' with a notice about the website's migration to a new domain. The right column, 'Directorios', lists links for 'Escuelas', 'Administración', 'Empleados', 'Emergencias', and 'Datos e Información', which includes links for 'Hors Escuelas', 'Recursos de Estudiantes', 'Nombres de Escuelas/Alumnos', and 'Recursos para Ciudadanos'. At the bottom, there is a caption: 'Des Moines Iowa Public Schools provides Web content in both English and Spanish.'

to more information than ever before, including district, state, and national standards; individual student-performance information; and testing information.

District leaders know that a Web site is an ideal medium to help stakeholders understand key education legislation and research affecting their practices and programs, communicate student progress, provide curriculum and technology resources, and offer professional development opportunities for staff.

Scientifically Based Research

Davis School District in Farmington, Utah, knows how to use its Web site for accountability and to convey the importance of research. Its Research and Assessment Department maintains membership in the Educational Research Service so that it can support its schools in obtaining research related to best practices as required by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). Individuals may apply to conduct research within the district with employees or students.

Standards and Accountability

Every state has submitted an accountability plan to the U.S. Department

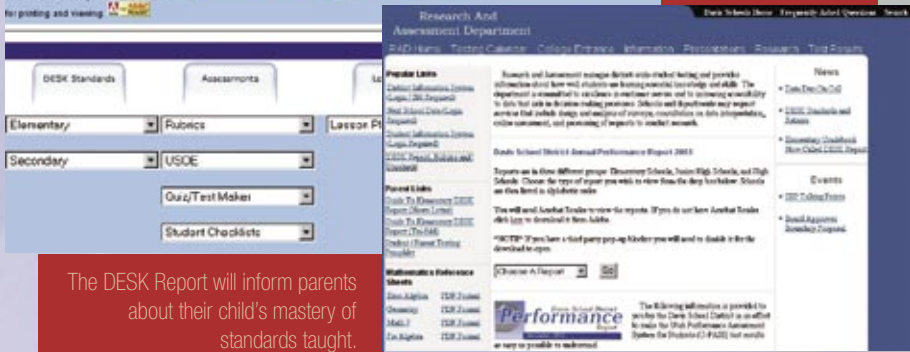
of Education for ensuring that students are proficient in reading and math by 2013–14. Districts link their Web sites to the state plans and letters, which are available from the U.S. Department of Education.

In its report *Making Standards Matter 2001*, the American Federation of Teachers stated that states should:

- Provide examples of standards and student work at various grades and performance levels so that teachers, students, parents, and the public have a shared understanding of what is expected.
- Specify the learning continuum in the core subjects to show the progression and development of critical knowledge and skills from grade to grade.
- Identify instructional resources—reading materials, textbooks, software, and so forth—that are aligned to the standards.
- Provide performance indicators to clarify the quality of student work required for mastery of the content standards.
- Develop lesson plan data banks that include exemplary lessons and student work related to instruction in the standards.



Davis School District supports research, standards, and accountability.



The DESK Report will inform parents about their child's mastery of standards taught.

I believe that the recommendations are valid for districts as well. Davis School District also provides this support with its grade level content standards and rubrics, which teachers can also use for curriculum mapping and planning. They have extensive Web-based instructional resources for the content areas, an extensive array of lesson plan sites, and provide professional development for integrating technology into instruction. The district's new elementary school stu-

dent DESK Report informs parents how well their children are learning on each standard in grade level material that has been taught. The district posts its test results, including its performance on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). As the ESEA requires administration of this test every two years in reading and mathematics, districts might link to the NAEP site so that educators and the community might become familiar with its content.



Montgomery County Public Schools posts testing data and information/presentations to help educators understand results.


District Web sites should provide their district curriculum framework, and access to state and national standards, including technology standards for teachers, students, and administrators. The Indiana Department of Education posted a map linking each state to its department of education, where Web site developers and users will find academic content standards. Education World also provides quick access to all state standards by topic and grade level.

Performance Data

Perhaps one of the greatest challenges for states and districts will be to keep stakeholders informed with performance data on standardized tests and interventions to close the achievement gap. In "In ESEA Wake, School Data Flowing Forth," *Education Week's* Lynn Olson stated, "The number of states publishing test results for each of the categories required under federal law jumped to 43 this school year, up from 16 in 2002–03. States also have been adding information about teacher qualifications to school or district report cards to comply with the law's requirements to put a highly qualified teacher in every classroom in the core subjects by the end of the 2005–06 school year."

Other school districts across the nation are beginning to post data as a means to monitor their performance. Montgomery County Maryland Public Schools posts testing results of student assessments (e.g., CTBS, CAT, MSA, Maryland Functional Tests, High School Assessments, and SATs) and produces an accountability newsletter to keep the public informed.

A second challenge regarding performance data will be for districts to provide educators with tools to effectively understand and use test results.

<p>FAQ Frequently Asked Questions Regarding AEA credit courses E-Learning Fetal Alcohol Syndrome instructions</p> <p>Tools</p> <p>Acrobat Reader Download: go to adobe.com</p> <p>Credit Course Info: Please check mylearningplan.com ASD Course Fees for APU posted 4-25-02</p> <p>Course Proposal Form APU posted 12-12-02</p> <p>Course Proposal Form UAA posted 12-12-02</p> <p>Pre-Approved Credit Course List Updated 6-20-2003</p> <p>Registration Procedures updated 12-12-02</p> <p>UAA Registration (pdf format) get the reader at www.adobe.com</p> <p>Paraprofessional</p> <p>Classes Approved for Reimbursement</p>	<p>New To District Employees Mandatory Training updated 8-21-03</p>  <p>New Teacher Induction Program ▶ New Teacher News updated 2-03-04</p> <p>Standards ASD Faculty and Student Performance</p> <p>National Staff Development Council Standards posted 3-14-03</p> <p>Nursing Standards posted 5-8-02</p> <p>Teaching Standards posted 8-17-00</p> <p>NSCTD (Native Studies Curriculum and Teacher Development) web site. http://www.alaskaschool.org This site is for students and Alaskan teachers. It is the result of a compilation of materials, time, and thoughts of UAA, Social & Economic Research Dept. folks along with other educators.</p> <p>Technology</p>
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Anchorage School District provides extensive professional development opportunities for teachers and paraprofessionals.

For example, the Department of Shared Accountability at Montgomery County Public Schools lists a PowerPoint training module among its “Information and Presentations” to help educators interpret data from the Comprehensive Tests of Basic Skills and to show how results can be used to inform instruction. Anyone can view this module, *Using CTBS Data to Inform Instruction*, online. At another level, Donna Long of McGraw-Hill Company developed a sample class template based on NCTM 2000 standards that can be used for reporting results from standardized testing. Teachers might use the completed template that lists math standards and four competency levels to identify weaknesses in student knowledge and to help plan instruction. Similar templates could be designed to report test results for reading and other content areas.

Professional Development

In his interview with *T.H.E. Journal's* Matthew Miller, Ruben Lopez, then Florida's chief technology officer, stated that “requiring intensive, sustained and high-quality professional development for teachers is a key concept” of this latest federal legislation. Tools exist to help schools and districts to plan, implement, evaluate, and share results from professional development. For example, the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory posted Emily Hassel's Professional Development: Learning from the Best toolkit, which is based on the National Awards Program for Model Professional Development. Indiana teachers are using the self-assessment

tool My Target to help them set personal technology implementation goals and identify the professional development needed to reach them. MyTarget draws from a database of hundreds of classroom and online training opportunities offered by numerous reputable organizations. Best of all, it is provided free to educators by the Corporation for Educational Technology in partnership with the Indiana Department of Education.

A special section of a school district Web site could include numerous resources for professional development, including opportunities from government agencies, the U.S. Department of Education, state departments of education, the school district itself, private foundations, corporations and education associations. There are online instructor-led programs and independent study, self-paced courses to satisfy differences in learning styles that can be located with the Washington Digital Learning Commons. Anchorage School District's Training and Professional Development Department in Alaska provides a model for using a Web site to support professional development that ensures teacher quality. Their page includes an extensive list of pre-approved credit courses, continuing education units, and conferences/institutes for teachers and paraprofessionals, and provides a link to Alaska's Staff Development Net-

MyLearningPlan is a Web-based service to track professional development activities in K-12 school districts.



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 MyLearningPlan is the leading web-based service for tracking and managing Professional Development activities for educators. Our solutions and services have been largely designed by educators for educators. Our customers include rural and urban school districts, regional and state education organizations, and educational foundations.

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work. The district uses MyLearningPlan, a Web-based service to track the professional development activities in its schools. MyLearningPlan charges districts an annual licensing fee based on the number of staff who will use the system. Teachers can monitor their individual professional development plans. Administrators can track professional development for certification/recertification, district requirements, state and federal compliance, and salary enhancing activities and create reports.

White County Schools in Cleveland, Georgia, recognized that elementary educators needed training to implement Reading First stipulations to guarantee children are proficient readers by end of Grade 3. Using their Web site Instructional Programs page, they reported that the Reading First Program was approved for their Jack P. Nix Primary and White County Elementary Schools. Teacher representatives will be sent for training in using reading materials/resources and those teachers will then return to teach the remaining teachers.

Links to Teaching Children to Read by the National Reading Panel and content provided by the International Reading Association, which has a focus on Reading First, would benefit educators as well as parents.

Concluding Remarks

Having a school district Web site is no longer an option. It is the accountability vehicle by which educators can demonstrate to the community that their students are achieving and that they are using effective policies, practices, programs, and products to ensure that success. It has become the communication tool by which they can help parents understand legislation affecting their educational decisions and to engage parents in the education of their children. Stakeholders are well aware it takes interest, time, funding, available technology,

and adequate staffing to design and maintain any Web site. It is my hope that school districts will find the examples and suggestions for Web site content contained within this article of value.

Resources

- Anchorage School District, Staff Development: http://www.asdk12.org/depts/staff_dev/
- Davis School District, Research and Assessment: <http://www.davis.k12.ut.us/rad/>
- Des Moines Public Schools: <http://www.dmps.k12.ia.us>
- Educational Research Service: <http://www.ers.org/>
- Education World's links to standards: <http://www.education-world.com/standards/state/toc/>
- Falmouth School District: <http://www.falmouthschools.org>
- Indiana Department of Education's U.S. map: <http://ideanet.doe.state.in.us/htmls/states.html>
- International Reading Association: <http://www.reading.org/focus/nclb.html>
- Montgomery County Public Schools: <http://www.mcps.k12.md.us>
- My Target: <http://mytarget.iassessment.org>
- MyLearningPlan: <http://www.mylearningplan.com/>
- National Assessment of Educational Progress: <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard>
- National Reading Panel: <http://www.national-readingpanel.org/>
- North Central Regional Educational Laboratory: <http://www.ncrel.org/>
- U.S. Department of Education Accountability Plans: <http://www.ed.gov/admins/lead/account/stateplans03/>
- Washington Digital Learning Commons: <http://depts.washington.edu/lcommons/>
- White County Schools, Instructional Programs: <http://www.white.k12.ga.us/curr.html>



Patricia Deubel earned a PhD in computing technology in education from Nova Southeastern University and is currently an education consultant, faculty member at Capella University, and the developer of Computing Technology for Math Excellence at <http://www.ct4me.net>. She has 29 years of secondary and university experience in mathematics and computer education teaching, teacher training, staff development, and curriculum development and has presented at many technology conferences.

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