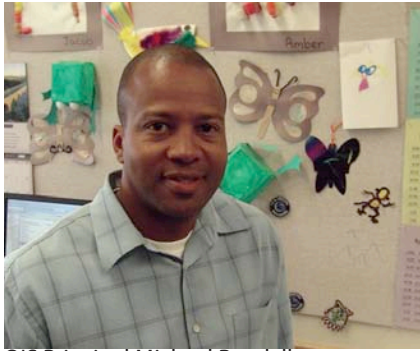


Brave New World of On-line School Registration

By Cathy Tyson

hours so
they
could
funnel



OIS Principal Michael Randall

For parents frustrated with waiting in lines, writing numerous checks and filling out countless forms for school registration, there is a better way, and you can find it throughout the schools of Moraga and at Orinda Intermediate School (OIS) as well as Del Rey Elementary. "Its better, faster, cheaper, more efficient, and more environmentally-friendly," says OIS Principal Michael Randall.

The initial idea came from Miramonte High School. Like Miramonte, OIS is using LogiForms for data entry and RevTrak to handle the financial aspects of the process.

Going paperless is a significant change. OIS had a committee to help transition from paper weekly and monthly newsletters to email. "It seemed like a natural evolution to start to add the registration process," reflects Randall.

Imagine 900 students, each with a packet of 30 – 40 pieces of paper. Much of the paperwork was redundant, the same information on multiple forms. Now its much simpler, all the forms come up online, already pre-populated with family name, address, student number. Parents can fill out the forms, and pay for yearbooks, lunches, T-shirts and sports fees all from the comfort of their own homes on just one website.

"The Orinda community was ripe for this kind of revolution, almost all families have computers, many families are already familiar with on-line purchasing." He continues, "The changeover couldn't have been done without the assistance of parent volunteers. Without their help, there's no way they could have made the switch. The District gave tremendous support, guidance and advice as far as developing the tools and uploading their in-

formation."

Without question, the new system is much more secure. Secure Sockets Layer software provides security for the OIS system, encrypting information and using firewalls. The old way, although supervised by school personnel, had up to a hundred volunteer parents handling student and family information. Now individuals have their own user name and password. Only about half a dozen school employees have access to confidential information. So far they have had no breaches of security.

Managing the old way with a paper-based system was inconvenient. For example, consider the number of kids purchasing yearbooks; accounting for the checks, making deposits, it used to take two weeks to sort out. Now it's done in minutes, according to Randall.

Even for families without a computer, OIS makes available 20 of their laptops for parents to use the system at school.

The PTA's of all the Moraga Schools make electronic registration happen. Rheem Elementary was first, then Camino Pablo, then Los Perales, and Joaquin Moraga started just this year.

Erin Bydalek, the PTA President of Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School, said, "this system is so much faster. The reason we went online was primarily for our own database needs, especially for hot lunch." It saves countless volunteer hours when parents can input their child's lunch order, versus manually having volunteers key in each child's choices and keep track of the money.

Marcia Holbrook, the Financial Secretary of Camino Pablo (CP) Elementary School PTA says by going to a web-based registration they were able to free up countless volunteer

that time and energy into the school auction, which in turn raised thousands of dollars for the school. At CP each of the 400 students had a 40-page packet; that works out to 16,000 pieces of paper each fall. "We are able to access our information easier and sooner, track changes and be more green," notes Holbrook.

Jeff Turner, Supervisor of Network Services with Lafayette School District, when asked why Lafayette hasn't gone electronic replied, "because we don't have the resources." As it stands now, the district mails out a packet of papers, pre-populated with existing information.

"Its great that these parents have the time and talent, but I'm very concerned about confidentiality," says Ben Lang, Director of Technology for the Orinda Union School District. In Orinda, NCS Pearson, Inc handles all student information. "This year they should have a software version that is fully integrated, with secure log-in." As it stands now, even though OIS has a web-based system, there is a fair amount of importing and exporting of data that is awkward. "Although it's not available now, in all likelihood it should be ready for next fall. Its inevitable," continues Lang, referring to the changeover to electronic registration.

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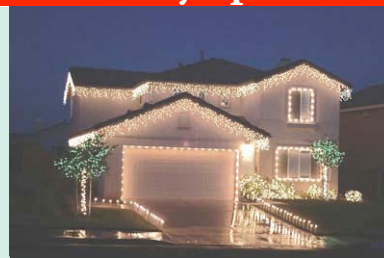
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