

# ARCC - A - TECT

"PLAYING A PART IN BUILDING BETTER SCHOOL DISTRICTS"

Arrowhead Regional Computing Consortium

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Teri Henderson x107  
Kevin Lindquist x123  
Jim Livesay x121  
Dale Nielsen x108

## INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Jim Livesay x121  
Bob Buchanan x122  
Kevin Lindquist x123  
Dale Nielsen x108



Happy St  
Patrick's Day!

Happy Easter!



## Thank You So Much Loren and Larry -

In the next few months ARCC will be losing the services of two individuals who have provided ARCC and our members with excellent service over the years. These two individuals are Loren Peterson and Larry O'Brien. Loren Peterson began working on a part time basis at ARCC in January of 2001 when he "retired" from his full time school business manager job. At that time ARCC was seeing a steady increase in requests for school finance services and Loren was a perfect fit to help us with the increased demand. Over the past 5+ years Loren has pretty much worked with every member district and has actually had his own office in one!! Loren has earned the respect of everyone he came in contact with over the years and we wish him the every best as he moves closer to truly being "retired".

Larry O'Brien has also served ARCC and our members over the years but Larry did it as a Board member and not as an employee. The Grand Rapids School District allowed Larry to begin his service on the ARCC Board in 1982. Larry has been an excellent Board member for the 24 years since then. When Larry started on the ARCC Board we were still keypunching from our districts hand written input sheets and running the punched cards into a million dollar mainframe!! Larry has been involved with every major decision since. Thank you Larry for the additional workload you took on over all those years. Thank you also to the Grand Rapids School District for sharing Larry's expertise with us for all those years. Larry played a big part in creating an organization that I'm proud to be involved with and we wish him the best as he moves closer to retirement.

- Marv Roberts



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Next Board Meeting: March 23, 2006  
Proctor Blackwoods Grill, 195 Hwy 2; Proctor  
11:00 a.m.

YOU ARE ALWAYS WELCOME TO ATTEND

# E-RATE COLUMN - Cindy Olson

## E-Rates

By the time you receive this newsletter, the e-rate filing season will be officially over for funding year 2006 (which is your district's 2007 fiscal year). Districts should have their forms 470 and 471 certified and should have mailed in their item 21 attachments along with copies of bills and contracts to support the costs for which they are seeking e-rate discounts.

What is the next step? By April, districts will start receiving phone calls from the Program Integrity/Assurance (PIA) staff at Schools and Library Division (SLD). Answer their questions as soon as possible as any delay in answering could potentially cause you to lose funding – however – in the past SLD has been willing to give extensions as long as you keep the lines of communication open. Call me if you are contacted by PIA and are not certain how to answer their questions.

## Cy Pres

You should all have received vouchers for the Microsoft Settlement - AKA Cy Pres. The vouchers were for 10% more than the initial estimates. Mary Mehsikomer wants to remind everyone that you have 6 years to use these vouchers so you do not have to rush out and purchase items today. She said to take time and plan for the best use of the funding. Remember that 50% must be used on software and 50% on hardware - and that you must purchase items for the specific schools designated on the vouchers.

If you have not received your vouchers and redemption instructions you should contact the Claims Administrator at 1-800-858-3765.



## Telecommunications/Internet Access Equity Aid

The state is still working on the reporting process for the new Telecommunications/Internet Access Equity Aid. Mary Mehsikomer thinks that at this time the reporting will be in a spreadsheet format, sometime after the end of the school year. Districts are eligible to receive some aid for telecommunication/Internet access costs that are greater than \$15 per adjusted marginal cost pupil units (AMCPU) for the previous year (or greater than \$0 per AMCPU if they are a member of an established telecommunications access cluster).

Costs that are eligible are:

- Internet access, data lines, video links for the equivalent of one data line/link that operates at a minimum speed of 1.544 megabytes per second (T1) for each elementary, middle or secondary school in the district.
- Recurring costs of contractual or vendor provided maintenance of WAN to the point of presence at the school building, up to the router, codec or other delivery equipment located at the POP termination at the school.
- Costs of recurring cooperative, shared arrangements for regional delivery between schools, post secondary institutions and libraries that include shared costs for gateway connections, peering points, regional network infrastructure, Internet 2 access, network support, maintenance and coordination. This will also include costs for cooperatives that own their own fiber or maintain wireless connections if the costs are reasonable and do not exceed the cost of a T1.
- Installation fees for new telecommunication lines or increased bandwidth.

Costs that are NOT eligible:

- School district staff
- Voice and telephone service
- Hardware, computers, telephones, computers
- Cost of laying fiber
- Cost of wiring schools
- Cost of filtering
- Cost for on-line learning subscriptions



In total 3.7 million dollars is available in this funding for the entire state of Minnesota. This includes public and non-public schools. It is almost certain that costs will exceed the 3.7 million dollars that are available and the state will then be forced to prorate the actual aid. At this time, there is not an estimate available as to what the pro-ration amount will be. We will not know this figure until sometime this fall when actual costs are submitted.

# FINANCE - Jeff Yeager, Mel Hejda, Cindy Olson, Cathy Erickson

## Budget Basics – Jeff Yeager

Fiscal year 2007 Revised07 and Adopted07 Budget Codes are ready to use. The current UFARS chapter X grid is 2006 information. Unique 2007 account changes may not be possible until UFARS is updated by late summer.

All districts should maintain the original board approved (adopted) budget and a working copy (revised). Keeping both files helps you comply with GASB #34 requirements for year-end reporting. Build the revised budget code first. When the board approves, copy and import as the adopted budget file.



Use the Budget Import screen to bring a budget into the system and for locking budget codes. If you have questions or need assistance, feel free to call Jeff for support.

## Closing Periods - Jeff Yeager

Remember to check your accounting calendar for open periods. You should close the FY2006 periods as soon as possible to make sure all activity is posted.

## Upcoming Workshops Focus on Finance Basics for New Business Managers – Mel Hejda

The Finance Team at ARCC is preparing several workshops for newer Business Managers and District Finance Staff in the region. Topics are geared towards Business Managers who have less than two years experience. The March workshops, scheduled for the March 8<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> in the ARCC Computer Lab, will focus on Student counting and General Education Funding. On the 8<sup>th</sup> we will discuss the different types of student counting and reporting, how Districts record and report their students, and where to retrieve student data both locally and on the MDE web site. On March 29<sup>th</sup>, we will explain how General Education funding is calculated using the MDE's "What if", and how the "What if" ties into ARCC's revenue simulation. Future workshop topics for April and May include Special Funding Sources, Fund Accounting and Student Activity Reporting, Budget Preparation utilizing Smart Finance, and Capital and Health and Safety Issues. Registration invitations will be coming soon.

# PAYROLL - Nikki Logan

## Retro Payrolls

If you still have retro payrolls to process, keep in mind the Timecard Import window that was discussed at the Calendar Year End Meeting. It will definitely save you time by reducing the number of manual timecard entries you would have to key on your contracted employees. Give us a call if you would like to give this a try.



## Things to consider:

- Payoffs will be upon us before you know it. Are you periodically running your YTD Pay Work List to check for variances?
- We will again be scheduling lab days for anyone who would like to come to ARCC to do 'summer cleanup'. Start a list of things you would like to accomplish during that time.
- We will also be scheduling a time for those districts that would like to start using rate tables. Please notify Nikki if you would like to be added to the list.

# STUDENT - Kerry Chaffey, Teri Henderson, Dale Nielsen

## INFINITE CAMPUS ANNOUNCES CAMPUS FOOD SERVICE – Teri Henderson

Infinite Campus announced on Tuesday, February 7<sup>th</sup>, 2006, a new product offered for managing your cafeteria.

Campus Food Service features:

- Touch-screen Point of Sale (POS)
- Personal Identification Number (PIN) entry
- Toggle function between different menus
- Multiple menu creation
- Seamless integration with Campus Student Information System
- Parental Options, including real-time viewing of items purchased by students
- Fully integrated Free and Reduced Application Management System
- Complete range of POS related reports, including transaction, audit, deposit and account statements



The program provides schools with the ability to plan school menus, track student food purchases and create student accounts. It provides district-wide food service, communication and reporting features that improve the efficiency of all staff members involved in the cafeteria process. And the easy to use POS system also simplifies State reporting.

The integration of Food Service with your Campus census data gives users immediate, secure access to the food service information they need.

Food Service provides data confidentiality in the lunchroom. Student photographs display on the terminal when a student enters their PIN number.

November 16<sup>th</sup>, 2005 was the “go live” date for one of the ARCC districts who volunteered to be the “test pilot”. Because Cook County was the test site they received their support directly through the Campus headquarters. Beginning with the 2006-2007 school year, ARCC will be giving support when needed.

John Engelking is the Middle and High School Principal in Cook County. This is what he has to say about the Infinite Campus Food Service program. “I would be glad to share our experience with you. Training from Campus was done in a two day format. One day dealt with understanding the Food Service Software on I-Campus and the second day was a run through of using our Point of Sales Terminal (POS). Unfortunately for us, we did have problems with our POS and the Campus team took it with them and then over-nighted it back. Our ‘go live’ date was set and we were off and running with actually no training on the POS and no support at our campus [school]. The Campus support in St. Paul was available on the phone. We did have an issue with the resolution on our POS right away in the morning, but that was fixed remotely. We have had some very minor issues regarding a script which is suppose to synchronize our data to the POS and that has been resolved.

“Overall, we couldn’t be more pleased with Campus Food Service. The reports generated are a huge time saver. All our students learned their PINs and were off and running in no time. The touch screen display on the POS pulls up student pictures and accounts instantly and we are able to use the current balance info and low and negative balance warnings to help our students monitor their accounts. Parents are really enjoying accessing Parent Portal to check on their children’s accounts.

If your district is interested in the Infinite Campus Food Service, please give us a call.

## Infinite Campus – Assessments - Dale Nielsen



February 14 turned out to be more than just another Valentine's Day for some of us. Jim Livesay, Kevin Lindquist and I met with Karl Beach and Chris Michaelson of Infinite Campus. Also attending this meeting was Craig Barnum, representing Prairie College Community School District, from Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Karl put this meeting together with the goal of gathering useful ideas for the assessments feature in Infinite Campus. Craig presented his vision of what he thought Campus should be able to provide for analysis and reporting. I presented new designs for data storage and data management.

Without going into a lot of technical goo, it's widely accepted that the current constraints to data storage are a recognized problem. A month ago, I proposed to Karl that if the system is going to do its job properly, it needs to allow and promote storage of any kind of assessment data in its complete form. Quite naturally, Karl's immediate concern was what he described as 'the big-ness' of the data. His fear being, that the assessment dataset might become an unbounded behemoth that could bring a database server to its knees.

That's a realistic concern. But now, my argument: "The moment a single data element is cast aside is the precise point in time in which one has designed a support issue, because there will surely be a stakeholder who 'needs' that particular piece of data for one reason or another." Naturally, Infinite Campus does not want to code fields for every conceivable assessment in existence. So my design suggestion: "Provide for your subscribers a tool that will allow them to store whatever assessment data that they want, as completely, or as summarily as they see fit." Of course users would be trained and encouraged NOT to omit assessment fields, and that they should represent complete collections of their assessment data. There are other design enhancements that would follow logically; something to go beyond the immediate need of compliance reporting and public accountability. For instance, a 'real-time' assessment tool for use by classroom instructors and enhanced analytical tools, report designers, etc. But for now, the goal must be to build the foundation to these other features and that starts with a slight adjustment to the schema design and user interface.

Benefits for Districts - Be master of your own data! ...ALL of it! Our place as an RMIC could certainly go a long way to assisting districts in efforts to achieve complete assessment data storage by providing pre-defined, standardized assessment data import maps, importable field names for standardized assessments, assistance with report definition, training for District Assessment Coordinators and other key personnel, feature support, etc.

So - when does this all happen? Karl felt that we may see changes come to fruition in 2007. We all came away from the first meeting of this kind with the Infinite Campus product development team, feeling positive about the information and ideas that were exchanged. We feel that they genuinely want to respond to those desires laid out before them.

### **Brain Teaser:**

During a crazy weekend of paintball, four friends were having great fun. The paint came in blue, green, yellow and red. Coincidentally, the four friends had T-shirts in those same colors. Brenda used blue paint balls. The person in the green T-shirt used yellow paint balls. James was not wearing a red T-shirt. Diane used green paint balls and wore a blue T-shirt. Simon was the only person who used paint which was the same color as his T-shirt. Can you tell which color paint they each used and the color of their respective T-shirts?

**Answer at the bottom of page 6**

**2006 MARSS Workshop** – Kerry Chaffey



The annual MARSS Workshop is scheduled for Wednesday, March 22, 2006 at the Best Western Edgewater in Duluth (2400 London Road) from 9:00-2:00 pm. A formal announcement and registration has been sent to the District MARSS contacts and Business Managers. If you are interested in attending, please be certain to register with Kerry Chaffey or Teri Henderson by Friday, March 10, 2006.

Topics include: MARSS Changes for 05-06 and 06-07, Transportation codes, PSEO, Shared Time and other miscellaneous MARSS topics.

The meeting is free of charge to all districts who receive MARSS support from ARCC.

For districts that do not receive MARSS support from ARCC and would like to attend, cost to attend the workshop will be \$50.00 per person.



**EOY Submission** – Kerry Chaffey

The first EOY 06 MARSS submission is due to ARCC by Friday, April 7, 2006. This is a mandatory submission for all districts.



**Brain Teaser Answer:**

	<u>Shirt Color</u>	<u>Paint Color</u>
<b>Simon</b>	Red	Red
<b>Brenda</b>	Yellow	Blue
<b>James</b>	Green	Yellow
<b>Diane</b>	Blue	Green

## Schools Interoperability Framework (SIF) Checklist



Here is a short **Schools Interoperability Framework (SIF)** checklist. It provides some general guidelines for your staff, but it is admittedly **Campus-centric** in some areas.

1. Install the software product locally at your district regardless of SIF intentions.
2. Become very familiar with how the product operates before considering SIF implementation.
3. Contact the company to see if its “agent” is certified. Ask them if it is certified and to which version (i.e. Version 1.5r1 or Version 1.1) Just because they say it is certified does not necessarily make it so.
4. Verify certification via <http://www.sifinfo.org/sif-certification.asp> . If you do not see the company's name, you should find out when it plans to *become* certified.
5. If certified, the company *may* want a one-time or recurring fee to set up the agent and support it. This cost will vary by vendor. You should ask your software vendor what charges might be incurred.
6. You should read the introductory chapters of the SIF Specifications documentation located at <http://www.sifinfo.org/sif-specification.asp> . You will find a large PDF file titled **SIF Implementation Specification 1.5r1.pdf**, Try to become familiar with terms such as “objects”, “elements”, “agent”. “Zone Integration Server” and so on
7. Regardless of the fee, someone, typically a technical person from the software vendor, will set up the agent on your premises. Once you get to this step, that person should contact ARCC. Infinite Campus provides both the SIF ZIS (Zone Integration Server) and the Campus agent.
8. Once underway, ARCC, Campus, the district person with the most knowledge of the product and the respective vendor will be working together to implement SIF. Occasionally we may need to pull in the district’s technical staff. For example, you may want to have your "network" person available.
9. Do not *expect* a quick implementation of SIF. Note that our first implementation took quite awhile to setup and test, requiring many phone calls. This may or may not be the case with any one software vendor. So far, ARCC’s experience has only been with Versatrans (<http://www.versatrans.com/> ).

Please contact ARCC with any address or name updates

ARCC WILL BE CLOSED  
Good Friday  
April 14, 2006

