

# LiveGrades: System Helps Teachers Communicate

By CATHY BONNSTETTER

For The State Journal

BRIDGEPORT — With the upcoming school year, Harrison County schools will launch the countywide application of LiveGrades, an innovative online grading and communication system that was a gift from **Citynet**.

Online grading and communication is not new, but Citynet engineers designed LiveGrades from nearly two years of input from Harrison County educators.

"I can't begin to tell you how many revisions were made," said **Marcel Malfregeot, Harrison County Board of Education** director of technology. "About 60 teachers participated in the pilot program."



With LiveGrades, teachers can calculate and post grades for their students, communicate with their students individually or as a class, communicate with parents and other educators on the network and much more.

"LiveGrades has a seating component, so if I am going to be out of the classroom, I will arrange my students

"With the internal e-mail system, I can send all my second-period students a note and tell them they did a great job today. I can also remind them about an upcoming quiz."

— **Jan Frenzel, technology coordinator at Bridgeport Middle School**

where I know they are supposed to sit and leave that chart with my substitute plans," said **Jan Frenzel**, technology coordinator at **Bridgeport Middle School** and the Harrison County Board of Education's Web master. "With the internal e-mail system, I can send all my second-period students a note and tell them they did a great job today. I can also remind them about an upcoming quiz."

LiveGrades also is connected to the West Virginia Education Information System (WVEIS). Citynet is one of only two companies allowed access to the secure site. That interface allows information sharing with the state **Board of Education**.

"As a teacher, if I have a student in my math class, and he isn't doing well, but he does well in English and reading, I have to ask myself what I am doing wrong," Frenzel said. "But if I can look back at previous years of math grades and see the grades are close to mine, I can build on what's being done. Before, I had no way to do that."

"The interface with WVEIS is not granted to just anybody; it's a hard thing to accomplish, but it will provide us with such good information," Frenzel said.

Unlike many of the other online grading programs, parents can log in with just one password and monitor all their children's progress. The information on the secured network is stored with the server, so parents and teachers can access or post information from any computer.

"We have built a solid product," said **Matthew Thornton**, Citynet vice president of development. "We have a state-of-the-art server cluster that is secure and high speed."

LiveGrades was a donation by Citynet to Harrison County Schools through **MedBrook Children's Charity**. Citynet eventually will sell the program to other school systems, but Harrison County will never pay for the service.

Thornton said the cost of the product should Harrison County have commissioned Citynet would be about \$39,000 a year. He said it has cost about \$300,000 to develop and implement.

Malfregeot said using LiveGrades as an online grade book will be an option, not a mandate. The program's assets will sell themselves.

"We have 800 teachers in Harrison County, and I'm guessing that by the second semester at least half will be using LiveGrades," he said.

Special educators have asked for a component to create and monitor their mandated Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), and teachers have asked for an attendance component, which is in the works. LiveGrade may provide a report card, saving the county money and teachers time.

"The teachers are so excited," Thornton said. "We have a whole laundry list of ideas they have asked for. One interface will do everything; we hope to keep developing and expanding."

**THE STATE JOURNAL**

www.statejournal.com  
July 25, 2008 • Page 19