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Real Life Success: Department Intranet

Sachem Central Schools Music Department keeps
the faculty in tune with each other



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Sachem Central Schools New York State School System

Sachem Central Schools is the largest suburban school district in New York State. In the Music & Art Department alone, there are 78 teachers located in 16 different buildings. Keeping such a disperse group of faculty in close communication can be a challenge, but administrator Anthony Ambrogio has Intranets.com to help him succeed

When Ambrogio joined the Music & Art Department a year ago, one of the first things he did was investigate setting up an intranet. While the school preferred trying to build something in-house, Anthony expressed his concerns about relying on a busy IT staff with limited resources. An avid Intranets.com user for the past six years, long before he accepted his position in the Sachem School District, Anthony persuaded them to try Intranets.com.

With the goal of promoting collaboration among staff, Ambrogio set up the intranet in the summer of 2003. He wanted a way for faculty in different physical locations to easily exchange ideas and information.

The Database Manager is proving to be a huge time saver for the busy group. They've been able to move their event registration online. "We have over 700 students participating in our upcoming music festival. A year ago, we would have spent hours collecting printed forms from teachers and then entering the information on the computer. Now, teachers can register their students online, right from the classroom," says Ambrogio. "The databases are also great for keeping track of our over 5,000 instruments. Now rather than making a bunch of phone calls to the different buildings to find an extra flute, we just look in the database."

Teachers have embraced the technology. They use the Discussion Groups for topics on everything from music software programs to the use of gel pens in art classes. "I'm happy that our teachers communicate more with one another now," says Ambrogio. "Recently they collaborated on the intranet to create a 2-hour faculty concert and art exhibit. It was a great event!" Ambrogio even posted MP3s of the music performances on the intranet so that students and teachers could listen online.

Ambrogio and other Sachem staff rely heavily on the Calendar. It makes coordinating meetings with the entire group easy. "On a typical day, I might have four concerts, in addition to several private meetings. I just sync it with my Palm, and I have my schedule with me even when I'm on the road." And when Ambrogio needs to get an email out to the staff quickly or post an announcement, he can log on from any computer, anywhere.

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Music Department
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Ambrogio's three assistants estimate the intranet has improved their productivity by about 30%. With the Document Manager, they no longer need to maintain printed handbooks with forms and schedules of activities. "The old 2-inch thick booklets given out at the start of each semester are a thing of the past. At our most recent semester kick-off, I think we handed out only five pieces of paper. Everything is on our intranet now!"

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Students in Sachem can also visit the intranet as guests, with limited access. The teachers maintain an area on the site with organized links for all areas of music and art advocacy. Students can learn about upcoming local cultural events, link to online ticket brokers, find resources and help on art software programs, research scholarships and more.

Ambrogio also has plans to expand the intranet by creating a cumulative knowledge base, along with a searchable digitized music library.

"I like to tell my staff, 'it's not just me, it's us.'" Ambrogio has helped to change the Sachem environment from a top-down organization to a more collaborative group of professionals. He's been invited to present his work at next summer's New York State Administrators Convention.

"I'm excited to share my experience and possibly help other schools achieve what we have here at Sachem."

