



Overview

Starting with the 2008-2009 school year, all schools MUST use IMPACT Gradebook as the primary tool for recording daily or period attendance. The following content provides answers to some commonly asked questions related to the rollout of IMPACT Gradebook's Parent and Student Portal tools. These tools will be used by parents and students to monitor the grading and attendance data entered by teachers.

When will the Parent and Student Portal tools be available Districtwide?

The current plan is to make the Parent and Student Portal tools available at all school locations in January 2009.

What gradebook product did CPS choose? The new Gradebook product is GradeSpeed.NET and it is produced by Campusware, LP based out of San Antonio, Texas.

How was the vendor selected? Vendors were solicited via the standard CPS RFP process. Respondents were vetted by a committee that consisted of school, area, and central office staff. A team of technical advisors provided a comparative analysis of the mechanical underpinnings of the solutions. Due to the size and scale of the district, we only had four respondents. The assessment process lasted about three months and involved RFP review, oral presentations, rigorous Q&A follow-up and hands-on user labs attended by the committee, teachers, and parents.

Can IMPACT provide a list of Parent Portal functions that are offered by other products but are not available in the IMPACT Gradebook?

- Some pre-existing Parent and Student Portal tools in the District have customized school home pages; when parents logged in, the look and feel of the main page was catered to that school, including announcements, school emblems, etc.

IMPACT Gradebook is an enterprise wide tool that allows parents to view records for multiple children. Therefore, the main screen is not customized for each school. The recommended conduit for school announcements is the primary school Web site and not the Parent and Student Portal.

- Some pre-existing Parent and Student Portal tools in the District were accessible from the school's main Web site.

Links to the IMPACT Gradebook Parent and Student Portal will be accessible at <http://cps.edu>. There are no current plans to integrate a button for the IMPACT Gradebook Parent or Student Portals on individual school Web sites as part of the Gradebook deployment. However, if schools choose to engage their respective Web site custodians to implement a button they are free to do so.

What functionality does the IMPACT Parent and Student Portals offer that is not currently available in some of the other tools on the market?

- **For the Parent:** The IMPACT Parent Portal will allow parents to establish self-defined notifications based on attendance and grading for their students. The system will allow for the distribution of e-mail or text message to cell phone alerts that notify parents when a student is absent or drops below a grading threshold defined by the parent.



- **For the Student:** The IMPACT Student Portal will eventually support the online submission of high school student course requests.

What are the benefits of moving to the IMPACT Portal tools?

- **For the Parent:** The IMPACT Parent Portal will allow parents to manage multiple students at multiple campuses from one central location, and with one system login.
- **For the HS Counselor:** This system is fully integrated with IMPACT Gradebook and the SIM tool; therefore, there is no manual upload of course requests required for high school counselors. (Gradebook training for high school counselors will be held in the fall).
- **For Teachers:** IMPACT Gradebook is completely integrated with the Parent and Student Portals, therefore all assignments and marking period grades recorded in Gradebook will be displayed through the portal without the need for any manual upload.

Will IMPACT offer school training for the management of the Parent and Student Portals?

Yes. The IMPACT training team will begin offering instructor led training Dec. 8. For instructions and details, please visit www.pdcentral.cps.k12.il.us. School administrators and technology coordinators from each school will be provided the opportunity to attend. Each school is ultimately responsible for supporting students and parents. Therefore training for those constituents will not be provided by IMPACT staff.

Who should parents contact with questions or problems?

The IMPACT team will provide the schools with the materials and training to support the Parent and Student Portals. Therefore, parents should contact their student's school with questions or issues. The IMPACT Help Desk **will not** field or troubleshoot login issues or how to questions from parents.

How do parents 'sign-up' for an account?

Parent Portal account creation is a self-initiated process; parents create their own account and profile. The IMPACT team will provide school administrators with an on-boarding packet that includes specific guidelines for the distribution and administration of parent accounts. Schools have been instructed to engage parents in the manner most appropriate for their location. Alternatively, CPS has made a help video available to parents at the <http://cps.edu> Web site.

How do students 'sign-up' for an account? Will students at all grade levels be given access to view online grades via Gradebook's Student Portal?

Students are not required to sign-up for an account. Students in grades 5-12 will use their CPS student username and password, or login credentials, to access the portal. Student login credentials are the same as students' FirstClass username and password. School-based staff is responsible for issuing student login credentials. For more information about accessing students' usernames and passwords, review the document *3 Easy Steps to Retrieve Student Usernames* on the FirstClass Web site at <http://fc.cps.edu>. Schools should not manually configure or create accounts for students. This is unnecessary work.

Moving forward, the Student Portal will be made available to 1-4 grade students after CPS network accounts have been established. Student accounts for all network applications are synchronized, and allocation of a CPS network account is the first step in the process.



Can schools define their own trigger frequency?

No. All triggers are configured at a District level by IMPACT. Since parents can potentially have students at multiple schools it is imperative that there be consistency across the District. The current trigger mechanism will send one notification for each event (grade/tardy/absence). The frequency is every two hours around the clock – if there are no new triggers to process, nothing will be sent.

Will teachers be able to use Gradebook from home in addition to students and parents?

Yes, any teacher with a CPS Remote Access account will be able to securely access Gradebook from home.

Do the Parent Portal screens display in multiple languages?

Out of the box, the Parent Portal screen does not offer multi-lingual support. However, CPS plans to expand to a Spanish option in 2009-2010. Also, all grade reporting and correspondence that is currently available in CPS supported languages has been implemented in the new system. Specifically, progress reports and report cards are available in English, Polish, and Spanish.

Does the system offer automated alerts to parents on grades and/or attendance status?

Yes, Gradebook allows parents to define automated notification guidelines for attendance and grading. Gradebook supports e-mail and text message notifications.

Is the solution secure, can it be hacked? No technology solution is 100 percent secure from attack. However, the Gradebook solution utilizes numerous security measures designed to uphold the confidentiality and integrity of student data.

CPS Networking Details & User Provisioning

- √ **Infrastructure** - All communication between the Gradebook and portal servers is protected by SSL encryption.
- √ **Infrastructure** - All communication between the portal servers and end-users is protected by SSL encryption.
- √ **Infrastructure** - Multiple layers of firewalls and other network security measures protect Gradebook and portal servers.
- √ **Infrastructure** - Gradebook and portal servers are physically protected in a restricted-access data center.
- √ **Teacher and Student User Provisioning** – The solution supports unique user identification by using pre-assigned usernames that are imported from LDAP.
- √ **Parent User Provisioning** – Parent accounts are self-initiated. However, access to student information can only occur after provision of both the CPS student ID and unique PIN designation. Student PIN designations are randomly generated. Should a PIN become compromised, it can be changed and the existing linked accounts reset.

GradeSpeed.Net Details

- √ All access to GradeSpeed.NET is based on explicit permission and user specific login. No default, generic, or anonymous access is possible for teachers, parents, or students.
- √ All activity in the GradeSpeed.NET application is audited. Any additions or changes to student grades are logged and regular backups are performed.
- √ GradeSpeed.NET provides users notification of successful login attempts from unrecognized IP addresses. The notification provides a time/date, host IP, and operating system and browser details. This information allows the authorized user to determine whether the unrecognized login was attempted by an unauthorized user or was simply the authorized user from a previously unused login location.



- √ The system has a built in User Management module that prevents users from escalating their privileges. The system assigns locked privilege templates that are based on user roles; users are unable to modify assigned to them or higher level users.
- √ GradeSpeed.NET's login process is designed to resist brute-force hacking; specifically, a user account will be locked for a pre-determined period of time if login is attempted with an invalid password more than five times.
- √ The use of server-side input validation as well as parameterized SQL queries help to prevent SQL injection attacks.
- √ GradeSpeed.NET supports automatic session timeouts. When the inactivity timeout is prompted, the browser window containing the teacher's current session is locked and minimized.