

Corpus Christi Independent School District

Corpus Christi, Texas

Resounding Success in Corpus Christi

By moving their district online with eChalk, Corpus Christi Independent School District (CCISD) has transformed communication and collaboration among the members of its community, from administrators and teachers to students and parents. Within one school year, a pilot program implemented in the district's Baker and Cullen Middle Schools achieved dramatic results, including:

- Increased parent involvement
- Higher standardized test scores
- Reduced disciplinary problems

Based on the success of the pilot program, the district has been steadily implementing eChalk in more of their schools, culminating in a districtwide rollout in February 2008.

Change Drivers at Work

For Corpus Christi Independent School District, the era of increasing accountability ushered in by No Child Left Behind (NCLB) highlighted a strong need to improve communication and collaboration within the district in order to positively impact student achievement. CCISD had already created webpages for its district and schools, but it wanted to move on to a more dynamic online environment. It also wanted to give teachers the capacity to build and manage their own class pages and the tools they needed to more effectively engage students and parents in the learning process. To do this, district leaders were looking for a comprehensive technology solution that was:

- Secure
- Easy to use
- Flexible enough to accommodate the diverse needs of school and district community members
- Integrated, so that all components (including websites, class webpages, email and calendars) would be operated by a single provider

Finally, CCISD needed the system to be backed by extensive technical support and professional development for school and district administrators and teachers. After considering all these factors, CCISD chose eChalk. In addition to a secure intranet-like system for faculty and staff, including student-safe email, eChalk provided the district with a compelling Web presence and dynamic class and group webpages that enable teachers and other group leaders to organize and publish resources for students and parents.

With eChalk, the following key outcomes were achieved:

- More efficient communication between district community members
- Increased parent engagement
- Improved NCLB criteria, including:
 - Higher standardized test scores
 - Reduced disciplinary referrals

"Once they got over their fear, teachers took to eChalk. Now, it's contagious."

Tammy Gathright

Coordinator for Instructional Technology
CCISD

"I always thought I was a good, creative teacher, but with eChalk I can be more creative than ever before, and in a whole new way."

Jeanelle Lee

6th-8th Grade Mathematics Teacher
CCISD

About CCISD

- 60 schools
- 38,000 students
- 2,600 teachers

The city of Corpus Christi, located on the lush Gulf Coast in southern Texas, is one of the few cities in the country to offer free wireless Internet access to all of its residents. It should come as no surprise, then, that Corpus Christi Independent School District is also a leader in implementing technology initiatives in its K-12 schools. Two CCISD campuses— Marvin Baker Middle School and Cullen Place Middle School—exemplify the transformative impact technology has had on leadership, teaching and learning in the district. Both schools are participants in the Technology Immersion Program (TIP), an initiative led by the Texas Education Agency in cooperation with Dell, McGraw Hill, Microsoft and other private and public partners. The Texas Middle School Association recently named Baker Middle School as the Elmer Watson Outstanding Middle School for 2007. It was also one of 12 schools invited to give a presentation to the Texas State Legislature showcasing how technology is being used to improve schools.

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Here's How They Did It

Improved Levels of Communication & Greater Parent Involvement

As the charts in the sidebar display, the data that CCISD has collected provides clear and compelling evidence that communication in the school and district community has vastly improved since the district implemented eChalk.

At the instructional level, improved communication has facilitated the success of team teaching and mentoring programs. These allow teachers to work together within departments and collaborate across subject areas to create exciting multidimensional lessons and share best practices. Teachers also save time by posting all relevant information on their class webpages and directing student and parent questions there. Scott Person, a CCISD Social Studies teacher for grades 6-8, noted: "I found it overwhelming to have to answer all the parents' questions, so I started by posting FAQs, which significantly reduced the number of calls that I had to handle and didn't have time for."

Perhaps even more importantly, increased communication between teachers and parents has coincided with a significant jump in the number of parents visiting the school and classroom webpages. As Sally Ann Lewis, the Coordinator for Staff Development at Baker Middle School, puts it: "Now, parents have no excuse not to be involved." This increased parental engagement has been shown to be a crucial factor in impacting student achievement.

Differentiated Instruction

eChalk enables teachers to reach students where they are—online—and give them access to exciting new tools such as podcasts, blogs and webcast lessons. "Blogs get kids to respond differently than they would in class," says CCISD's Todd Moulder, who teaches 6th-8th grade English. "It's easier to get kids involved and have more thoughtful discussions, which allows me to be more creative in the classroom." With eChalk, teachers can develop class webpages with assignments and resources intended for specific groups of students. Accelerated students can move ahead with extra assignments, readings or activities, while those who need to catch up have access to study guides and can ask questions of teachers and other students through email or online discussions. As a result, students' learning is more self-directed and they can practice key skills of problem-solving and investigation. According to 8th grade Science teacher Britt Taylor: "Students are much more engaged, because learning is no longer by rote, but through investigation. It's only limited by a student's creativity."

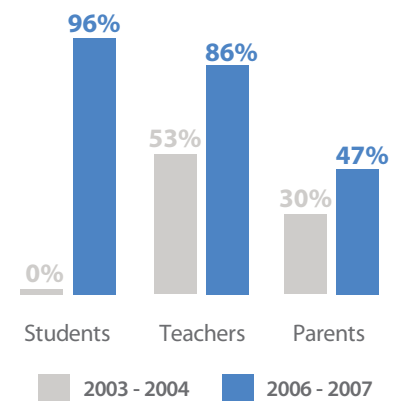
Extended Learning Window

In addition to secure email, 24/7 access to eChalk means students have the time and resources to take responsibility for their own learning—before, during and after school. All of the information and learning resources they need—homework, class notes, study guides, test information—are online, and they can easily email a teacher or classmate with questions or form online study groups to collaborate and learn from each other.

Parents have access to these resources as well, and can help their children stay on track. Finally, students can submit homework online, eliminating the need for printers that can malfunction or papers that can get lost. With eChalk, Social Studies teacher Scott Person says, "Kids can't escape responsibility" for their own academic performance.

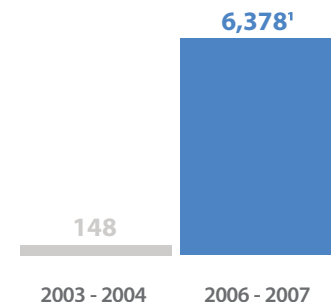
Percent of Users that Exchange Information via Email

Teachers, parents and students sent and received more email.



+ 48.7% more communication via email

Total Number of Teacher/Student/Parent Emails



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Improved NCLB Criteria

eChalk has enabled CCISD to increase communication with all stakeholders, which has been shown to have a positive effect on:

Academic Achievement

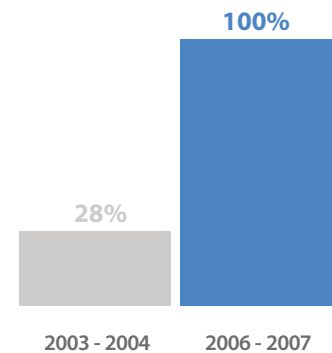
Texas Assessment of Knowledge & Skills (TAKS) ²		
	2003-2004	2005-2006
Reading	87.9%	90.2%
Mathematics	74.8%	77%
Writing	92.3%	94%
Social Studies	83.3%	86.7%

Baker Title 1 Neighborhood Student Test Results			
Subject	Grade	2004-2005	2005-2006
Reading	6th	80	94
	7th	65	76
	8th	70	80
Mathematics	6th	57	68
	7th	43	63
	8th	35	58
Writing	7th	78	90
Social Studies	8th	57	77

Student Discipline

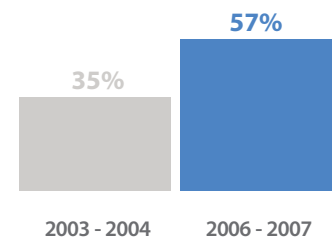
Discipline Data		
	District Average	Baker ³
OSS	148	71
ISS Referrals	441	223
Removals/SLGC	32	13

Percent of Teachers that Actively Updated Classroom Websites



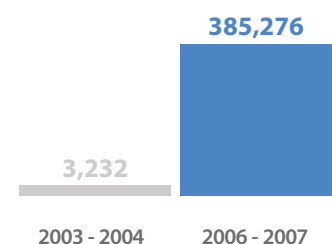
+70% of teachers communicating using class webpages

Percent of Parents Accessing the Classroom Websites



+22% of parents accessing class webpages

Number of Hits on School/Class Webpages



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Lessons Learned

CCISD's advice to other districts and schools contemplating a communications solution such as eChalk focuses on the importance of effective professional development and training. Tammy Gathright, the district's Coordinator for Instructional Technology, warns: "Don't just jump in—start in phases, with trainings that build on each other and include help for teachers about how to incorporate technology with instruction." To work towards the goal of 100% teacher adoption, get the word out. Implementation and adoption was supported by CCISD at first focused on a few teachers and counted on them to get the word out. Implementation and adoption was supported by extensive professional development led by eChalk's Client Services team and covering a wide range of needs and skill levels, including onsite training and ongoing guidance and support.

The district's work quickly paid off. As Gathright puts it: "Once they got over their fear, teachers took to eChalk. Now, it's contagious." Excitement about eChalk has been so great that when the district surveyed teachers about what would happen when it could no longer count on TIP funding, they responded that if they were able to keep only one tool, that tool had to be eChalk.

Where to Next?

As reflected by the data collected during the pilot program, CCISD's implementation of eChalk in Baker and Cullen Middle Schools achieved a number of positive results, and the Board of Education approved a districtwide rollout of the program. In addition to implementing the technology itself, the district set clear goals for integrating it into classroom instruction for maximum impact on student performance. One key goal was to give all parents access to published grades online so they can get a solid idea of how their children are doing in school. The district also focused on closely monitoring eChalk's detailed usage reports in an effort to see how teachers are using the system. That data will be used to effectively tailor professional development programs in order to get the maximum benefit from the technology.

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Todd Moulder

6th-8th Grade English Teacher CCISD

"Now, parents have no excuse not to be involved."

Sally Ann Lewis

Coordinator for Staff Development,
Baker Middle School
CCISD

"Students are much more engaged, because learning is no longer by rote, but through investigation. It's only limited by a student's creativity."

Britt Taylor

8th Grade Science Teacher
CCISD

1 Email approximation based on December 2006 data.

2 TAKS data includes Baker's Athena (GT) Magnet student results. Test score increases were more dramatic among Title 1 Neighborhood students.

3 Student discipline referrals at Baker are substantially less than the district average.