

**Web access widens for students, parents**  
**Miami-Dade County Public Schools will roll out a new version of its Web portal that will give unprecedented online access to parents, students and teachers.**

Posted on Sun, Aug 19, 2007  
 BY TANIA DELUZURIA  
 You can order groceries online, plan an exotic vacation and find an exotic car rental. Now, Miami-Dade County Public Schools will roll out a new version of its Web portal that will give unprecedented online access to parents, students and teachers.

The school district will unveil a new version of its Web portal Monday, an interactive online site that will give the school district's 53,000 employees and 240,000 students unprecedented online access to everything from textbooks to testing information. The school district will also offer recent training sessions to learn how to use the site.

"I love it," said parent Francisco Rodriguez, who attended a recent training session to learn how to use the site. "I wish they would have done this earlier with an eye toward getting more parents involved in their children's education."

School districts around the country are watching Miami-Dade's experiment with an eye toward getting more parents involved in their children's education. The project has attracted attention from Howard and officials in school systems from Texas to New York wanting learn more about the \$3.2 million initiative. Broward, Palm Beach and Dade counties have also expressed interest.

One hurdle will be to be worked out in a district where one in five students is foreign-born. The site will be only in English at first. District officials say that preparing the site will be a \$3.2 million initiative. Broward, Palm Beach and Dade counties have also expressed interest.

Done in partnership with Microsoft, the rollout on Monday will allow them to collaborate with the software giant but will give parents the same information. Sensitive to the fact that not all families have internet access, district officials say that set up a phone system that will allow parents to participate in the school district's new technology.

"It's truly new technology," said Debbie Karcher, Web content's executive officer for Miami-Dade County Public Schools. "It's not being used in any other school technology. We will meet parents, teachers and students on a regular basis. We will have traditional accomplished their goals separately. We will have traditional accomplished their goals separately."

**USERS CONCERNED**  
 How the portal ties them together and puts them in one place, allowing interaction and customization.

For example, students will have a "My school" page that will allow them to collaborate with other students on class projects and participate in a discussion board, download homework assignments, and even lead interactive webinars. The project has attracted attention from Howard and officials in school systems from Texas to New York wanting learn more about the \$3.2 million initiative. Broward, Palm Beach and Dade counties have also expressed interest.

**NO MEETING**  
 The resources and technology are here for them to utilize on their terms, on their time. Among Rodriguez's favorite tools are features that give him up-to-date information on his child's progress, including test scores, grades and attendance. The site also has a "My school" page that will allow them to collaborate with other students on class projects and participate in a discussion board, download homework assignments, and even lead interactive webinars.

**HOW TO USE IT**  
 The school district will offer recent training sessions to learn how to use the site. "I really don't like it," said Andy Vargas, 17, who is about to start his junior year at Barbara Gatzert Senior High. "I can see everything I'm seeing and how I'm doing it. It's all organized."

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### Parent Portal



MIAMI-DADE | EDUCATION

## Parents' involvement is goal of Web portal

SCHOOLS, FROM IA

more parents involved in their children's schoolwork. Educators say parental involvement is key to student success. The project has attracted attention from Harland and officials in school districts from Texas to New York wanting learn more about the \$3.2 million initiative. Broward, Palm Beach and Dade counties have also expressed interest.



PHOTOS BY ANNA GONZALEZ/MIAMI HERALD STAFF

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