



## District returns to old system

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ST. GEORGE — The Washington County School District will be coming back to an old friend for the 2008-09 school year, paying for the services of Powerschool, a system that allows students, parents and schools to access student information online.

A Powerschool customer just two years ago, the district has had a two-year fling with a state-provided Student Information System, which is free to use but is unpopular among school faculty and staff.

A request for proposal committee, composed of district counselors, teachers and administrators, completed a 3-month study of all available SIS systems, and recommended Power-school to the district school board this month.

According to members of the RFP committee, the state SIS was a capable system, but not as accessible and easy to use for students, parents or staff as Powerschool was.

Phyllis Mitchell, school registrar at Pine View Middle School, said the move back to Powerschool would make things easier on everyone involved.

“Powerschool seems to be a much more user-friendly program,” she said. “I think it makes it easier for students and parents to access the information they need on the Internet.”

Mitchell, who works in the counselor’s office at PVMS, said Powerschool also makes it easier for staff to keep track of how students are performing on a day-to-day basis.

“Powerschool gives us great search capabilities,” she said. “Counselors especially can check up on students to see how they’re doing right at the moment.”

Switching back to Powerschool might make it easier to input and access student information online, but the move comes with a cost.

While the state provided the current SIS free, Powerschool will cost the district a yearly sum, as well as the cost of integration. The numbers will add up to approximately \$210,000 in the first year, said Charlie Roberts, technical director.

Nearly half of that will be part of a one-time startup cost, Roberts said, and while the final contract is not complete, Powerschool offered the district a discount for the first year. The service fee is based on \$4.35 per student this year, compared to a statewide average of about \$10 per student, and will cost approximately \$102,000 in year one, Roberts said.

Roberts said the rate would likely be closer to the state average in future years. The challenge of converting the data back to Powerschool falls into the hands of the district technology staff,

“Powerschool is what Powerschool is,” he said. “We will make Powerschool work the best possible way we can.”

The transition will take some time because of the difficulty of transferring student data from one

system to another, said Lawrence Esplin, technical coordinator.

Esplin said the process for students and parents will essentially be the same — they will still use the same user name and password, and all of the same information will be available. The extra work will take place with the tech staff and within the district, as data is moved and everyone is trained on the abilities of the new system.

“I think the key is just for the district to make sure to train well,” Esplin said.

Some training will be necessary, but the RFP committee based its decision, in part, on the familiarity much of the district staff already had with Powerschool, said Marshall Topham, assistant superintendent of secondary schools.

“This is the one that was chosen, and it was an old, familiar friend,” Topham said.

Gaye Sullivan, secretary at West Elementary School, said she was getting comfortable with SIS, but is glad about the return to Powerschool. The interface is easier to navigate, and the end goal is to use the system that helps schools and parents utilize technology the best, to help educate students, she said.

“I really think it will be worth it in the long run,” Sullivan said.