

# Local

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## Hamburg School powers up

PowerSchool program lets parents check child's homework, test scores on Web

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HAMBURG — Thanks to a new online program, parents of students in the Hamburg School are now able to answer questions such as “do you have homework tonight?” or “how did you do on your math test?” with the click of a mouse.

The Hamburg School District began using PowerSchool — a Web-based, cross-platform technology — to better enable students, parents, teachers, and administrators as a way to increase student achievement with enhanced information sharing in early October. Since then, there have been more than 1,300 log ins to the program, said Steven Engravalle, Hamburg School superintendent.

“Our main philosophy is that parents are partners in their children's education

and that we have to work together,” Engravalle said. “We have always wanted to be transparent about what's going on. We have a huge presence on the Internet and we want to give the parents as much information as possible.”

Engravalle said parents today are very busy and “some of them don't have time to call the school. This allows them to log in from anywhere on the Internet.”

The program offers the same encryption as an ATM card, he said, and every password is completely unique.

“Parents can log in and see what's happening,” he said. “They can see assignments, grades, attendance. It eliminates the “do you have homework tonight?” questions and it keeps parents completely informed.”

Engravalle said the program also eliminates the surprises the school sometimes

gets from parents. “Now when a parent walks in for a conference, we can say to them, how's your son doing?”

Dawn O'Grady, Hamburg Schools Board of Education member and mother of two daughters in the school, said as a parent she loves the PowerSchool program.

“It's very user friendly and it makes it much easier to be in contact with teachers,” she said. “I can click on everything the girls have done and handed in and has been graded to see how they're doing.”

As a board member, purchasing and implementing the program was money well spent, she added.

“If there's a concern about a child's grade you can know about it a lot faster,” she said. “The information can be back and forth between a teacher and parent instead of waiting until a teacher conference or waiting until something goes

wrong. We (the board of education) thought it was a great thing.”

The company that makes the program, Pearson, specializes in educational publishing, assessment, information and services. The company provides effective and innovative curriculum products in all available media, educational assessment and measurement for students and teachers, student information systems, teacher professional development and certification programs.

“At Hamburg School, we believe that parents are partners in the educational process, and therefore, it's our hope that through the launch of the PowerSchool Premier's parent and student portal we will foster increased, open communication between home and school,” said Louise Murphy, PowerSchool coordinator at the Hamburg School.