



# Connections

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## Ohio Regional Delivery Services Alignment Now Before the Ohio Legislature

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In House Bill 95, the Ohio Department of Education was required to submit a plan to the legislature by March 31, 2004, regarding a redesign of the Ohio Regional Education Delivery System (OREDS). The Ohio Department of Education had several regional meetings and took written input for several months as they developed various drafts for consideration. In the final phases of these deliberations, the Ohio Department of Education met with the Buckeye Association of School Administrators (BASA), the Ohio Educational Service Center Association (OESCA), and the Management Council of the Ohio Education Computer Network (MCOECN) to discuss the various impacts the changes would have on the members of these organizations.

The Management Council was very pleased to be involved in these discussions and believes the wording of the final recommendation that was sent to the legislature is something that can help in the delivery of educational services to our school districts. From the perspective of DA Site services, the OREDS decisions were in two categories: First, there are business decisions that help in the day to day operation of a school district. These services include payroll, purchase orders, inventory, grade cards, scheduling, INFOhio, Educational Management Information System (EMIS), and many other such services. Secondly, there are the information technology (IT) services that will have a direct impact on student achievement.

In the OREDS plan that was submitted to the legislature, the DA Sites will work under the Regional Service Centers (RSC's) by 2007 for the IT portion of the services delivered to school districts. The OECN staff will work with others within the Regional Service Centers such as the Area Media Centers, the SERCC Centers, the

Educational Service Centers (ESC's), INFOhio, the Ohio Education Telecommunications Network (OET), and SchoolNet to make sure that students have access to technological advances that will improve student learning.

The business function of the DA Sites will move forward in a slower progression towards the Regional Service Centers. There is a considerable investment among the current member districts of DA Sites in the infrastructure, equipment, and software in their current facilities. The Management Council will work with the Ohio Department of Education in designing a business plan as to how these services will continue to be delivered to Ohio school districts.

The Ohio Department of Education did present a model map to the State Board of Education outlining boundaries for the Regional Service Centers. One of the stipulations in developing these boundaries was that existing educational service center consortia would not be divided. The SERCC boundaries were also taken into consideration in the development of this map. One issue that the Ohio Department of Education and the Management Council will need to work out is the fact that three of the regions do not contain existing DA Sites. This will accentuate the need for a business plan to be developed so that current services can continue to be delivered to Ohio school districts.

Hearings have already taken place before committees in the state legislature and further discussions will be taking place as the realignment of educational services are completed for Ohio schools.

## DASL Software Development Update

We are adding a student information system (or "SIS") component to our Data Analysis for Student Learning (DASL) software. The SIS component will have full student data functionality including scheduling, grade reporting, attendance, discipline, fees, and EMIS data capabilities. The pilot release of the new DASL software is scheduled for fall 2004.

At this point, development is progressing on schedule. Significant portions of the DASL application have been completed. These include the student registration module, contacts, admission/withdrawal, medical information, alerts, and fees. A new security model, extensive search capabilities, and a portal have also been developed for DASL. Several hours of instructional videos for these features are finished and available for review.

Additional modules will be completed within the next month. These include discipline, proficiency testing, data import/export, and the JAMS batch job scheduler. The scheduling engine has been optimized, and coding for the scheduling module screens is in progress. Video training materials are being developed to coincide with the completion of each module.

Developers are working on the final design of EMIS capabilities. Plans for EMIS call for the ability to manage a major portion of EMIS information directly through DASL. Features of the SMART and BRERFOX programs are being incorporated as well. These tools are used to maintain EMIS situation codes, which help districts conform to state EMIS reporting requirements.



# Is Your Computer Spying on You?

The problem of adware or spyware is becoming as great, or greater than, the problem of computer viruses and worms. What is adware or spyware? There are companies that make it their business to get programs installed on your computer to help them make money.

Adware is a type of program that displays ads just like those on most commercial Web sites, but they are controlled by the program instead of by visiting a Web site. Some of these programs are relatively polite, in that they make it obvious that viewing the ads pays for a free piece of software you've chosen to download. Polite programs only run when you are using that particular program. Nasty adware programs are those that are set to start whenever you start your computer and serve ads even when you are not running the ad supported software you chose to install. Most of the bad adware keeps running even when you uninstall the software it came with.

Spyware is a program code that tries to gather information about you and relay it to the company that distributed it. The more benign of these watch what sites you visit and where you shop on the Internet in order to create a marketing profile. The most evil ones may attempt to capture credit card numbers and other sensitive personal information.

At the best, these programs are an annoyance. At worst, they are a severe security risk, and may constitute a violation of the Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA) when used on school computers. Aside from their intended purposes, adware and spyware can also have other effects. Since they often run all the time when your computer is on, they can cause extreme slowdowns and software conflicts which can make your computer less stable or unable to connect to the Internet at all.

You can help to avoid these problems by staying away from sites on the Internet that are known as "warez" sites that distribute pirated software. These pirated versions of software have often had spyware routines added as a Trojan payload.

If a pop-up shows up on your screen and asks you to press

"Yes," make certain you know what you are saying "Yes" to! If you weren't intentionally attempting to install software, you probably shouldn't be hitting "Yes"! If you were attempting to install software, did you read the acceptable use policy to understand what you're agreeing to? Some of these policies tell you in plain English that the software vendor has the right to look at everything you do on your computer! Are you sure that the screen-saver you are downloading is worth that type of privacy invasion?

Most anti-virus programs provide only a small amount of protection against adware and spyware routines. That is not to diminish the importance of anti-virus programs. No one should be using a computer connected to the Internet without current anti-virus software and running full anti-virus scans on a daily basis. However, don't expect that your anti-virus software will provide full protection from both adware and spyware. The anti-virus industry is moving toward this, but it will most likely be 6-12 months before this becomes a widespread offering.

In the interim, there are some freeware utilities that can be used on Windows-based computers that will identify and remove adware and spyware routines. The most popular is SpyBot Search & Destroy. It is free for all users, and has an "Immunize" function that when enabled will keep more than 500 known adware and spyware programs from being installed on your computer. Another popular utility for Windows-based computers is Adaware, which also does a good job, but you have to purchase the software if you want to utilize the "Immunize" function within Adaware.

Adware and spyware is not as common on the Macintosh platform; however, it does exist. A program called MacScan (SecureMac.com) is used by several Ohio schools to identify problems on the Macintosh platform. If you have questions about adware or spyware, please discuss them with the Technology Coordinator in your school district or technical personnel from your OECN DA-Site.

## Oracle – Helping Ohio Schools

Oracle, a multi-billion dollar technology company, believes that technology can revolutionize teaching and learning, just as it has revolutionized business. Oracle wants to do its part in making this a reality, and has created a family of education programs. Ohio schools have received more than \$3,700,000 in grants through these programs in the past year. The Oracle family of education programs includes the following:

**Oracle Help Us Help Foundation** assists economically challenged public schools and youth organizations by providing resources, training, and support to integrate technology into the learning environment. [www.helpushelp.org](http://www.helpushelp.org)

**Think.com** gives students and teachers free websites and protected email. Within a password-protected community, elementary and secondary schools have access to a rich set of collaborative learning tools. [www.think.com](http://www.think.com)

**ThinkQuest** is an educational website competition where student teams experience collaborative, project-based learning.

Their website entries form the ThinkQuest Library shared by students worldwide. [www.thinkquest.com](http://www.thinkquest.com)

**Oracle Internet Academy** is a two-year program educating high school students in Internet and database technology. The Academy prepares students to pursue academic and professional opportunities. [academy.oracle.com](http://academy.oracle.com)

**Oracle Academic Initiative** provides software, curriculum, training, and certification resources to higher education, enabling colleges and universities to effectively educate their students with industry-relevant skills. [oai.oracle.com](http://oai.oracle.com)

**Oracle Workforce Development** allows educational institutions to deliver Oracle training as part of certificate and non-degree programs offered via Continuing Education, allowing easy and low-cost access to Oracle training. [workforce.oracle.com](http://workforce.oracle.com)

Learn more about these opportunities for your school district at [www.oracle.com/learn](http://www.oracle.com/learn)

# SPAM – How Do They Get My Email Address?

If it seems to you that SPAM is getting worse, it's probably not just your perception! In recent weeks and months, organizations throughout the world have reported significant increases in the amount of SPAM Email being sent via the Internet.

Many states and the federal government have attempted to stop SPAM Email by implementing laws that try to outlaw it and/or regulate it. However, these efforts have not been very successful to date, and it is more important that you as a user take efforts to try to reduce SPAM from reaching you. Steps that you can take include the following:

- **Do not post your Email address on a web site.** SPAM companies run web spiders that harvest Email addresses from web sites. If you need to post your Email address on a web site, do so as a graphic or as part of a database that cannot be directly accessed via a web spider.
- **Refrain from entering your Email address in web forms** where asked unless you know the company requesting the information and have read and agree with the company's information privacy policy. You should also be cautious of using some freeware web form completion tools. While these

**Take steps to help keep SPAM from reaching you!**

applications reduce the amount of time it takes to complete a web form or transaction, some are not secure, and have not been compromised by hackers and spammer.

- **Be cautious about replying to any unsolicited Email** where you don't know the sender. Often these spammers send Email trying to get you to send a reply, so that they know your Email address is correct. It is often best to ignore unsolicited SPAM Email, unless the volume starts to get too troublesome.

Many OECN DA-Sites provide SPAM filtering services for their member schools. Please contact your district Technology Coordinator or DA Site personnel if you have questions about the status of SPAM filtering within your school.

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