

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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TO: Board of Trustees

FROM A. McBeath, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT Digital On-line Resources Selector (DORS)

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RESOURCE
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INFORMATION

Up to now, the evaluation and acquisition of educational software resources were handled in different ways across the district. School staff either investigated and evaluated resources themselves or sought assistance from various consultants or technology experts throughout central services. Principals were requesting assistance for consistent information from central services.

Subsequently, a project was undertaken by several central services departments to respond to the needs of school staff for a coordinated district approach. This has resulted in the implementation of a new information system called the Digital On-line Resources Selector (DORS). This application helps schools to select technology resources such as educational software, special hardware and curriculum resources that support teaching and learning. Schools are thus enabled to reference reviewed and recommended resources prior to making purchasing decisions.

Purpose and Benefits of DORS

The goal of the project was to develop and support a coordinated process for providing consistent information and assisting schools to select computerized resources which are recommended for use within the district including software, special hardware, and other computerized resources.

This project is a result of the collaborative efforts between central services: District Technology, Purchasing & Contract Services, Consulting Services, Curriculum, as well as pilot schools. All involved parties indicated that assisting school staff to make informed decisions will be a major result of the project.

DORS features include; Software Overview, Hardware Overview, Online Web Resources (links), Templates, Best Practices, Software and Hardware Reviews, Recommendations and Frequently Asked Questions. In addition to commercial products, DORS includes information about Open Source (free) and other non-commercial products.

Software is evaluated from both a curricular and technical standpoint, and information is available about current version, upgrades, curricular connections, features, templates, integration with other software, special needs considerations, tutorials, and technical evaluation. This enables school staff to make decisions based on reliable information from educators and technological experts in the absence of pressure from company representatives.

Supports Teaching and Learning

DORS benefits schools by providing:

- Recommendations on educationally and technically sound resources aligned to district expectations, instructional focus, grade level and curriculum;
- Descriptions, examples and best practices for using these resources in the teaching and learning process;
- The latest information about a particular resource including information about upgrades and new releases;
- Ability to try the resource before making a decision;
- Reduced staff time spent on resources selection by eliminating the need for each school to independently review products;
- Information on the acquisition and support of these resources.

Supports Staff Collaboration

DORS also serves as a collaborative work space by allowing users to:

- Exchange information about the use of technology in the teaching and learning process;
- Participate in discussion forums that review specific resources;
- Share expertise and proven experience on using specific resources in classrooms;
- Review curricular connections and student exemplars.

Supports Standard Solutions

DORS is an example of how standard solutions benefit the district by helping schools to:

- Ensure resources selected are instructionally sound and aligned with curriculum expectations;
- Reduce maintenance costs by ensuring support and compatibility with district technological infrastructure;
- Obtain favorable pricing negotiated through Purchasing & Contract Services;
- Receive coordinated support for further assistance (technical support, consulting advice, professional development needs, purchasing, etc.).

By providing consistent information and recommended solutions, DORS reduces school costs in acquisition and use of digital educational resources. This reduces the risk to schools of acquiring expensive software and training only to discover later that the particular product does not meet the instructional or curriculum expectations.

It is more efficient and cost-effective when common technologies, applications and processes are used across the district.

Project Status and Availability

DORS was piloted by teachers at a number of schools. Feedback from district teachers and consultants has been very positive.

This service is centrally funded and is now available for all teaching staff to use. District staff can use it from any district network workstation or home computer connected to the district network.

Any district staff member can logon to DORS at <http://dors.epsb.ca> with their Exchange e-mail user ID and password. Feedback from users will influence future content and available features within the system.

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