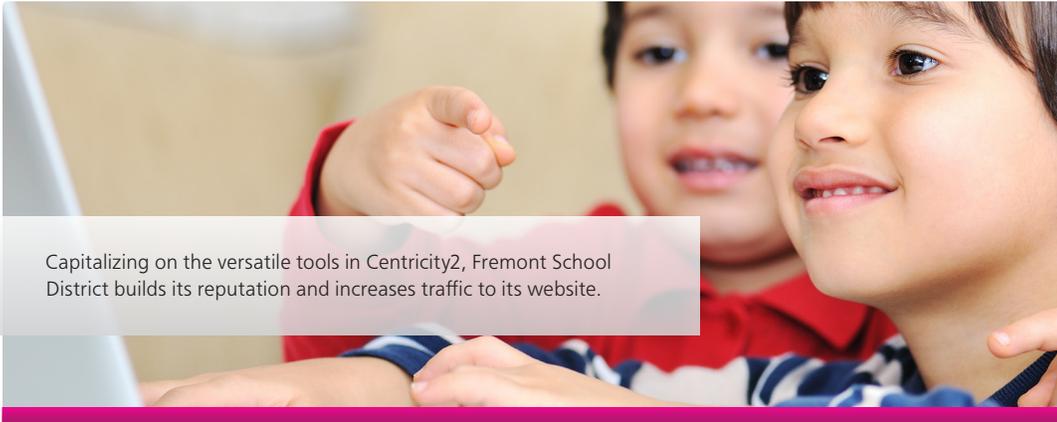


Home page hits soar on Fremont School District's Centricity2™ website



Capitalizing on the versatile tools in Centricity2, Fremont School District builds its reputation and increases traffic to its website.

Imagine experiencing a 1,900 percent increase in home page hits in one year. That's exactly what happened when Fremont (IL) School District 79 launched its new customized website. The statistics demonstrated the dramatic impact a branded website, easier navigation and quality content can have in successfully engaging all members of a K-8 school district.

What triggered such a phenomenal increase in Web activity? Margaret Van Duch, communications coordinator at Fremont, credits a strategy to capitalize on the versatile tools available in Centricity2. Using succinct, targeted and well-timed electronic messages with links to hundreds of Web pages, visits to the Fremont site skyrocketed.

Calendar provides one-stop scheduling

Whether it's a district school board meeting or a multi-age program picnic, the Centricity2 calendar tool helps the district spread the word about school activities and events. Van Duch said the calendar's scheduling feature is especially convenient to plan notifications for upcoming events that are days, weeks, or even months in advance.

"I schedule notifications to push out months from now, and they're automatically removed when the event passes. I don't have to worry about forgetting something or leaving outdated information on the website," she said. "The ability to set activation and expiration dates on the calendar — as well as announcements and news items — is huge."

The calendar is particularly popular with coaches and teachers, Van Duch says. Coaches have items posted on the athletic page that are pushed out to the district calendar. Teachers use their class calendar to link to assignments on their homework page. The district also utilizes the Centricity2 iCal, which synchronizes calendars from desktop to mobile to ensure that students and parents have access to the latest information.

"Can't mess up" CMS

Fremont users quickly discovered the benefits of the Centricity2 content management system. "Its simplicity is extremely important. We don't have to add HTML code to achieve a different look or format. It's easy to learn, add content and design pages. We can move content around in a fluid format. We save a tremendous amount of time and we can't mess it up," Van Duch said.

Ann Ward, a sixth grade science and social studies teacher, uses her Web page to post the online textbook, homework assignments, handouts, PowerPoint™ presentations and photos. She's looking forward to starting a blog for her students. In addition, she and Van Duch are developing another layer of Web pages by grade level. "This gives parents a convenient place to find information about the entire grade, along with links to the individual teacher pages and calendars," Ward said.

Van Duch discovered that e-alerts are easier to manage than the district's previous email system. "According to statistics, 6 a.m. Tuesdays through Thursdays is the best time to send out information. With the e-alert scheduling application, I can write the email ahead of time and schedule its delivery."



E-Alerts get the word out

By using broadcast e-alerts, Fremont sends out content updates, emergency messages and event registration to the entire district or to targeted groups. Van Duch loves how easy it is to link e-alerts to pages across the site, which has been effective in getting people to explore the website. Recipients are automatically subscribed to e-alerts on their mobile devices.

The e-alert is an ideal tool for the Fremont district's green initiative, "Virtual Backpack." The online resource saves time and paper by posting public events and programming on the school's website, such as park district classes, healthcare services and business opportunities.

Web analytics make it count

Fremont staff track the escalating hits to the website through the integrated analytics tool. They closely monitor activity across the entire site, which enables them to adjust their content to meet the community's needs. For example, the district's parent population reads the news section one to two times each week, so Van Duch knows how to gauge the timing and frequency of the information to be posted.

Ward found the analytic tool a useful resource for checking hits when something new is posted on her page, and to help gauge the effectiveness and timeliness of that information.

On the road and on Facebook

The mobile app provides the Fremont community with easy access to customized school and district information on a smartphone, as well as those all-important e-alerts. Van Duch says the mobile app integrates well with the browsers like Firefox, Internet Explorer, and Safari, which is important, since these browsers are continually upgraded.

"I love that whatever I put on the website front page, like articles in the 'Latest News' section, is auto generated to Twitter and Facebook," Van Duch said. She's able to evaluate feedback from Facebook comments, "likes," ratings and rankings. Van Duch's latest communication strategy is Tweeting in real time and sending people to the website for details on the news Tweet.

The Fremont district also uses RSS feeds so subscribers can stay current on Web content updates. This tool has been effective for the athletics program to inform parents and the community about game cancellations, time changes and weather issues.

And the survey says

Van Duch utilizes the survey tool frequently for registration. She targets specific audiences, programming, topics and events. By implementing the survey fill-in form, she captures data for reminders and other communication uses.

"I learned that parents need at least three reminders to complete a survey or register for something," Van Duch said. "I schedule multiple reminders through e-alerts, link to the survey from our Web pages and Centricity2 automatically sends out the notices."

Ward uses the tool to survey parents about the amount, frequency and type of information they like and what delivery format they prefer (print newsletter, email, website).

"Real people read and respond to my emails and phone calls in a timely manner. Never once have I had to follow up with a phone call because someone neglected to return my email."

Tech support raises the bar

Exceptional technical support is key to effective use of website tools, and according to Van Duch, "Schoolwires® support and troubleshooting are outstanding," she said.

She found Schoolwires responsive and innovative when she has requests or needs an issue resolved. "I wanted a different way to display my staff directory. They brainstormed and created an application that was exactly what I wanted and they built it just for me. That service is invaluable."

Centricity2 tools help build credibility

In addition to a distinctive design that reflects the district's rural setting in the Chicago metropolis, the tools in Centricity 2 have helped Fremont build a reputation for credibility.

"Our website is the platform we use to deliver reliable and credible information to our community," Van Duch said. "Instead of venting their frustration or dissension, people go to our website for correct and up-to-date information. It diffuses gossip."

As a result, the district's customers — staff, students, faculty, parents and the community — are informed and satisfied, and the website hits continue to climb.



Fremont replaces “nightmare” website with award-winner

Margaret Van Duch had worked with the Fremont district’s homegrown website for six years and knew it was time for a change. The old site wasn’t content-friendly or easy to navigate. “It was mostly static and browser dependent, and the HTML was hard to maneuver,” she said. “The front was pretty, but the backend was a nightmare.”

Fremont needed a content management solution that let users quickly post content in a user-friendly format where multiple users could edit sections without disturbing other parts of the website.

Van Duch and her colleagues researched hundreds of award-winning school sites. They sought input from graphic designers, teachers, parents, school board and members of the Illinois Chapter of National School Public Relations Association (INSPRA).

“We heard about providers who walked away from a site once it was built and didn’t provide much technical support,” Van Duch said. “Favorable reports from clients clearly showed that Schoolwires was ahead of the market with innovative design, excellent ongoing tech support and products that were specific to K-12 needs.”

Based on their research and endorsement by peers, Fremont selected Schoolwires to help the district build a customized website to enhance its brand and meet its needs well into the future. The site, www.fsd79.org, went live in May 2011 and received the 2011 Award of Merit in the INSPRA Communications Contest.

Fremont School District website report

SECTION	IN-HOUSE WEBSITE MAY 2011	SCHOOLWIRES WEBSITE MAY 2012
District Home Page	22,080	438,586
Fremont Middle School	6,136	128,555
Fremont Intermediate School	2,473	32,696
News & Events	1,878	34,192
Fremont Elementary School	1,799	38,498
E-News	1,686	60,696
Staff Directory	1,536	20,669
Lunch Program	1,401	14,656
Board of Education	396	4,984
Superintendent’s Welcome	296	2,567
Business	295	4,115
Curriculum	227	2,483
Student Services	213	2,794
Technology	121	1,991
Transportation	111	1,669
Teachers	85	3,730

ABOUT FREMONT SCHOOL DISTRICT 79

Located in Mundelein, Illinois, a northern suburb of Chicago, Fremont enrolls 2,200 students in pre-kindergarten through eighth grade. It employs 262 teachers and support staff in its elementary, intermediate and middle school campuses.

The Centricity2 Web analytics tool illustrates the dramatic difference the Fremont district’s new website made in just one year. Statistics provided by Fremont School District 79.

The Schoolwires story

Schoolwires is dedicated to K-12 education, and to the people who are part of every local school community — students, families, teachers, administrators, and supporters of education. From the beginning, we’ve believed that a successful school district is a product of total community involvement. That’s why our Web-based solutions are expressly designed to connect K-12 communities with the information, services and people they need to achieve their district goals. For more than 10 years, our intuitive technologies have been helping administrators and educators, students and parents, communicate and collaborate like never before — to come together around success.

Today, more than 10 million users in the U.S. and China rely on our website, content management and safe social learning solutions to drive engagement in the classroom, locally and across the globe. We’re proud to be a part of that. And we remain committed to helping K-12 communities extend their local reach and transcend the boundaries of their districts so that individuals everywhere can achieve their full potential.



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