

Record Keeping Software 3 Programs Reviewed

By John Hutcheson and Elma Rios

As politicians and parents intensify demands on teachers for greater accountability data, some entrepreneurs are creating computerized programs that may do more than meet the demands. Indeed they may help teachers become more effective. At least three Montessori parents from different regions of the country are pioneering the development of internet based record keeping systems. Motivated by a benevolent desire to help their children's schools, they've utilized their background in Information Technology to develop new products that will enable Montessori schools to dramatically improve evaluation reporting and record keeping.

Whether it is simplifying the lesson plan process, documenting presentations, reporting student progress, or managing school records, this technology holds a great deal of promise. Each vendor offers a unique product or service, providing schools with a variety of options to address their individual needs. All products provide multi-faceted progress reports which can be customized to convey a more personalized assessment. Major features range from completely customized student evaluations, progress reports available for e-mail at a moment's notice, the ability to scan album pages and align them with teachers' lists of presentations, and bar code recognition. All but one of the vendors utilize a web based system, to provide the user with intricate lesson tracking and planning, and a greater facility for parent communication. Respective websites display samples of format, readability and appearance to help buyers get a feel for the product.

This review looks at three programs we were able to identify.

At least three others are apparently deep into the development stage.

- MontAlign is apparently affiliated with Island Village Montessori School in Florida. www.montalign.net/index.html
- Metro Montessori LLC is developing MoreMontessori.com
- Aptware is developing MyMontessori.net www.mymontessori.net/

For the three we examine, we focus primarily on features. While these systems are continually developing, they have much to offer. We look forward to hearing evaluations from users.

Administrative Technologies, Inc.

ATI does not offer teacher lesson planning and record keeping. Instead, it focuses on designing evaluation reports that are clean and easy to read. They reflect a continuity of design through all grade levels and provide schools with custom designed skill-based student evaluation reports and report cards. In the words of the designer, "ATI's student evaluations are not meant to simply regurgitate lists of lessons presented." The teacher is able to include both group and individual comments within each subject. While this system is not web based, it does utilize a combination of FTP (File Transfer Protocol) and USB for encrypted data transfer. E-mail capability is also included. The program's owner/developer personally enters the initial data, tailors a reporting system for each school, and offers additional Information Technology consultation as needed.

ATI serves four schools in Massachusetts.

Montessori Records Xpress

Montessori Records Xpress is a comprehensive web based reporting service with several distinct features. A unique file sharing system enables the user to import extensive lesson sequences and copy a variety of evaluation report formats from various schools. In addition, subscribers can attach album pages to corresponding lessons using just a mouse and scanner. Various reports can be e-mailed directly with just a few mouse clicks. Additionally, MRX offers a basic framework of AMS Primary and Elementary lessons from which the teacher is able to build upon and customize lesson sequences and lesson plans. Using just a mouse, the teacher can create and print a lesson plan.

MRX report cards, "Conference Reports,"

can denote three levels of mastery using words, triangles or percentages. Additionally, the teacher has greater latitude in designing a report and may choose to include skills and individual lessons within each subject area and align them with state standards. Comments can be added to any subject area.

MRX serves 435 classrooms and training centers.

Montessori Trac

Montessori Trac provides a web based software program with exclusive bar-coding material management and parents web access to their children's records (or any other information designated by the administrator). MT tracks school and classroom records, teacher lesson planning and presentations. MT uses a framework of AMI Primary and Elementary lessons which, due to its general nature, any Montessori teacher may use to develop lesson plans and lesson sequences. The report card offers the teacher a customizable Class Behavior Criteria and an area to list Exercises Mastered with a given date. The Website is attractive and colorful.

Montessori Trac serves seven schools in the Tempe, AZ, vicinity.

Implications

The future of Montessori internet based systems is rife with possibility. Beyond empowering the teacher with enhanced planning, management and communication, these innovations can generate a new pedagogic whole. Within this technology is the means to better record and organize the data that drives research to validate Montessori education, thus uniting Montessorians across the world into a global village. Imagine being able to access training albums, view presentations online, chat with mentors through web based cameras or share a lesson with Montessori schools anywhere. At the core of this vision lies the dream of greater possibilities.

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A Quick Look

	Administrative Technologies, Inc.	Montessori Records Xpress	Montessori Trac
REPORT CARDS			
Lesson based reporting	*	*	*
Skills based reporting	*	*	
General comment capability	*	*	*
Subject specific comment capability	*	*	
Lifetime reporting capability	*	*	*
Design flexibility	*	*	
Enhanced rating options (presented, practicing, mastered, words, symbols, percentile, etc.)	*	*	
TEACHER PLANNING			
Lesson planning		1	2
Built-in lesson sequences		*	*
Customizable sequences ²		*	*
Multiple lesson sources (file sharing)		1	
Lesson importing capability		1	
Album scanning ability		*	
STUDENT RECORD KEEPING			
Document student progress/mastery levels		1	1
Capability to align lessons with state standards		2	
Multiple data sorting options		*	
REPORTING/COMMUNICATION			
Attendance		*	*
Student/Staff profiles		*	*
Student periodic progress (daily, weekly, monthly, etc.)		*	*
Demographics		*	*
Parent web access		*	*
General e-mail capability		*	*
E-mail reports to parents		*	
1 mouse activated, keyboard optional 2 requires keyboard & mouse			
Customer Service & Technology Support			
Weekdays	*	*	*
Evenings & Weekends	*	*	

For More Information

Administrative Technologies, Inc.

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 \$10/Student (one time charge) + \$250 - \$500 annual maintenance fee which includes all training, servicing, upgrades and maintenance.

Redrock Software Corporation

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 If hosted by Montessori Trac: \$99 set up fee + \$1 - \$2/student/month
 If self hosted: \$595 - \$3,995 set up fee + \$149 - \$399 annual maintenance/upgrade.

Montessori Records Xpress

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 \$119/classroom/year which includes free, unlimited on-line training with teleconferencing (7 a.m. - 10 p.m. CST), free service upgrades and maintenance. On-Site Training \$1,200 /school with an unlimited audience.