

## Technology can ease teachers' chores

By Matt Lucey / Special To *The Independent*  
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The passage of the "No Child Left Behind" (NCLB) legislation by Congress in 2002 has had wide ranging impacts on schools within our state and throughout the nation. One of the most dramatic effects is the mandatory reliance on accurate data.

In Massachusetts, data gathering is manifested in the long-standing SIMS project (Student Information Management System) which requires each district to maintain a database of 52 data elements for each student.

For many districts this task has caused considerable angst due to the difficulty of managing the volume of dynamic information. Littleton was no exception. We were further compromised due to outdated and unsupported software. But like the old adage reminds us, "Every gray cloud has a silver lining."

Over a period of a few months last year, working with a small ad hoc committee, we investigated upgrading to a "best in breed" application that focused on the NCLB and SIMS requirements. In the end, we chose Administrator's Plus from a Massachusetts company, Rediker Software. The decision was based on the modular nature of the application, satisfied customer base, range of features, and cost.

Our goal was to have an integrated system that supported the entire district. Modularity was important to us because we wanted a defined roadmap for a complete system with complimentary compatible applications.

As part of our initial deployment, along with Administrator's Plus, the schools purchased GradeQuick, a teacher attendance and reporting tool, Scheduling Plus, which the high school and middle school used to prepare this year's classes, and Report Card Plus, which has been implemented at the high school and middle school and is under consideration at Russell Street and Shaker Lane.

In the future, as funds allow, we will explore adding a health module, cafeteria module and web portal.

As many know, given the experiences with the technology boom of the last few years, software companies come and go overnight. Rediker chalks up their longevity to writing quality code and supplying great customer service.

We spoke with some of their existing customers in the area and were impressed by the fervor of their comments regarding application support and stability.

With Rediker's 23 years of experience and thousands of customers in all 50 states and 75 countries coupled with a proposal that waived the cost of a substantial portion of the one-time cost of the software, we felt comfortable moving ahead.

Application training was held in June of last year and again once school resumed in September. Although there were a few bumps in the road, we've grown to appreciate many of the promised benefits of the application suite.

School-wide record keeping as mandated by state and federal government has been streamlined, access to student data is more easily indexed and analyzed, and by leveraging the software, some of the more difficult projects - like scheduling, report cards, and attendance - have been made less cumbersome which allows for more time and energy to be focused on our core passion and responsibility, teaching and learning.

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