Case Study: Vacaville Unified School District
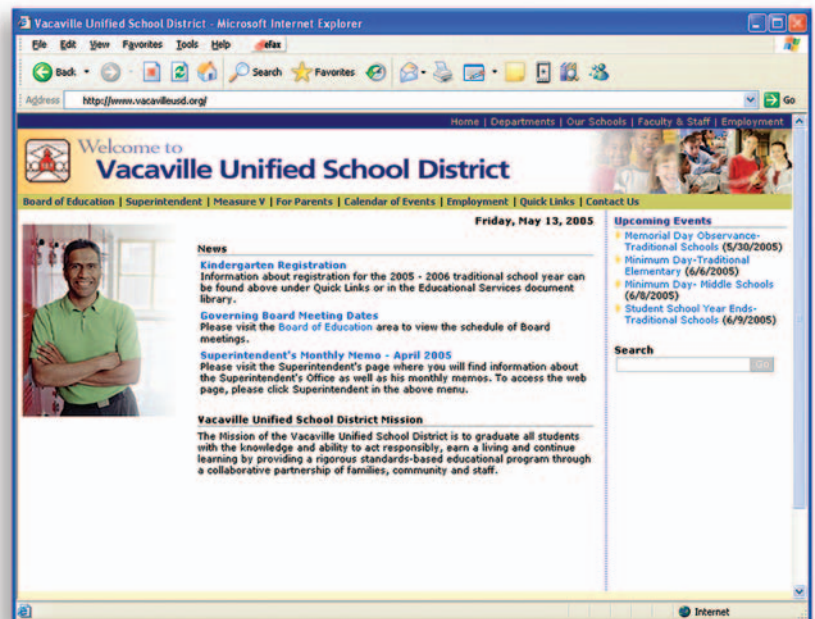
True Cost Savings for the Vacaville Unified School District

http://www.vusd.solanocoe.k12.ca.us

T he Vacaville Unified School District (VUSD) has been a client of School Web Services since 2000, and its Web Site serves as an excellent illustration of the many tools of the SWS Campus Platform. Speaking to the Vacaville Reporter in 2000, Earl Swenerton, the technology director for the district, had this to say of his expectations of the site. "With a new district Web site, parents, students and prospective employees would be able to access school-year calendars, contact information for district administrators, agendas and minutes from school board meetings, district-wide test scores and job openings." Further, "The site would also likely provide access to in-house memos and course descriptions for teachers and administrators." The site has fulfilled all this and more in the years since its first publication.

The need for true cost savings was another factor in the district's decision to contract with School Web Services. The VUSD had relied on volunteer support, but found if a site is not functional, then even with few labor costs, the funds spent on the hardware, software and licensing are being largely wasted. As Swenerton said in the interview, "There's a difference between a professional Web site and the kind of thing you get with a volunteer, which tends to be flashy and pretty but not always functional, especially if you're depending on it as one of your main ways of communicating information." The district needed performance and dependability.

The VUSD serves over 15,000 students over a large community, both suburban and rural, of 91,000. This single district has 10 elementary, 2 middle, and 4 high schools, plus an adult education center. With so many students spread over a large

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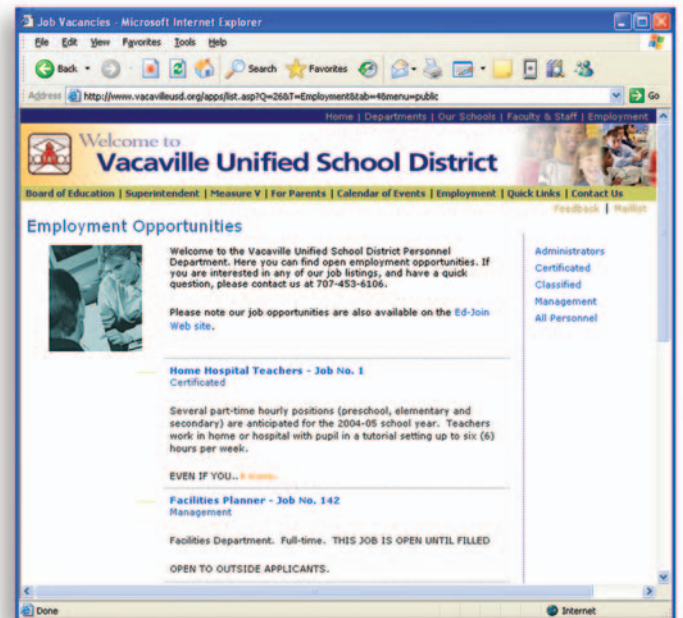>
> Earl Swenerton, Vacaville Unified School District

region in 17 institutions, the district's online presence is all the more important. Of course, creating that presence as inexpensively and efficiently as possible, is vital, as well. One key is in involving a large number of non-technical faculty, staff, and departments in creating and maintaining the site, which means making the site as user-friendly as possible:

"Publishing Jobs to the Web site is really easy for me. All I have to do is complete a simple form, specify the category, salary, etc. and then attach detailed job announcements as Word or PDF files. This is very nice because I don't have to wait to have somebody post the job to the Web for me, I just do it myself. It is easy and quick for me to do it." (Barbara Lawson, Personnel Clerk, Vacaville Unified School District)

After many years with the SWS Campus Platform, the faculty and staff of the Vacaville Unified School District have become skilled at utilizing the Web site to serve their students, and students and parents have come to rely on the site as a valuable resource. As the district is long passed the initial start-up costs, it can now maintain its site at considerable savings, with the knowledge that the infrastructure has the flexibility to evolve with the needs of the Vacaville community.

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