



SEVEN OAKS
SCHOOL DIVISION
community begins here

Community

B E G I N S H E R E

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A Site to Behold!

The new www.7oaks.org is more than just a website

It took a lot of work, but the end result is perhaps the most comprehensive, interactive and informative school division website in Manitoba.

The new Seven Oaks School Division website all started when Gabe Kraljevic (Divisional Teacher Team Leader) and Michael Pohorily (Divisional Team Leader, Educational Technology) met with Division Superintendent Brian O'Leary and then Secretary-Treasurer Ed Johns.

"Basically we were told that the website was a little bit out of date," says Kraljevic. "We were asked to brainstorm our absolute wildest wishes for a website – for what it could do not just for the community, but for teachers, kids and everyone in the Division."

Those broad parameters opened a world of possibilities. But with all the possibilities came a challenge: how to manage an incredible amount of content in a way that would be engaging, dynamic, easy-to-use and continuously updated.

"You look at it now and you think, 'It makes absolute sense! It's so easy to use! Of course that's the way it'll be!' But in the beginning, it wasn't quite like that at all," says Pohorily. "A great deal of time was taken to in order to create a simple interface. It's complex in the background but simple on the surface."

It was time well spent as that easy-to-navigate, easy-to-use content management system is the key to unlocking a whole lot of features for people from all over the Division.

The screenshot displays the homepage of the Seven Oaks School Division website. At the top is the division's logo and name. Below this is a navigation bar with links for School Division, Teachers, Students & Parents, Support Staff, and Continuing Education. A search bar and links for Log In, Sitemap, and Contact are also present. The main content area is divided into several sections: 'Links for Teachers' with a list of resources like Activity Finder and Rubric Developer; 'SOSD Teachers' Resource Centre' featuring a 'Sharing Connecting Growing' banner and sections for Activity Finder, Rubric Developer, and Make a Classroom Website; and 'Useful Tools' which includes a School Calendar, Winnipeg Weather, and a Quick Poll. The bottom of the page has a footer with copyright information and a list of links.

Schools Log On

Making certain each school in the Division had a web presence was an important consideration. Most school sites were being developed by a few teachers with programming skills on their own time. Unfortunately, this often meant that if the teacher got busy, the site wouldn't – or couldn't – be updated by someone else.

The new site, however, has integrated school websites built into the Division site. Using the simple "word processing style" content management system, authorized users (virtually any person on staff at a school) can easily add and update content. This gives more people at each school the opportunity to keep all its information up-to-date.

The sites also share a common look now, all with the familiar Seven Oaks School Division brand. Pohorily feels that's an important part of bringing everyone together, because instead of the Division being seen as separate from a school and vice-versa, they are seen as part of something bigger.

"It's actually something that belongs to the Division and *they* belong to the Division so it helps form a sense of family and community."

A Toolkit for Teachers

Teachers also became an important focal point for the site. The site not only provides an easy means of creating websites for every classroom, it provides a virtual resource centre where teachers can collaborate, inspire one another,



All users have a Digital Locker available to them, providing them with an information storage area that allows people to upload, store and organize materials. Even more significantly, those materials can be accessed from virtually any computer with an Internet connection.

Students can upload an assignment in progress and work on it from home. Parents can log on to see what their children are

working on and perhaps get a sense of where their child needs to focus more. For teachers, it means lesson plans, worksheets and notes can be completed anytime and uploaded so they're waiting to be printed off at school the next day.

In other words, schoolwork is always a mouse click away, so there are more opportunities to keep up with studies... and fewer excuses for missing deadlines.

Log On, Delve In

There's literally something for everyone on the new Seven Oaks School Division website:

- A **Calendar** that provides an overview of all scheduled events, holidays and in-services for the Division.

- **Discussion Boards** where anyone in the community can freely voice their thoughts, ideas and opinions about education.
- The **HTML Newsletter** which takes a variety of Division news stories and sends them directly to your e-mail.
- The **Continuing Education Registration System** that provides a secure method for people to register and pay for various continuing education courses
- The **Professional Development Registration System** where teachers and support staff can register for workshops or even create and offer workshops of their own.
- **User-created Online Polls and Surveys** to assist in gathering feedback on education-related issues.
- Password protected **Online Report Cards and Attendance Reports** updated each semester.
- A **Resource Booking System** to prevent double booking of meeting rooms and facilities.

Visit **www.7oaks.org** and start exploring. You'll see why it's more than a website; it's an extension of the "community begins here" philosophy.



promote professional development opportunities and offer insights based on personal experiences.

"Just as you have tools in a toolbox for carpenters or craftspeople, this provides a set of professional tools for teachers," says Pohorily. "It represents something new for our teachers in that it's an integrated set of tools that we've never had before, all in one place."

Teachers and support staff learn how easy and advantageous the site can be at special site-focused professional development days held at each school. As part of their "lesson plan," teachers are shown how to build their own websites – and once they see how easy it is, many of them can't wait to make their sites shine.

"I got a couple of e-mails last week from teachers who are saying, 'Come check out my site!' because they're really excited about what they're doing," says Kraljevic.

The Digital Locker

Another valuable tool for anyone signed up and logged on to the site – teachers, parents and students alike – is the Digital Locker.

Gabe Kraljevic's Favourite Feature: The Idea Centre

"One of the biggest resources we have in the Division is our colleagues. The Idea Centre is a place for teachers to share their gems, their ideas, the resources they've discovered. If every teacher in the Division just put one idea up there, that's now 700 ideas to pick out from."

Michael Pohorily's Favourite Feature:

"Personally, I like the news pages for teachers. There's so much information that comes through. Using the news pages for teachers we can highlight information quickly, like using an electronic bulletin board."

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note: all phone numbers provided
 are home phone numbers

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