

NEWS RELEASE



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ePals to Provide New York City Public School Students and Parents with Safe E-mail Learning Solution

ePals SchoolMail® service, combined with Microsoft Live@edu, to connect millions of New York City users, provide support for parents using instant language translation and enhance student collaborative learning experiences

New York City (July 15, 2010) – ePals announced today it will provide a safe, secure and customizable e-mail solution to the New York City Department of Education (DOE) that will be available to the city’s approximately 2 million students and parents. This will help schools create online communities connecting students, parents, teachers, and school leaders as they adopt technology as an integral part of student learning. Additionally, schools adopting this solution will have access to the ePals Global Community™, allowing them to collaborate on meaningful learning projects with classrooms throughout the world.

ePals won the competitively bid DOE project to provide its SchoolMail® product to New York City for five years beginning in the 2010-2011 school year. The service is being provided at no cost to New York City public schools. The goal of this program is to provide a safe, secure and private space where students can easily communicate and collaborate as part of their learning experience. Parents will be able to receive e-mail from their school and the DOE regarding school events and their children’s progress in class, as well as the opportunity to interact with their child’s teachers. ePals SchoolMail will be provided to the New York City DOE without advertising of any kind to students. ePals anticipates high quality sponsors and educationally-related advertising for adults.

ePals SchoolMail is hosted on the Web, integrating technologies from Microsoft Live@edu, so the district does not need to maintain software, hardware or server side technology for the deployment. This cloud-based solution is estimated to avoid the district spending up to \$5 million annually on infrastructure to host e-mail for students, teachers and parents.

“This partnership will create an additional channel through which schools can communicate with families about how to get more involved in their school communities and academic programs,”

said Schools Chancellor Joel Klein. “Our children always do better when their families are invested in their education.”

“Expediting student-teacher-parent communication and workflow is necessary for 21st century schools and in building a community of collaborative learners in the digital era,” said Tim DiScipio, co-founder of ePals. “New York City is setting the standard for other U.S. school systems by introducing collaborative technologies to equip students with digital literacy skills and the ability to create, manage and share their work. ePals SchoolMail and its collaborative workspace tools help NYC students work with each other as well as with other ePals classrooms across the globe, putting NYC on par with classrooms in Europe and Asia that have already embraced Internet-enabled learning technologies.”

“E-mail has become the predominant form of writing and communicating in the 21st century, especially as it pertains to critical thinking and thoughtful expression,” said Donald J. Leu, PhD, director of New Literacies Research Lab at the University of Connecticut. “More information is communicated today by e-mail than by text messaging or other social media. Districts, schools and teachers must integrate e-mail into the writing and content curriculum to effectively prepare students in powerful ways for their college and workplace futures in a world of electronic information and communication.”

The ePals SchoolMail solution combined with Microsoft Live@edu offers many benefits for students, teachers and parents.

- Students can benefit from using the SchoolMail solution at school, at home or in public facilities, like the library. In addition to robust communications capabilities, students can access educational content from providers such as National Geographic or expert mentors approved by their teachers, to collaborate online with other students studying languages, history, science, and other subjects to improve writing and digital literacy skills. For example, a Brooklyn-based student in fifth grade could secure a mentor through the program and collaborate online to improve the student’s literacy skills.
- Schools can provide electronic communications capabilities to their students and other stakeholders with the assurance that it is safe and secure, compliant with district policies, and filtered in accordance with specified controls. With these capabilities, students can receive school or homework instructions, port their work between school and home, collaborate with classmates, turn in assignments or apply to college. For example, a third grade student in Manhattan could communicate with other third graders in his or her classroom or school, with his or her teacher and parents, but not with high school kids.
- Educators can choose from robust resources that enhance the integration of technology and collaboration for learning purposes, while principals or others might update parents about upcoming events, or post and update calendars. Online journaling and writing projects may be established, and students can communicate with others in New York City or around the world through access to the ePals Global Community, which connects 600,000 educators who teach 25 million students worldwide for project-sharing, cross-cultural exchanges and language learning practice with native speakers. For example, a class in Queens learning Chinese could collaborate with a class in Beijing learning English.

- For the first time, the New York City DOE will provide every parent with an e-mail account. Parents can save time by effectively receiving communications from their schools, and communicate with their children about schoolwork and school events, using SchoolMail features such as instant translation into 58 languages — an important capability given that more than 40 percent of the city’s students report speaking a language other than English at home.

About the New York City Department of Education

The New York City Department of Education is the largest system of public schools in the United States, serving about 1.1 million students in over 1,600 schools. <http://schools.nyc.gov>.

About ePals

A privately held education technology company, ePals Inc. has created the world’s largest K-12 learning network. ePals offers primary and secondary schools, teachers, students, and parents worldwide a safe and secure platform for building educational communities, providing quality digital content and facilitating collaboration for effective 21st century learning. ePals is used by more than 600,000 educators and reaches more than 25 million students and parents in 200 counties and territories. www.ePals.com.

ePals is committed to enabling academically rigorous educational opportunities in economically disadvantaged environments worldwide through the ePals Foundation - provider of In2Books, the company's flagship literacy e-mentoring program. Corporate information is available at www.corp.epals.com.

About ePals Products

ePals is a recognized leader in K-12 education technology and has more than a decade of experience providing safe, secure and customizable online communication, collaboration and learning solutions to school systems in the U.S. and internationally. Its award-winning products include the ePals Global Community (www.epals.com), ePals SchoolMail, ePals LearningSpace, and In2Books. ePals products are built on a highly-scalable distributed learning platform that is easily implemented at the school or district level to deliver desired communication and collaboration with an assurance of K-12 regulatory compliance, security and individualized policy control. This includes domain-based and message-based security (filtering, monitoring and moderation) combined with innovative “Rules Based Control” methods that may be established for each user based on defined roles. Roles could include student, guardian, educator, moderator; organizational hierarchy such as district, school, grade, group; and other factors such as relationships to other users or groups such as a student’s parent, membership in a collaborative group or sent mail versus received mail. ePals products meet the strict requirements of COPPA (Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act), FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act) and TRUSTe children’s privacy certification.

About Microsoft Live@edu

Live@edu is a no-cost hosted platform for students, staff, faculty, and alumni communications and collaboration, providing industry-leading services to the global education market. E-mail and calendars with a 10GB inbox, 25 GB of additional file storage, document sharing, instant messaging, video chat and mobile e-mail are just part of the feature set. Live@edu provides

students with the professional tools to prepare them for college or work from day one. Live@edu is accessible through popular Web browsers for Windows, Mac and Linux operating systems – and easy to set up, administer and manage. More than 10,000 schools in more than 130 countries have enrolled in Live@edu, serving 11 million people worldwide. More information is available at <http://www.microsoft.com/liveatedu>.

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