

LOCAL NEWS: Rockford

Parents OK with posting grades online

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ROCKFORD — Anthony Smerko admits he was wrong. Smerko, the principal at Holy Family Catholic School, said his concerns about installing an online grading system to allow parents to check their children's grades were unnecessary.

"My greatest concern might have been whether parents would get too much information too fast," he said. "So far, the feedback has been all positive. Parents like the immediacy of the information the best and not having to wait for three weeks to get a progress report. They like the idea that they can address things without waiting for progress reports to come out."

Parents of sixth-, seventh- and eighth-graders have online access to grades as soon as they are recorded and posted by teachers.

This is the first school year Holy Family is using the program, called TeacherEase. About 560 students attend the school. About 210 are in junior high. The only change to the program has been adding a provision to include semester exams into the final grades listed on the site. Students take cumulative semester exams, which needed to be listed on the site, too, Smerko said. "We've had no real surprises with the program," he said.

About 90 percent to 95 percent of parents are using the system to check their children's grades. Smerko believes the system allows parents to address problems before they show up on report cards. He also thinks the system has driven students to try a little harder when they know they are within points of moving up a grade.

"There's no solid proof, but subjectively, I hear students in the hallways making comments like, 'I'm pretty close,' and 'I can do better,' 'I'm not far away from a better grade' and 'I can get my grade up.' "