

Blogs

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In the fall, the pair used the blog to rally supporters for Eberhart's re-election and the election of trustee Sherry Whitmarsh, who occasionally posts on the site. They also criticized then-incumbent April Treece and challenger Jeff Adams, as well as Superintendent Gary McHenry, who last week agreed to resign after losing a running battle with the new majority.

Gina Hale, who blogs about special education, said Eberhart and Strange's blog took on a negative tone as it built momentum toward ousting Treece and McHenry.

"I understand the political need to build factions and a base of support," she said. "Now that they've accomplished some of their goals, I'm watching to see if they can be as artful about bringing people together who have really different points of view."

Many anonymous posters joined the fray, sometimes seeming like an angry mob. District teachers and parents also jumped on the bandwagon with blogs disseminating information and calling for change.

"We're trying to upgrade our Web site and eventually link it with our blog," said teachers union President Mike Noce. "I've also thought of podcasts and taking surveys online."

Central Contra Costa bloggers such as the Mayor of Claycord, Concord blogger and Mister Writer carry on lively discussions with small groups of fans and others about the district's woes, including budget cuts and dis-

Online comments

"McHenry wins sweet buyout deal: Sounds like McHenry got the better part of this deal and is laughing all the way to the bank. Plus we hope this is not an example of the negotiating skills the board brings to the table when bargaining with the blessed unions. More importantly, the McHenry buyout news diverts attention from the MDUSD decision to raise taxes."

— Bill Gram-Reefer, Feb. 11, Halfway to Concord blog

"YES!!! Now Paul and the Gang can get some real reform

in this district. It is long overdue. Dr. Nicoll we're behind you 100%!"

— Army Dad, Feb. 10, ContraCostaTimes.com

Responding to Jan. 29 Times story quoting Superintendent Gary McHenry: "Mr. McHenry is correct. I will not support his proposed cuts when they directly affect our children. It is not personal, nor is it motivated by anything except educating our children, keeping the board priorities and doing the job that I was elected to do."

— Sherry Whitmarsh, Jan. 29, MDUSD blog

satisfaction with McHenry. These blogs sometimes discuss identical issues with the same posters, giving them an "in-crowd" feeling. The men behind them say they want to include everyone.

The Mayor of Claycord shares a chat room with Eberhart and Strange, boosting visibility for both blogs.

"I think it helps to be connected with them, but I don't think it's a little clique," said the mayor, who has maintained his anonymity. "But, I could see why people could think that. Usually, if they put something up, I'll put something up, but it might be a different angle."

Koka Sexton, known as the Concord Blogger on his virtual Mayor of Concord site, said some blogs merely repost information from the Times or the district.

"If I see something that catches my eye," Sexton said, "I'll grab that and then write my opinion. So, it is getting another voice out there and asking for input."

Although each blog tries to present a unique perspective, some people say the blogs are biased and disparage opposition. During the election, comments grew uncivil, said Bill Gram-Reefer, who posted a paid ad for Eberhart and Whitmarsh on his Halfway to Concord blog.

"It was like somebody got pushed down and everybody was kicking the corpse," he said, adding that he didn't join in the barbs. "But, God bless 'em, it was great fun."

As new blog sites compete for attention in the ever-expanding blogosphere, each is challenged to find its own identity and purpose, said André Gensburger, a former Mt. Diablo school district teacher who runs the Mister Writer blog.

"There's plenty of room for it," he said. "I just think we haven't yet discovered where they're going to end up being the most useful. I know the media is looking at it. Much like Web sites were when they first came out, I

Some local blogs and Web sites

■ <http://ccexm.blogspot.com>: Mr. Writer blog by André Gensburger

■ <http://claycord.blogspot.com>: anonymous Mayor of Claycord blog

■ <http://thedubc.blogspot.com>: anonymous DubC blog about Walnut Creek

■ <http://mayorofconcord.com>: Concord blogger Koka Sexton aka "The Mayor of Concord (not really)"

■ <http://mdusd.blogspot.com>: MDUSD blog by board president Gary Eberhart and Vice President Paul Strange

■ <http://mdusdparents.blogspot.com>: MDUSD Parents blog by Catherine Myers, a Clayton parent

■ <http://mdusdsped.blogspot.com>: MDUSD special ed blog by Gina Hale, parent of special ed student

■ <http://mdusdteachers.blogspot.com>: Mt. Diablo Education Association Teachers Speaking Up

■ www.contracostatimes.com: Contra Costa Times newspaper stories and discussion forums

■ www.halfwaytoconcord.com: Halfway to Concord blog by Bill Gram-Reefer

■ www.mdusd.k12.ca.us: Mt. Diablo Unified School District Web site

■ www.wcsn.org: Walnut Creek Schools Together Now Web site

think there's a lot of trial and error going on."

Reach Theresa Harrington at 925-945-4764 or tharrington@bayareanewsgroup.com.

reflection on the passing of a "lifelong friend."

Reach Chuck Barney at cbarney@bayareanewsgroup.com. Check out his blog at <http://blogs.mercurynews.com/aei>.

CORRECTIONS

The Times corrects all significant factual errors that come to the editors' attention. Telephone numbers for the editors responsible for news content are listed on

Digital

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Executives at the stations pointed to their own economic concerns as a reason for proceeding with the change. Craig Coane, president and general manager of San Francisco-based KOFY, said Channel 20 can reduce "about 60 percent" of its energy consumption by shutting down its analog transmitter — at a savings of nearly \$20,000 a month.

Viewers who own TV sets that don't have cable or satel-

to implement a delay for the mass changeover.

No one knows for sure how many households are still unprepared for the digital transition — a recent survey by Nielsen put the estimate at 6 million nationally — but station executives are bracing for push back from their audiences.

"It doesn't matter how much information is put out, there will be a segment of the population that waits until the last minute — until they see snow on their screens — before they do something."

25 and 100 calls per day" in the past week from consumers asking about the changeover. "Most are inquiries on where to purchase converter boxes and obtain coupons," he said.

Rosenberg, whose assistance center in downtown Oakland features a demonstration on how to install a converter box, said the majority of viewers affected by the changeover are often on fixed incomes and tend to be elderly, disabled, or of limited English fluency.

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SuperLotto Plus
Saturday, Feb. 14 draw

Mega Millions
Tuesday, Feb. 17 draw