

Words to the Wise

One Source
One System

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www.ncwise.org

For story ideas or questions you would like to see answered in this newsletter, please contact NC WISE Information Specialist Michele Burton at 919.807.3456 or mburton@dpi.state.nc.us

Back to School = Slow Systems

As the new school year begins, you may have experienced slow performances when utilizing the NC WISE application. The NC WISE technical team has been monitoring the system for potential issues, and has discovered that extremely high user loads and high volumes of duplicate user sessions are the main causes for the slow down. Although the heavy user load is expected and planned for, the duplicate sessions tend to block themselves and actually slow down all requests in the database. We strongly urge you to remind all NC WISE users not to create more than one session when logging into the system. Also, when running lengthy or complex reports, please refrain from creating more than one report request per user at any one time. Submit the initial request, wait a period of time for the report to complete and then submit your next request. The NC WISE technical team will continue to monitor the issues, and will keep you updated on the progress.



You Have A Friend Request!

facebook

We would like to think that we are already your friend, but now we want to be your friend on Facebook too!

If you are hip to social networking media, then consider following and interacting with us! Our page will stay updated with important dates and all the latest happenings with NC WISE. You can also join our user community group and let us know what's on your mind. To find us on Facebook, type our email address ncwise@dpi.state.nc.us in the search field.

MAINTENANCE WEEKEND**» UPCOMING DATES**

2009	2010
October 16-19	January 8-11
November 13-16	February 19-22
December 11-14	March 19-22
	April 23-26
	May 21-24
	June 18-21

**Course Utility Database is Here!**

NCDPI is excited to announce that the Course Utility Database is active and available for you to use.

First presented at the Summer Virtual Academy and piloted by local LEAs, the database was developed to provide one central location for DPI and LEA staff members to view, search and verify what courses are available for the students of North Carolina schools.

Built-in search options include:

- Multiple Search Criteria
- Course Code
- Course Description
- 5th Position of the External Course Code
- Academic Level
- Grade Level
- Course End Date
- Inactive Courses
- Active Courses

The Course Utility Database is open to everyone and can be accessed by using the drop down feature on the NC WISE Web site or by visiting <https://schools.nc.gov/coursecodes>.

Now Playing! NC WISE Training Videos!

Missed a Refresher session or just can't fit it into your busy day? No problem!

The NC WISE training team has begun recording the Refresher sessions so that you are able to view them as a video at your convenience.

Below are a listing of current Refresher videos available. More videos will be added in the future.

Teacher Assist Module
RPG/Dropout
Incidents

To access the videos, please visit the NC WISE Web site and click the "What's New" tab.

(Windows Media Player Required)

At a Glance: NC WISE Ad-Hoc Reporting

NC WISE Ad-Hoc Reporting (AHR) is currently in Phase 2 of its evolution. The AHR State Rollout Project has been submitted and is currently in Gate 2 State Approval to start the Execution and Build Phase. For those who wish to be more familiar with AHR, its current status and what is coming at the completion of Phase 2, a summary is included below.

AHR is a user empowering extension to the NC WISE suite of student information service applications. In fact, its capabilities span beyond its assumed ad-hoc reporting-like capabilities which are at its core. In addition to on-demand reporting, the service also provides features for sharing report objects and their results as well as sharing/accessing other information content, plus the ability to export reportable data from AHR into other applications like Excel. In that regard, perhaps the “name” AHR is limiting in what facility it implies.

The reports that come from AHR have capabilities and facilities beyond what is typically available through other student information reporting services, some of which include:

- Ability to dynamically sort results with a single mouse click.
- Ability to easily add graphs and charts to visually represent the underlying report detail.
- Ability to organize and select specific data via built-in filters or create your own filter on-the-fly.
- Ability to access and export data/results to other applications like Excel on demand.

From a business operational and cost perspective, AHR provides the ability for the user to create just-in-time reports without needing to initiate a request to engage DPI staff to understand requirements, design, build, test and finally make a specific report available through either the SIS vendor (for eSIS) or the Reporting Hub, etc. Customer feedback to date indicated that these savings are typically between a few days to over a month depending upon the report.

In addition, the user has the ability to create a new report and share it. A user can also save time by using a report (all, or in part) that has already been created by someone else, rather than spending the time to create that new report from scratch. As the service and associated user community grows, the business efficiencies and cost savings can be significant.

Current Implementation (Phase 1)

Currently in limited rollout, AHR is in Phase 1 production supporting the extended reporting needs of Wave I LEAs, via the original pilot hardware. As is the case with the student information system component eSIS, in order to effectively support the state-wide needs, AHR requires a hardware upgrade, which is part of the Phase 2 development and rollout cycle.

During Phase 1 limited rollout, after receiving training, each LEA begins with two developer accounts, as the rollout strategy is to concentrate on report developers first to provide the portfolio of reports to address their current business needs. These reports can then be shared with the larger community who will be able to run and view results.

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Part of the reason for this training strategy is that AHR is different in context from most other user applications. Unlike the traditional data entry and view capabilities of most service applications, half of the AHR service is based in a report development environment called Web Report Studio (WRS). In that respect, WRS requires a specific set of training for these initial LEA report designers. These designers, in addition, should have good eSIS data experience within their LEA. This additional requirement for report developers is important, so that the downstream report information user/consumer can have confidence that reports they use have that knowledge and experience behind them.

In addition, unlike other applications, report development-specific training for AHR is done in the production environment, not a training environment. The rationale here is twofold: First, because of the robustness of the reporting capabilities in WRS, the user will more easily learn and engage in report writing when they can leverage their user experience and comfort by using their own data. This allows them to focus more energy on understanding the tool. Second, at the end of their training, because they used their own LEA's data, reports built during class can be used immediately by the LEA, creating a business benefit, as soon as the next day.

Going Forward (Current Phase 2) Activities:

Updated User features/benefits:

- AHR data will be expanded to include Student Credit History and Teams data.
- The system will support access to historical detail data that spans previous years.
- The AHR data repository will also expand to include data from and support all LEAs.
- The WRS User Interface will change, improving ease of use and easier report construction. Data extraction capabilities will also be improved.
- Capability will be introduced to create cross-domain reports, functionality previously not available. For example, a user will be able to create a report that includes absence data and incident data.

Additional user benefits from Phase 2 include improved performance and data availability as well as state-level support objectives for user capacity and ID management. From the system, operational and user support side, Phase 2 activity will focus on elements required to support a statewide rollout and includes:

- A hardware expansion/upgrade
- New user support tools

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- A new, more efficient ETL data load process.
- New operational monitoring & support tools.
- A new, simpler and more robust account authorization and maintenance capability.

In addition, the AHR foundation will be upgraded to SAS 9.2, providing more robust end-to-end service support now, as well as the benefit of avoiding the additional cost and user impact of an additional downstream upgrade.

For questions regarding Ad-Hoc Reporting, contact Ken Weiss at kweiss@dpi.state.nc.us



NC WISE Communications Now on the Web!

If you have missed one of our e-mail communications, don't worry about looking through your inbox trying to find it! You can view everything we send out by the week on the NC WISE Web site.

Email sent within the past 30 days can be viewed in the "What's New" section at http://www.ncwise.org/whats_new2.html.

Weekly E-bulletins from the previous school year to the current may be viewed at http://www.ncwise.org/ncwise_email_bulletins.html.

Parent Assistant Pilot Rolls Out!

Soon, the possibility of a parent being able to log on to NC WISE to check on their child's performance in school will become a reality.



Parent Assistant

The Parent Assistant Module was introduced this month as a pilot in the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools. NC WISE Management anticipates that the module will be available to all districts by the end of this year when the eSIS upgrade is completed.

Parent Assistant will give parents the capability to view information about their child or children enrolled in NC Public Schools via the internet 24/7. Examples of the types of information parents will be able to view include attendance, current grades, homework assignments and tests, credits earned toward graduation and lots more. In addition to English, Parent Assistant will also be available in Spanish and French.

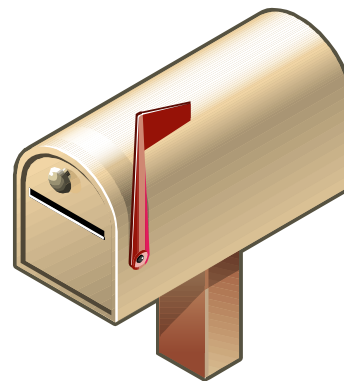
Parent Assistant webinars previewing the system will be forthcoming! Stay tuned to our NC WISE Communications for more information and dates!

Thank You, Wayne!



Congratulations to NC WISE Service Desk Manager Wayne Price (left) as he embarks on a well deserved retirement. Wayne has worked in state government for 25 years, with almost 13 of those being at DPI.

The NC WISE Team celebrated Wayne's retirement on September 18th, when he was presented with a service plaque by Academic Services Director, Dr. John Wetsch (right).



Comments & Suggestions

As always we welcome your comments, feedback, suggestions and story ideas! Please contact us through the NC WISE Mailbox at ncwise@dpi.state.nc.us

Walking for a Cure

NC WISE Team Members, Ladansa Ussery (left) and Anh Gibbs (right) will participate in the Avon Walk for Breast Cancer on Oct. 24-25. The event consists of a 26 mile walk on the first day, sleeping overnight in a tent and finishing the race the next day with 13 more miles.

Ladansa and Anh each need to raise a minimum of \$1,800 in order to participate in the event.

To find out more about this cause or to make a donation towards their goal, please visit http://info.avonfoundation.org/goto/anh_gibbs and at http://info.avonfoundation.org/goto/ladansa_ussery.

