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Transcripts in Transit - Digital, Safe, and Secure

Just about everything has gone digital – from the glamorous (think music and videos) to the mundane (think birth certificates and tax returns). Therefore, high school transcripts must have been digitized, right? Wrong! At least, not in the state of New Jersey, where an array of concerns with security and data integrity have delayed the concept until recently. Finally secondary schools there are beginning to consider the transmission of student transcript information to colleges via the Internet.

[NJ Transfer](#) has linked New Jersey Colleges and Universities together for transcript transmissions. These institutions don't just exchange transcripts among themselves, but can also send/receive electronic transcripts to over 600 U.S. and Canadian institutions. Now, in a bold and groundbreaking move, NJ Transfer has partnered with Vineland Public Schools to transfer high school students' transcripts to numerous colleges and universities, which have linked, with NJ Transfer. Transcripts going to out-of-state institutions are sent through a host server located at the University of Texas. The old, laborious, and time consuming process of mailings with its numerous pitfalls has been replaced with a secure and instantaneous delivery of student data from the school district's student's record system (Keystone Student Information Systems) to NJ Transfer and then to the identified universities and colleges.

Electronic transference of transcripts is probably the best method of sending student information. Some might think that paper transcripts are safe and secure due to the physical and concrete nature of paper, but this couldn't be further from the truth. First, they can be easily lost in transit. Second, with today's copiers, a clever but dishonest person can copy, alter, and re-copy a transcript. Electronic transcripts, on the other hand, offer many advantages, including:

- Immediate transfer of data with no wait time for traditional mailing
- Secure transcript transmission
- No confusion in the transcript sending < > receiving cycle
- An audit trail
- Cost effectiveness (save mailing, printing, staff time)

One obvious area of concern with electronic transference is security and whether the system can be compromised. In reality, this system is actually much more secure than paper mailings. Security parameters and procedures for the electronic transfer are as follows:

- The transcript data is transferred directly from the school district's student data systems to NJ Transfer and then to the college or university.
- The protocols offer restricted parameters in the process of file creation which develops a secure file system; this ensures a secure data transmission process
- There are strict limits to users access through user rights and folder access

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For those still skeptical, here are
some system safeguards:

- A code from an approved district staff member must be entered into the NJ Transfer Login Screen. This code has over 2 billion permutations.
- Then a password must be entered. The password has over 200 trillion permutations.
- The computer user must have rights and user privileges to the district's student's database. Access is limited to only a few staff and set up for only a few computers in the district.
- The student files and associated data are also clearly defined and must emanate from the district's student information system.

With all of the above safeguards, electronic transcript transmission is much more secure and assured than the old paper method.

The real winners are the students who are looking at the various colleges for admissions. Transcripts can be sent in seconds to as many colleges as desired. Unlike as with the paper transmission method, this doesn't take weeks and doesn't involve numerous phone calls to be sure of receipt.

We encourage all high schools to seriously consider implementing a system which really benefits everyone involved.

A special thanks to Linda Santagata, Vineland School District Supervisor of Student Services for her integral part in the initiative.

Resource _____

[Vineland High School Enters the Age of Electronic Transcripts](#) (Power Point Presentation)

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