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Lunch payments to change in Schuylkill Haven schools

BY MARIA HERNE
STAFF WRITER
mherne@republicanherald.com

Students in the Schuylkill Haven School District may soon be able to pay for their lunches with a swipe of their finger through a new scanning and point of sale system the district will be implementing in its cafeterias.

On Wednesday, board members of the Schuylkill Haven Area School district gave the “thumbs up” to a contract with Altoona-based Food Service Solutions Inc., for software, technology and training to install the computerized cafeteria system based on biometrics.

Biometrics is an automated way to authenticate a person’s identity that’s being used everywhere from airports to grocery stores, for both security and convenience.

According to Superintendent Richard J. Rada, a base system should be in place by May.

The new system will allow parents to pay for their student’s lunch online with a credit card, add money to their child’s meal account, view their child’s cafeteria transactions and keep track of what they are eating.

Additional features will be added in the 2007-2008 school year, Rada said.

He also said that the technology will eliminate the need for students to carry money for lunch and allow parents a greater awareness of what their children are consuming during school hours.

According to the company’s Web site, students place their index fingers on a small scanner and a template matches them with their electronic print, which is taken before the system is operational.

Rada said Blue Mountain and Hamburg Area are two local school districts already using similar technology.

Board member Richard Croneberger, a member of the board sub-committee which initially researched the contract, said the system could benefit the district by speeding up the lunch line and enabling the district to keep a better accounting of cafeteria services.

The funds for the contract would come from the cafeteria reserve fund, in addition to other grants that may be available from the Pennsylvania Department of Education, he said.

In other business, school cancellations for snow emergencies will be made up on April 5, 9, 10 and 11. Graduation has been set for May 31.

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