



# ets Connections

CONNECTING FAMILIES TO SERVICES, AND COMMUNITIES TO EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING

## 2009 In Review

And what a year it was! Each of us remembers 2009 in a different way – some favorable, some unfavorable, some mixed. But for most of us, it was a year of transition –good news, bad news, and building for the future. This was the story for [ets](#) in both the Consulting Practice and the Community Software Solutions business.

### Good News First

Fortunately, there was more good news than bad. When you think about the nature of our business, we accomplished our overall mission. We helped organizations improve performance, helped clients' workforces improve their skills and capabilities, and through the [ets Connections](#) family of communities, we gave thousands of regular people hope and empowered them to obtain useful services to improve the quality of their lives.

Following are some noteworthy accomplishments by the **ets Connections** family of Communities and ets client organizations:

1. Six counties implemented the [Whole Child Connection™](#), and two more started the implementation process. In the aggregate, more than 300,000 more children have the opportunity to benefit from **ets Connections** Community Software Solutions.
2. Over 100,000 visitors came to the **ets Connections** sites, and more than 35,000 users completed more than 13,000 profiles in 2009. This translated into 41,000 requests for services and information.
3. User satisfaction exceeded 97.5% in all communities.
4. With the Whole Child Connection™ implemented in five of Florida's 20 Judicial Circuits, Florida's Governor Charlie Crist is 25% complete on Goal #2 of his Child Abuse Prevention and Permanency ([CAPP](#)) Strategic Plan target of 100% by 2015.
5. The [Whole Senior Connection™](#) was launched in Brevard County. With more than 150,000 persons 55 years and older in Brevard, there has been tremendous community support for this program. By partnering with the phone-based "We Help Brevard" elders information and referral service, Brevard will have a proactive and comprehensive approach for empowering members of its elder population to improve the quality of their lives.
6. ets client Brevard Public Schools, one of the ten largest of 67 school districts in Florida, and among the 50 largest in the nation, achieved great results in several areas, including:

- Graduation Rate of 95.3% - #2 in Florida (behind Gilchrest).
- % of Schools with an "A" Rating – 86% - #1 among Florida's ten largest districts.
- Florida A+ Plan District Performance (Points Earned) - #3 in Florida.
- Florida A+ Plan District Performance (Meeting High Standards) by Category:
  - Science - #1 in Florida.
  - Math - #3 in Florida.
  - Reading - #4 in Florida.
- Professional Learning Communities (National Models at Work) - #1 in Nation.
- % of Spending in Classroom – 64% - Among the top 5 in Florida (65% is the accepted benchmark of excellence set by the FLDOE).
- # of National Board Certified Teachers - #1 in Florida and #2 in the Nation.
- ...and more. To view Brevard's Scorecard and all results, go to <http://www.brevard.k12.fl.us/ScoreCard/schools/district.asp>.

These results were achieved despite budget cuts of more than \$100 million in the 2008/2009 school year.

7. ets organized and is leading the Education Summit in partnership with the Florida Department of Education and the Florida Governor's Sterling Council. The "Summit" is a full-day workshop to be held at the annual Sterling Conference for Performance Excellence in June in which featured speakers from Florida and the nation will share practices to bolster Florida's "Race to the Top" initiative. A key element will be the **ets Connections Best Practices** website which was enhanced to document and share best practices from all of Florida's school districts and more than 5,000 schools – public, charter, and private. By sharing knowledge and learning from each other, it is expected that districts will be able to accelerate the improvement process. The **ets Connections Best Practices** website is currently available to all current and future communities using the EZ Self Help System. To learn more about the Sterling Council go to <http://www.floridasterling.com>.
8. ets President Bob Seemer completed his latest book, "[Six Sigma for Educators](#): A Guide for Achieving and Sustaining Excellence in Education." The first edition was released in January, 2009 as a customized version for Brevard Public Schools, which was made available to all 10,000+ employees at no cost. A generic Education version was released last June, and will be offered nationwide as an e-publication in March, 2010.

## Not So Good News

1. Brevard Public Schools (BPS) did not receive the 2009 Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award for Education. Despite a strong 50 page, written application with numerous processes identified as "exemplary" by Baldrige Examiners, and results among the best in Florida, BPS' inability to compare many of its results with other school districts across the nation was a key factor. School districts continue to grapple with this issue because key indicators such as graduation rate are calculated differently by most states. In addition, many states don't have standardized tests, and no state has a test exactly like FCAT, so "like for like" comparisons are very difficult. Given the current state of the economy and looming issues such as the

classroom size amendment, redistricting, additional budget cuts, increased NCLB standards, and a leadership team in transition, BPS has chosen not to reapply in 2010.

2. Community services have been reduced in all ets Connected Communities because of budget cuts in county governments, state agencies, and certain programs of our thousands of not-for-profit providers. **ets Connections** Administrators in each community can monitor trends for key factors in each dimension, and can actually see the measurable impact the struggling economy has on the average person, and the growing gaps between services requested and services provided.

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## Building For The Future

The state of the economy is no surprise – as there were signs of its impending downfall in late 2007 and early 2008, when several key indicators began to diverge. As Florida State Government entered the 2008/2009 fiscal year in July, 2008, it was clear that budget cuts would be severe, and that service reductions would be a consequence. As an approved provider of both Performance Consulting and Information Technology Services to Florida State Government, ets leadership acted on these signs and made a strategic decision in early 2008 to significantly increase the capability of the **ets Connections** suite of services to help mitigate the effects that would be felt by both family and provider users of our systems. This resulted in the creation of the EZ Self Help System ([EZSHS](#)) which was first implemented in Brevard, soon in Martin during February, and then followed by Ottawa, MI, Indian River, DeSoto, St. Lucie, and Volusia counties. The EZSHS was designed to more effectively meet the needs of all age groups, and to help provider businesses become stronger, more efficient businesses and better positioned to weather bad economic periods. In addition, by utilizing the Revenue Generation feature within the EZSHS, communities are able to create an additional funding stream and no longer need pay the service and support fees necessary to sustain their **ets Connections** system(s).

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## New Year's Resolutions

I don't know about you, but 2009 taught the team at ets a lot of lessons, and with the turn of the New Year, I personally felt liberated because I committed and took action on the following resolutions:

1. **Clean out the closet:** Stuff accumulated on my desk, on my desktop, in my bookcases, in my mind, everywhere! With so many loose ends, it was difficult to prioritize and focus. I made a list of what I really need to get done in 2010. Anything not closely aligned to those four goals was either deleted or placed by the dumpster (the city needed to make two pickups).
2. **Get rid of excess baggage:** All of us are distracted by things, and some of us, because of the nature of our work, want to help everybody. In other cases, we let ourselves get consumed by the actions, or non-action, of others who have no goals and add no value to our lives. Well, be the falcon and soar to your vision! But to do so, you must let go of the extra weight that is holding you back. It's okay to say "goodbye."

3. **Quit wasting time:** People who can't keep commitments, or are non-responsive, can keep you from achieving your goals. They may just be unorganized, possibly have bad work habits, or maybe they don't respect you or your goals. It doesn't matter, the effects are the same. In a team sport, you replace the ineffective team members. We are all part of one or more teams and we all want to be successful. Make sure your "team members" share your goals, and want you to be successful, too. Otherwise, the bench has a spot for them.
4. **Support those who really try to make a difference:** There are those who work hard at what they do, and there are those who work hard **and** are effective. The difference is that the latter know where they are going, they measure their progress, and they keep wanting to do better based on measured results. By supporting them, I can measure my success through them. If they win – I win, if it's a team.
5. **Be a beacon of hope:** Thank goodness I'm an optimist, otherwise I would be afraid to go outside in this economy! Part of my job is to help organizational leaders, and community leaders also, create a vision of "what can be." That's the hard part because most are consumed with items #1-4 of this list of resolutions. That's why when we get together to create a vision, we do the "rumba." No, not the dance, but the essential requirements for creating a vision.

R – Is it **r**easonable?

U – Is it **u**nderstandable?

M – Is it **m**easureable?

B – Is it **b**elievable by everyone on the team?

A – Is it **a**chievable?

If the client answers yes to these, then we're good to go, and I have another potential winner to support. Winning is good – so let's create some winners in 2010!

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## Feedback & Input

Should you have any questions, comments or suggestions for topics, please contact [info@etsfl.com](mailto:info@etsfl.com).

**The regular ets Connections Newsletter will resume with the February 2010 edition.**

*Bob*

