



TAKING ON GOLIATH

schoolyard & drupal in the school site market

Jason Pamental, Platform Architect



Who's This Guy?

- I'm Jason Pamental – or @jpamental most places
- Built my first site targeting Mosaic and Netscape 1 while studying Graphic Design
- Built my first DB-backed CMS site in 1997
- Have run my own small shop, worked for several others variously as CD, Tech Dir, designer, developer, consultant, infrastructure manager
- Am the Platform Architect for Schoolyard
(well, among other things... but isn't that always the case?)



Background/Marketplace

- The Independent School market has a few main players, all of whom developed proprietary systems
- Schoolyard used to be one of them: founded in 1995, the mainstay was a Cold Fusion-based CMS
- Platform sold to another school site vendor in 2007
- Reimagined and redesigned starting in January, 2010 as a Drupal-based platform
- Started from zero – and built up as a modern web design/development team with Open Source roots



Philosophy

- Schools should be able to have a good web platform without spending a faculty member's salary on it
- We CAN provide that platform using Open Source, letting the budget go for strategy and design, not to supporting dozens of developers and legacy code
- We DO use modern tools, web standards and great type to make sure that when you've seen one Schoolyard site – ***you've seen ONE Schoolyard site***
- What we do wouldn't be possible without the Drupal Community – so we want to support it in kind



Approach

- Not your grandmother's web design shop
- We're a design and strategy company that makes smart use of Open Source – not a tech company that hired a couple of designers
- Projects begin with Discovery, IA, Sandbox prototype (full Drupal site w/minimal theme), Content — THEN design/theme integration
- Design process starts with style tiles* and then an interior page, revise (if needed) & then build (see Samantha Warren's excellent article here: <http://bit.ly/ITikNE>)



It's How We Roll



Schoolyard: Questions and Answers about Drupal



Recent Schoolyard sites, powered by Drupal



SCHOOLYARD WEB DESIGN & DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

There are numerous steps in our web design and development process, and the smooth transition from one to the next will ensure a successful outcome for your school. From gathering initial information, to the launch of your school's newly designed web site, we have outlined below the five phases of Schoolyard's design process, along with estimated timelines for each.

Generally, Schoolyard web design projects are completed within a twelve-fourteen week timeframe. This timeline is dependent on met deadlines, timely client feedback, and continual communications.

I. Discovery Phase:

This period serves to explore key questions surrounding the redesign and determines the scope of the design requirements for your school. Our objective is to facilitate strategic discussion about your school's needs, and uncover the shared vision, goals and expectations for the project. In order to do this, we must critically evaluate the school's current online identity - identifying both strengths and challenges before determining what particular changes are required.

Initial consultation will serve to explore key questions surrounding the re-design. Through a discovery phase questionnaire, Schoolyard's critical analysis of the current site and those of regional competitors and subsequent meetings and discussions with school representatives, we will pinpoint the following elements:

- Current web site's strengths, limitations, deficiencies
- Web site mission statement development
- Perception and brand
- Primary and secondary site objectives
- Target audiences and their core tasks on the site

Estimated Timeline: 2-3 weeks

II. Information Architecture Phase:

Based upon the collected and evaluated findings in Phase I, Schoolyard will provide your school with a framework and strategy that best meets the agreed upon objectives. Before any visual design begins, the goal of the Information Architecture phase is to create a working skeleton, or blueprint that ensures all site navigation matches to the expectation of audience use and important messaging is prioritized in a clear, straightforward manner. Given that this phase focuses on user experience strategy it's the most critical in the design process.

Deliverables during this phase include:

- Site map: Detailed navigation listing all topics for the site, as well as sub-topics. The sitemap will ultimately dictate specificity of all site content.
- Wire frame: The visual manifestation of the Information Architecture phase. Essentially block and white mockups of a website page, the wireframe allows clients to focus on messaging, user flow and content before design elements are added.

Site map approval will result in the identification of content inventory for the project - to be provided by school representatives. Content requirements with regard to structure, format and delivery to be provided by Schoolyard at a later date.

Estimated Timeline: 3 weeks



Schoolyard: initial development cost saving measures

Keeping Schoolyard initial development fees at the lower end of our price range

Our initial development fees are based solely on the amount of time we spend on a project from the signing of an agreement through site launch. At the request of schools interested in keeping these fees as low as possible, we have compiled this list of suggestions and considerations. We would note that each project is different, in some cases these recommendations are advisable, and in some they are not - or at least some of them may not be. In short, some schools require more time for site development for entirely sound reasons.

1. **Know what you want.** Some schools know exactly what they want, and others require considerable discovery and consultation. Most schools fall somewhere in between. There is no judgement involved here, as one of the benefits we bring to the project is professional experience and perspective. It's just that framing and delivering advice adds to the time required to complete the Discovery phase. There have been cases where stakeholders within the school have done considerable homework in advance, especially looking at the sites of other schools, and have said to us, "we want something with the structure and features of this school site, but we want it to look and feel like our school." These schools tend to spend less on preliminary development costs.

2. **Have content ready.** During the Prototype phase, the process can become bogged down if we are waiting on content, if the content is not clearly formatted, or if it is not clearly organized. For every page in the site that is due to be live upon launch, there are content requirements. Knowing what these are and having the content ready in advance makes for a streamlined process.

3. **Have good photography, and identify selections and placement in advance.** Similar to the first item, having Schoolyard involved in photo selection and editing can certainly be beneficial as we have extensive experience in art direction and photo editing. Schools who make these decisions on their own, however, cut down on development time; in most cases Schoolyard decides which pictures are used and where they go. These decisions can make for a more visually compelling site, but they also take more time. Regardless, if the pictures are not of professional quality it costs the school more money as we spend time creating the best possible images from limited resources.

4. **Keep the committee small; establish consensus on design quickly.** This is a hard one because a school's website is the one communication vehicle that every department "owns" a part of. Insofar as schools are collaborative by nature, an inclusive web committee is a large web committee, and as a general rule, larger web committees result in higher initial development costs. Often this is because larger committees have a harder time reaching consensus on design approval, but also because larger committees simply generate more discourse. This discourse can make for a better project, it just takes more time and costs more money. In regard to establishing consensus on design, this is once again a matter of preparedness. A school with an established brand and message, with a list of other school sites that reflect similar structural and visual attributes, will spend less time on design approval.

5. **Keep the initial launch profile manageable.** One of our inaugural sites launched with over 700 pages of archived material ported from the previous site. We were able to automate much of this migration, but media had to be sorted manually. It was a huge job that could have been done internally, and more gradually, over the current school year with very few people taking notice. Insofar as the website is always evolving, confining initial launch content to that which is important, allowing additional content to be added over time, keeps the initial development costs down.



And How We Design

Style Tile #1
version 1.0

Client Logo Here

This is a Static Header

Font: Lucida Sans Bold 24px

This is an Example of a Subhead

Font: Georgia Italic 18px

We sat silent for a few moments, she wrapped in the gloomy thoughts of her terrible past, and I in pity for the poor creatures whom the heartless, senseless customs of their race had doomed to loveless lives of cruelty and of hate. Presently she spoke. "John Carter, if ever a real man walked the cold, dead bosom of Barsoom you are one. I know that I can trust you, and because the [knowledge may someday](#) help you or him or Dejah Thoris or myself, I am going to tell you the name of my father, nor place any restrictions or conditions upon your tongue. When the time comes, speak the truth if it seems best to you. I trust you because I

Font: Lucida Sans 14px

Button Sample

Possible Collors

#bebebe	#a6a6a6	#848484	#737373	#575757	#313131

Possible Paterns & Textures

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contact: info@schoolyard.com

schoolyard



What We Built

- Full-fledged CMS with media management, workflow controls, social media ties, secured content areas, calendars, online giving & more
- Almost all entirely stock modules
- A starter theme with solid typography and LESS.css integration
- A server environment tuned for Drupal but still easily portable and maintainable
(you'd be amazed at what a little MySQL tuning can do)



Sites/All/Modules

admin_menu
advanced_help
anonymous_contact
authorizenet
auto_nodetitle
better_formats
browscap
calendar
cck
content_access
content_profile
ctools
custom_pagers
date
demo
draggableviews
editablefields
email
emfield
extlink
favorites
fb
feeds
feeds_imagegrabber
ffmpeg_wrapper
filefield
filemaker

fivestar
flashnode
fontyourface
force_password_change
formfilter
globalredirect
google_analytics
i18n
image_caption
image_fupload
image_resize_filter
imageapi
imagecache
imagefield
insert
job_scheduler
jquery_ui
ldap_integration
libraries
lightbox2
link
location
media_vimeo
media_youtube
menu_block
menutrails
messaging

mimemail
mobile_tools
mollom
nice_menus
nmi_gateway
node_clone
nodequeue
nodewords
notifications
oauth
og
override_node_options
page_title
parser_ical
password_policy
path_redirect
pathauto
pay
phone
poormanscron
pop_links
restrict_password_change
roleassign
schoolology
securepages
securepages_prevent_hijack
simplenews

site_map
site_verify
swftools
token
twitter
typekit
ubercart
ubercart-
v2.x_nmi_gateway_services
uc_donation
uc_tablequote
uc_termsofservice
video
views
views_accordion
views_attach
views_bulk_operations
views_cloud
views_slideshow
votingapi
webform
webform_calc
webform_pay
workflow
wysiwyg
wysiwyg_spellcheck
xmlsitemap



LESS.css In A Zen SubTheme

```
@page-width: 960px;  
@left-col-width: 365px;  
@right-col-width: 200px;  
@gutter: 40px;
```

```
@font-stack-serif: "garamond-premier-pro-display-1", "garamond-premier-pro-display-2", "Times New Roman", "Bitstream Vera Serif", serif;
```

```
@font-stack-sans: "museo-sans-1", "museo-sans-2", Verdana, Helvetica, Arial, "Bitstream Vera Sans", sans-serif;
```

```
@font-stack-headings1: "museo-sans-1", "museo-sans-2", Verdana, Helvetica, Arial, "Bitstream Vera Sans", sans-serif;
```

```
@font-stack-headings2: "garamond-premier-pro-display-1", "garamond-premier-pro-display-2", "Times New Roman", "Bitstream Vera Serif", serif;
```

```
@font-stack-serif-nowebfonts: Georgia, "Times New Roman", "Bitstream Vera Serif", serif;
```

```
@font-stack-sans-nowebfonts: Verdana, Helvetica, Arial, "Bitstream Vera Sans", sans-serif;
```

```
@font-stack-headings1-nowebfonts: Verdana, Helvetica, Arial, "Bitstream Vera Sans", sans-serif;
```

```
@font-stack-headings2-nowebfonts: Georgia, "Times New Roman", "Bitstream Vera Serif", serif;
```



LESS.css (cont.)

```
.border-radius(@radius-tl: 10px, @radius-tr: 10px, @radius-br: 10px, @radius-bl: 10px) {  
  -webkit-border-top-left-radius: @radius-tl;  
  -moz-border-radius-topleft: @radius-tl;  
  -o-border-top-left-radius: @radius-tl;  
  border-top-left-radius: @radius-tl;  
  -webkit-border-top-right-radius: @radius-tr;  
  -moz-border-radius-topright: @radius-tr;  
  -o-border-top-right-radius: @radius-tr;  
  border-top-right-radius: @radius-tr;  
  -webkit-border-bottom-right-radius: @radius-br;  
  -moz-border-radius-bottomright: @radius-br;  
  -o-border-bottom-right-radius: @radius-br;  
  border-bottom-right-radius: @radius-br;  
  -webkit-border-bottom-left-radius: @radius-bl;  
  -moz-border-radius-bottomleft: @radius-bl;  
  -o-border-bottom-left-radius: @radius-bl;  
  border-bottom-left-radius: @radius-bl;  
}
```



LESS.css In Use

```
#page {  
  .border-radius(0px, 0px, 10px, 10px);  
}
```

```
/** content **/  
#content,  
.no-sidebars #content  
{  
  float: left;  
  width: @page-width;  
  margin-left: 0;  
  margin-right: -1 * @page-width; /* Negative value of #content's width + left margin. */  
  padding: 0; /* DO NOT CHANGE. Add padding or margin to #content-inner. */  
}
```

```
/** sidebar-left **/  
#sidebar-left  
{  
  float: left;  
  width: @left-col-width;  
  margin-left: 0;  
  margin-right: -1 * @left-col-width; /* Negative value of #sidebar-left's width + left margin. */  
  padding: 0; /* DO NOT CHANGE. Add padding or margin to #sidebar-left-inner. */  
}
```



Lets Us Go From This

St. Mary's Academy

the st. mary's story | admission | teaching and learning | international baccalaureate | beyond the classroom | support st. mary's

Home • [The St. Mary's Story](#) • [Headmaster's Welcome](#) •

Headmaster's Welcome

• INCLUDE VIDEO MESSAGE

headmaster's welcome

- what we believe / mission statement
- faq's
- board of trustees
- strategic plan
- faculty / staff

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to the St. Mary's website. Located on a beautiful campus, we are a vibrant school community filled with bright, motivated young people, and talented and dedicated teachers. As our mission statement reads,

"St. Mary's is an International Baccalaureate® (IB) World School dedicated to inquiry-based academic excellence, developing well-rounded, confident children who flourish in a creative environment founded on Christian values"

We do all of this work in an environment with a spiritual focus that is expressed in thought, word and deed, and we inspire our students to become grounded, committed people of faith—spiritual, principled, and who possess unquestionable integrity. We believe that much of our role is to prepare our students for the eventual rigors of a challenging high school curriculum. Our students need to possess joy and enthusiasm for learning, must be literate and able to compute easily and accurately, and must possess the skills necessary to cope with the many demands that will be made upon them here at St. Mary's and beyond. Globalization has made it abundantly clear that schools in the Twenty-First Century need to focus less on memorization of facts that are unconnected and more on studying information in ways that promote deeper critical thinking (analysis and synthesis) and creative, collaborative approaches to problem solving.

At St. Mary's we work to accomplish our objectives in a number of different ways. We expose our students to a wide variety of inquiry based thinking methods, problem-solving and connection-making across the curriculum, utilizing the unique combination of the International Baccalaureate Programme and our core curriculum. It is readily evident



To This (In A Day)

The screenshot shows the St. Mary's School website. At the top, there is a navigation menu with links: 'The St. Mary's Story', 'Admission', 'Teaching & Learning', 'International Baccalaureate', 'Beyond the Classroom', and 'Support St. Mary's'. Below the menu is a large banner image of students in school uniforms. The main content area is titled 'Headmaster's Welcome' and features a welcome message from John O'Brien, the headmaster. The message discusses the school's commitment to academic excellence and its International Baccalaureate (IB) program. A sidebar on the left contains a menu with links: 'The St. Mary's Story', 'Headmaster's Welcome', 'What We Believe / Mission', 'Statement', 'FAQ's', 'Board of Trustees', 'Strategic Plan', and 'Faculty / Staff'. Below the menu are social media icons for Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, and the IB logo. The footer contains copyright information: '©2011 St. Mary's School. All rights reserved. | 7 Fossil Ridge Way, Orange County, California | main phone 949-448-9027 | Directions | Contact | Sitemap'.

The St. Mary's Story

Headmaster's Welcome

What We Believe / Mission

Statement

FAQ's

Board of Trustees

Strategic Plan

Faculty / Staff

connect with us

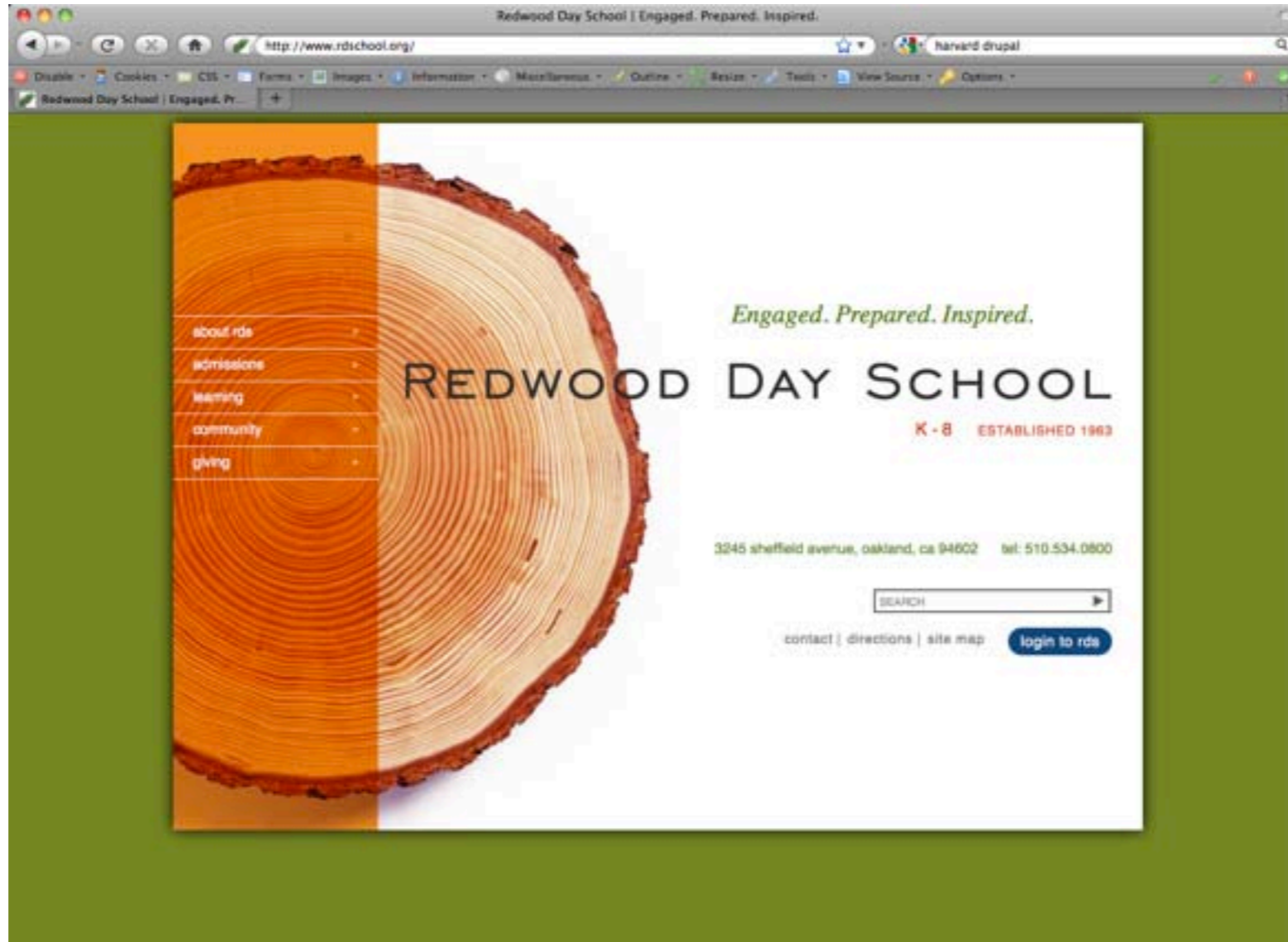
f t y

ib

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What We've Launched



rdschool.org



What We've Launched



nantucketnewschool.org



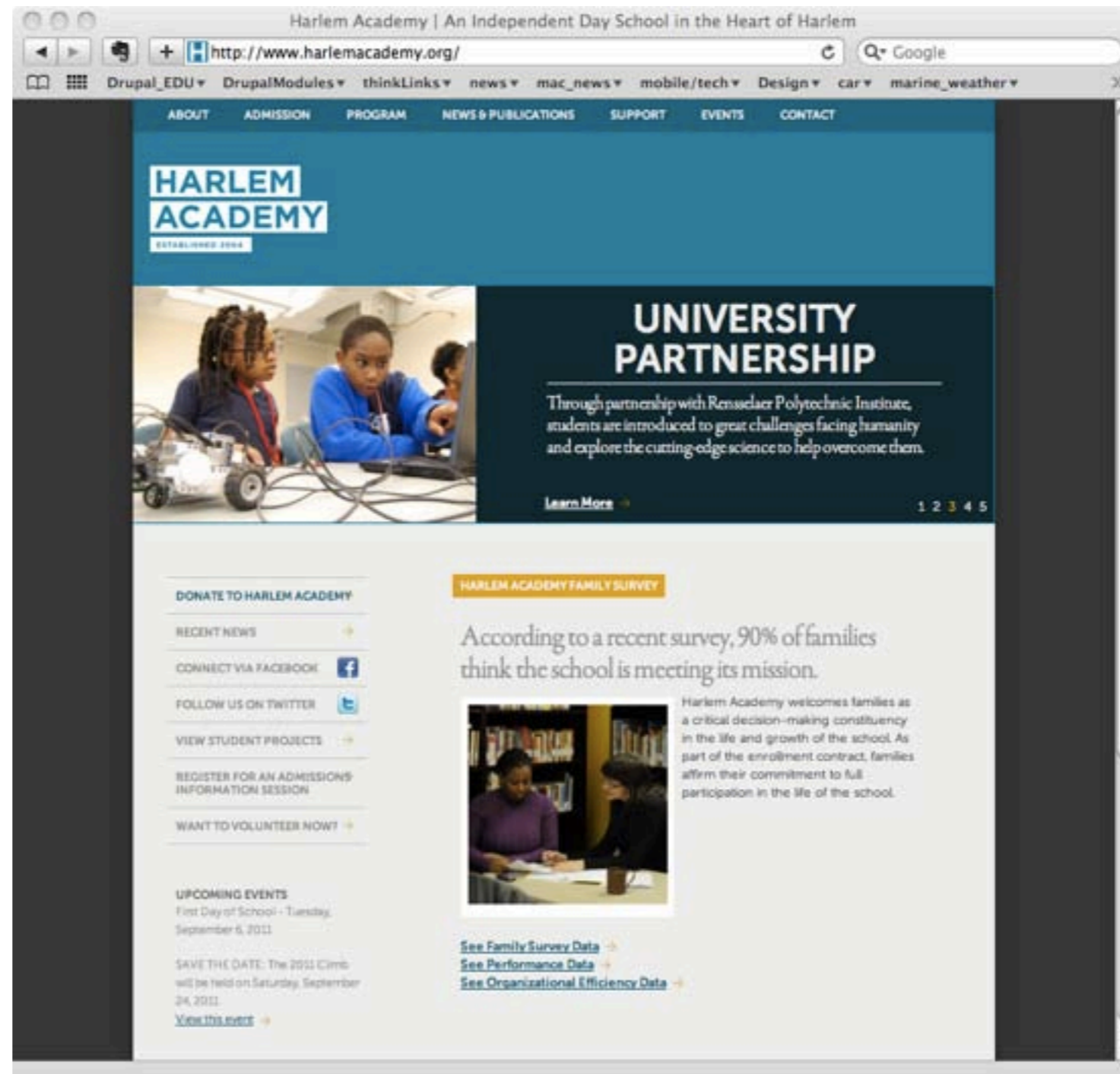
What We've Launched

The screenshot shows the website for St. Mary's School, an IB World School. The browser address bar displays <http://www.smaa.org/>. The navigation menu includes: The St. Mary's Story, Admission, International Baccalaureate, Teaching and Learning, Student Life, and Support St. Mary's. The main banner features the school's logo and the quote: "AFTER I'VE FILLED MY HEAD WITH MY OWN THOUGHTS AND CONVICTIONS, I WILL LEAVE PLENTY OF ROOM FOR THOSE OF OTHERS." Below the banner is the tagline: "ST. MARY'S SCHOOL :: TURNING STUDENTS INTO CITIZENS." A search bar and navigation links (login, calendar, contact, alumni, employment) are present. The "Welcome to St. Mary's" section states: "Every day, St. Mary's cultivates the next generation of compassionate and critical thinkers. As an International Baccalaureate (IB) World School, our teachers and curriculum are preparing tomorrow's global leaders for an increasingly diverse and technological future." A "Recent News" section highlights "01/28/11 St. Mary's Cheerleaders Crowned as State Champions" with a "view all news" link. Social media icons for Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube are shown. The footer contains: "St. Mary's is an independent co-ed day school serving students from Preschool (2 yrs old) through Grade 8 located in Orange County, California. © 2011 St. Mary's School. All rights reserved | 7 Purcell Aliso Viejo, Orange County, CA | main phone 949.448.9027 | directions | contact | sitemap | site by schoolyard".

smaa.org



What We've Launched



harlemacademy.org



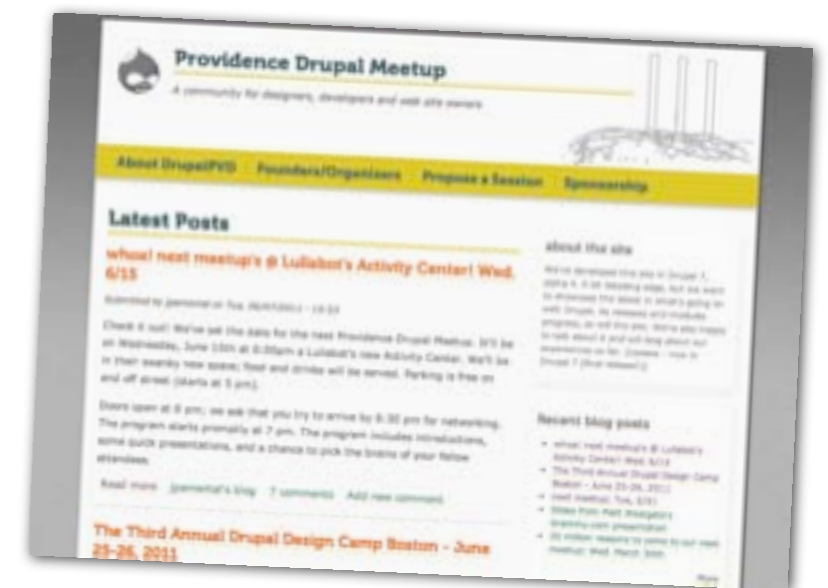
What We Connect

- We have sites with thousands of user accounts: teachers, staff, students, parents
- Integrated with LDAP directories for account management
- Integrated with Schoology (a social learning platform SAAS) with single sign on (SSO) & synchronized account creation
- Integrated directly with Filemaker databases
- Developing/implementing SSO with Moodle, Blackbaud, Infosnap & others



What We Give Back

- All updates, patches and new modules go back to the community
- Work actively on Filemaker, payment processing & web type modules
- Present, publish and share what we've built, how we've built it & why
- Sponsor local Drupal events like monthly DrupalPVD meetups & school technology conferences





It's A Win-Win-Win-(Win?)

- Schools: They get a great platform that continues to evolve and stay up-to-date for a fraction of the cost
- Drupal Community: We've created & contributed to a number of modules, sponsor local events & publish/present what we learn
- Schoolyard (*it is a business after all...*): We get paid to help schools, not build a platform
- You: We're growing, and are looking now for our next Drupal Geek



THANK YOU!

time for questions, answers & discussion