

## **SHOPPING CARTS, ENHANCING OUR COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE**

Our warehouse on-line ordering system currently allows our customers to see pictures of the brand and packaging of items they can order from our District warehouse catalog. This has greatly reduced the number of items returned to the warehouse for credit or exchange, thus saving valuable man hours in pickup time, restoring inventory and inventory and invoice adjustments.

However, we were still receiving complaints from schools and departments on the length of time it took from the time teachers turned in their order, to the school clerk processing order, to the time the teacher actually received the items ordered. We also have historically had schools and teachers request copies of their start up warehouse orders from the previous year to give them an idea what they should include in their new school year order. The clerks at new schools always ask for copies of the last new school's initial warehouse orders so they can make sure everything needed is in place for the start of school. Both types of requests required research and time to go back to the previous year's files to recapture this information.

We began to look at the industry leaders in on-line purchasing; such as Office Depot, Amazon.com, and Grainger. The first thing we saw of potential value was the shopping cart feature. After meeting with our MIS department we were able to create our own shopping cart for schools & departments to use to order directly from our warehouse ordering system. Previously, a teacher would go on-line and write down on paper, the item number, quantity and unit pricing for each item she wanted. This list was then totaled and given to a clerk who, when time was available, would enter the order line by line into our requisition system.

Volusia County Schools  
Purchasing & Warehouse Services

The new shopping cart feature allows teachers to select an item from the catalog, enter the quantity requested and complete an order which is then totaled. Once the teacher submits the request, the clerk attaches an account string and approves the order without having to re-key it. At a high school, this can save three to four hours per week of data entry work for the clerk and reduces the chance for processing errors. In addition it speeds up the time it takes the orders to get to the warehouse and thus improves delivery time.

A key feature is that the teacher can now go on-line and see the status of her order. The clerks cannot say they have approved an order if that is not true. Another benefit is any teacher can go to the shopping cart site and pull up any order they have previously placed in the system. Also, if an item is back ordered it will show on the order request.

After testing the new system, purchasing staff attended District Teacher Advisory Counsel meetings to demonstrate the Shopping Cart and its features to our school teachers.

Since implementation, we have heard from many teachers and data clerks at the schools concerning this new feature. The teachers have eliminated the need to hand write an order, verify the correct item number selected and total the order to insure they have the budget to cover the purchase. The clerks are telling us they no longer have to be concerned with misplacing a hand written order, reading the handwriting and checking the math. They no longer have to respond to teachers concerning the status of their warehouse orders since that can be viewed on-line by the teachers.

The Warehouse Shopping Cart feature has proven to save time and reduce errors in the ordering process for the schools, departments and has improved the efficiency of our warehouse operations.