

Attention: Site Technology Champions

Chances are if you are reading this, it's because you are the person who's responsible for technology implementation at your school site. That, or you have way too much spare time!

Maybe you're wrestling with the possibility that your healthy fascination with educational technology is leading you toward a position of technology support? Accept it before it destroys you. Tech support is a calling. Don't fight it.

Whatever the case, this document is intended to give you step-by-step instructions that may just help you implement the most far-reaching technology integration your school has ever experienced.

Part One: The Role of the Technology Champion

For most teachers, the initial hassle of entering student data into a grade management program outweighs the perceived benefits, and I don't blame them. I remember using my first computerized grading program, and being up late at night, entering student data from my printed roster, thinking, "This had better be worth it!" It was, but I recall thinking that the learning curve was pretty steep, as the program I was using at the time (not MicroGrade), didn't have much documentation, so I was forced to figure most stuff out on my own.

It's my clear recollection of that experience that has motivated me to provide my faculty with a level of support that eliminates frustration.

Your Mission: Remove the Hurdles

In my experience, data entry is the number one reason why teachers don't use a grade management program. No matter how slick your presentation, or how compelling the time savings, entering all the data, during the hectic first couple of weeks of a new grading period is simply not realistic for most teachers.

As a classroom teacher, I began to investigate the import feature (in an effort to save myself some time) several years ago. The import feature was a bit cumbersome then, but I was eventually able to import a fair amount of student data into my class files.

When I became the technology coordinator at my site, I made it a priority to remove as many technology hurdles as possible. I quickly found myself spending a disproportionate amount of time wrestling with the issue of student information system integration, until I was able to discuss my problems directly with the folks at Chariot.

They've subsequently tweaked the import feature a bit, and now it's possible for me (and you) to create MicroGrade class files for a faculty of almost one hundred teachers, based on their individual preferences, quickly and easily. The following section will walk you through the process, and also provide you with recommendations for conducting quality MicroGrade in-services.

Converting the reluctant teacher

As a technology coordinator, I am constantly looking for ways to show teachers how to make technology work for them. In my experience, people need a "hook" to draw them into the realm of technology users, so I tend to think of my role as that of an angler, trying a variety of "hooks".

For a lot of teachers, electronic mail is reason enough to embark on a new learning curve. Most e-mail users would agree that it's the most important application they use, and that e-mail rivals even the telephone when it comes to keeping them in contact.

The Internet has been the "hook" for lots of teachers, leading them (and their students) to a wealth of subject-related information. Others still have been "hooked" by educational software offerings that allow them to teach and reinforce their subject matter in new and exciting ways.

The problem is, that there are a great number of teachers who, for a variety of reasons, have not jumped on the technology bandwagon, and that makes a tough job even tougher for the technology champion.

In most situations, the reluctant teacher has experienced some kind of barrier, or hurdle when attempting to use technology, and simply decided that it's "more trouble than it's worth". In some cases, a negative experience attempting to use technology in the past will provide enough of a disincentive for teachers to steer clear of it in the future.

The main reason teachers give for not using a computerized grade management program is that there's a large amount of data entry required to set up a class file. Student records include a growing amount of information that teachers find useful, and most of it is readily available in printed form on their class rosters. "Why should I retype all of that data, when it's right here in my good old-fashioned grade book?"

With class sizes swelling to over 35 students in a typical high school environment, the average teacher has over 150 students in a given grading period. Multiply that number by the number of fields in the student record (Student ID number, First name, Last name, Middle name, Address, City, State, ZIP, Parent name, Home Phone, Work Phone, and potentially an e-mail address

or two), and it's plain to see why data entry is a hurdle that many teachers find to be a "deal killer".

Using MicroGrade's import feature, and your school's student information system, you can import all of the above-mentioned data, as well as any other students' attributes that you are interested in including (schedule info, period number, special education classification, learning style modality, counselor, etc.), in a split second!

Don't reinvent the wheel

If you've tried to support the use of MicroGrade or any computerized grading program at your school, you've probably had to learn some of the same lessons that I did.

First lesson: It's impossible to effectively support the use of every grading program out there.

When I first took the tech coordinator position at my school, I conducted a survey to find out how many teachers were using a grading program, and then collected information about which program they were using. I found that only about 10% of the faculty had been using a grade management application, and that there were about six different applications being used.

When I asked the remaining 90% why they were not using it, the most common answer I got was that it was too much of a hassle to enter all of the student information.

Second lesson: Data entry is the single biggest hurdle between new users and this type of application.

As I mentioned earlier, the average high school instructor in my school district has over 150 students a day. It's a huge amount of data entry, and most teachers want to be ready to enter scores before the end of the first week of instruction.

Third lesson: No two users are alike.

The biggest mistake you can make here is trying to fit a square peg in a round hole, so keep this one in mind at all times. The teachers you support will be happiest if you can show them how to replicate their grading procedures using MicroGrade. Don't try to convince them that there's a "better way to do it."

As a rule, I will try to accommodate their wishes, and then gently suggest an alternate method. I find that this technique is most effective.

Where to start?

The first step in any technology support effort is always to conduct a “needs survey”.

I usually create a simply half-sheet checklist, and stuff it in faculty mailboxes. Keep in mind that teachers make the worst students, so make the “Your name” box nice and bold, or you’re likely to get a large percentage of “no name” replies! I also try to dress these types of correspondence up a bit, so they stand out among the rest of the mailbox contents. Colored paper is a nice touch, if you’ve got some.

Your survey should ask questions like:

- Are you currently using a grade management program?
- If not, why?
- If so, which one?
- What do you like about it?
- What doesn’t it do that you wish it would?

These types of questions can help you assess the needs of your faculty, and target your staff development efforts.

MicroGrade class files order forms

One of the simplest ways to get your faculty started using MicroGrade is to provide them with an order form that makes requesting these files simple.

I typically create a half-sheet that faculty members turn in. Teachers can give me all the information I need to create usable MicroGrade files based on their preferences.

Essentially, you just want to know whether teachers would like their files created by subject, or by class period. It’s usually a good idea to create files by subject, unless assignments or grading standards vary between class periods. At any rate, you’ll find that a small percentage of instructors still prefer to have their files created by period.

Segment your audience

It’s my experience that there are almost always three unique audiences when it comes to technology in-services: the “beta” group (who’ll jump on any training, simply because they love technology), the “second wave” (who would have come to the first round of training, but they lost the flier), and the “hard sells” (who would avoid this and any other form of professional development if given the choice).

While it's easy to let the "hard sells" take the wind out of your technology champion sales, it's better to simply accept the fact that these groups are much easier to deliver information to separately than they would be together. Allow me to explain.

When you provide an in-service for the **beta group**, they'll be there on time, if not early. They'll understand half of what you're presenting before you present it, and they will immediately find any errors in your handouts. If you've guessed that this in-service will take 60 minutes, expect this version of it to be over in 30. Also expect that if there are questions, they'll be really good ones!

The same in-service for the **second wavers** will require a bit more preparation. Spend a little extra time sending out reminders to these participants the day of the in-service, as they are busy people, and frequently double-book. They will trickle in during the first 10 minutes, but once they settle down, they will prove to be a captive audience. Expect them to get a lot out of the in-service, and that there will be plenty of questions at the end of the session, most regarding information missed during the first 10 minutes of the in-service! Expect this one to run exactly 60 minutes, give or take a question or two.

Now that you've got two-thirds of the faculty covered, it's time to focus on the "**hard sells**". The key in this one is to try and minimize frustration, and to keep all parties on the same page, so pacing is critical. I recommend modeling your best student teaching skills with this group, and providing them with clear color-coded handouts, including an outline of the session objectives! By now, you'll have a pretty good idea which faculty members from the first two groups are most proficient, and you'd be wise to enlist their efforts in this final round of training. When it comes to the "hard sells", communication, and a little bit of peer pressure are the keys to getting a good turn out, so I typically visit them myself and extend an invitation. I've also found that if you can enlist the assistance of some students to act as one-on-one tutors, you will have done all you can do to ensure an effective session. Expect the majority of the questions to come a day or two after the in-service, and that the in-service itself to run a minimum of 90 minutes.

Delivering the message

In each of the three in-services, it's important to focus on the message, which is slightly different for each group.

The Beta message

Your objective in this training is to highlight. This group doesn't need, nor have time for a full-blown in-service. They want the highlights, and that's it. You should provide them with the same handouts that you'll give the other two in-services, but they probably won't need them. (If nothing else, they will identify any typographical errors for you, so you can edit them before the next session.)

Betas love to know what's new. Don't waste time building up to the big stuff, or you risk losing them. Cut straight to the chase. "Here's how it works, here's what's changed, and this is what's new." 'Nuff said.

Betas are a delicate breed, so it's best to treat them with respect for their eccentricities. You can do this by being brief. They probably won't thank you out loud, but inside, they'll appreciate your brevity.

The Second Waver message

"I promise this will save you time!" This is your mantra. It's what the second wavers are waiting to hear. Expect any resistance that comes out of this group to be a direct result of their getting the impression that this whole thing is simply "more work". Focus on the work that you're going to do for them, and how much easier it's going to make a job that they're already doing. Once you've conveyed that message, they'll follow you anywhere.

You'll probably have an even split of MicroGrade users and non-users in this group, so it's a good idea to follow the above disclaimer with a demonstration of what the application can do: grade calculations, attendance, report generation, communication, etc. Show them how much student information will already be in their files, and give them a minute to applaud you on your efforts. This is a good time to mention your favorite color, in case any of them feel compelled to buy you a gift.

The "Hard Sell" message

Keep in mind that this group is probably your least computer literate. Begin by introducing them to their student tutors, and encourage them to ask questions at any time. Prepare your faculty assistants to recognize "snags" that might crop up, and to cue you when it appears that all participants are ready to move on.

Begin this session by stating your desire to convert them, but be careful to focus on what a low-impact experience this will be, and to remind them constantly of the support structure that's around them (including, but not limited to, your expertise, other faculty members with experience, etc.). The last thing you want to do is to allow members of this group to envision a situation where they need assistance and it's not readily available. It's an easy out for them, and you need to spend a decent amount of time keeping it from presenting itself.

Focus on the big picture with the "hard sells". Avoid getting too specific, and take notes so that you can answer specific questions one-on-one, after the in-service. This group of users will appreciate any opportunity for one-on-one training you can provide, so make mention of it now, and watch their eyes light up!

One last point with the “hard sells”: Have their files ready to go at the in-service. Because you’ve trained them last, they’ve already begun to use their traditional grade books, and the only chance of converting them at this point, is to hand them a file that’s ready to go. Even the most skeptical of “hard sells” will want to give it a try, and before you know it, they’ll be setting grading standards and creating categories and assignments. If they have access to their grade books, they’ll be entering grades as your in-service enters its second hour (in fact, you might encourage them to bring them to the in-service!)

Preparing the in-service

Regardless of the ability level of users, I highly recommend conducting MicroGrade in-services in a computer lab where participants will have an opportunity to put their hands on the software. Initially, it’s not likely that you will have individualized files created for participants, but if that is possible, it makes for the most meaningful instruction.

For the beginning levels of MicroGrade users, (which may include members of both the “second waivers” and the “hard sells”), I would recommend beginning with a quick demonstration of a MicroGrade file.

- Explain what the windows are, and briefly how each is used.
- Open the student record section and explain that you plan to provide files complete with all student information (direct them to your MicroGrade order form).
- Demonstrate report creation, and highlight some of the e-mail and WebGrade features.

Continue this session by walking users through the MicroGrade “Quick Start” feature. If at all possible, walk them through the steps before turning them loose on their own workstations (you’ll thank me later!).

- Explain the file naming issues (in case participants use multiple platforms).
- Guide a discussion about grading methods (total points vs. weighted categories), so that they might select their preference.
- Discuss the issue of grading standards, and demonstrate how they might be altered.
- Share some tips on category creation (less is more), and demonstrate assignment creation. Create a couple of each, so that participants will have an opportunity to try score entry.
- Have them create a single student record (so they can truly appreciate the service you’re about to provide by creating their files!)
- Walk them through a standard assignment score entry.
- Create a student summary, and show them how simply they could use the e-mail feature to send detailed progress reports directly to their students and/or parents instantly.

I've found that the above topics take about an hour and a half to cover, save for any technical difficulties. Again, I'd urge you to involve as many seasoned MicroGrade users as possible in your in-service. Having them circulate and trouble-shoot will keep your presentation on track for this, the most critical audience.

When it comes to intermediate users, it's useful to begin with a discussion about skill levels. You might use the bulleted items above to get a read on how familiar your audience is with the application before jumping to conclusions. At any rate, a simple introduction (like the one I recommend for beginners) won't hurt anyone. Just try to avoid boring these users, as they aren't shy about walking out in the midst of technical training that they perceive to be below their skill level.

Once you're comfortable that your audience is up to speed on the basics, I'd move right into the good stuff:

- Highlight MicroGrade's e-mail feature.
- Walk participants through the WebGrade feature and perhaps have them create their own accounts.
- Explain how students will access WebGrade info (create a sample student login so teachers can see for themselves).
- Question & answer session (no training session would be complete without one).

Expect this one to take just under an hour, unless instructors have their own files. In that case, they will most likely stick around to post their classes on the web!

Part Two: Student Information System/MicroGrade Integration

There are quite a few steps involved in integrating your student information system with MicroGrade, and it's easy to get lost in the process. I find that it's useful to think about this whole process as a handful of smaller steps.

Basically, the steps are as follows: First, gather a snapshot of your student population data. Next, import student data into Microsoft Excel. Sort and export data (based on teacher requests) to tab-delimited text, and finally, import into MicroGrade templates (employing some global file preferences).

Simple, right?

Student Data

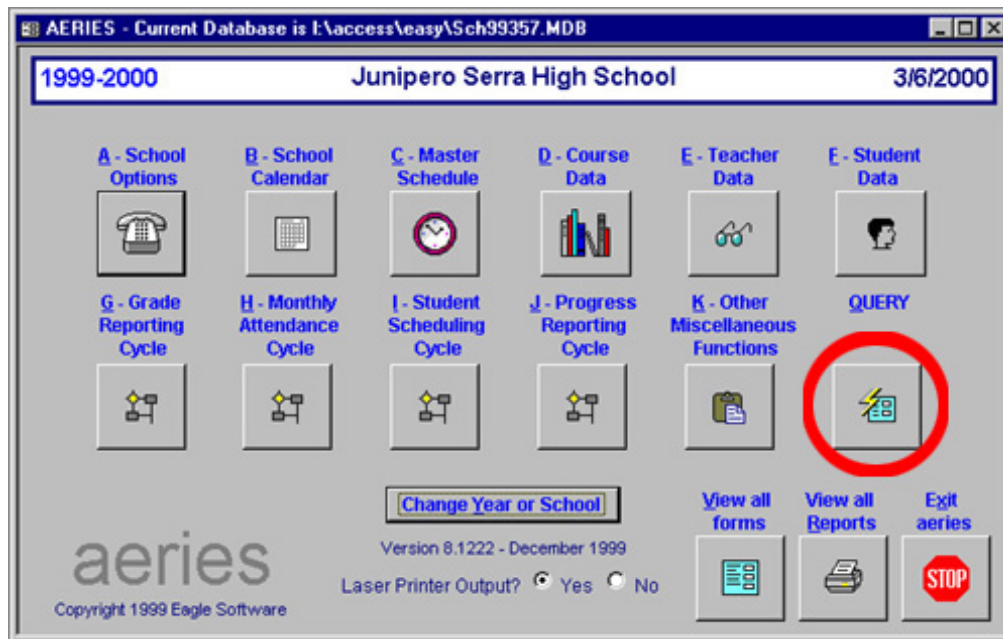
I'd love to be able to include screen shots of a single student information system interface here, but there are far too many, so I'm forced to speak generally about this process. If you're not familiar with your site/district's student information system, you will want to share these general steps with the individual at your site who's responsible for it.

I'll include directions here for the student information system used in San Diego City Schools, as it may help you work with your own.

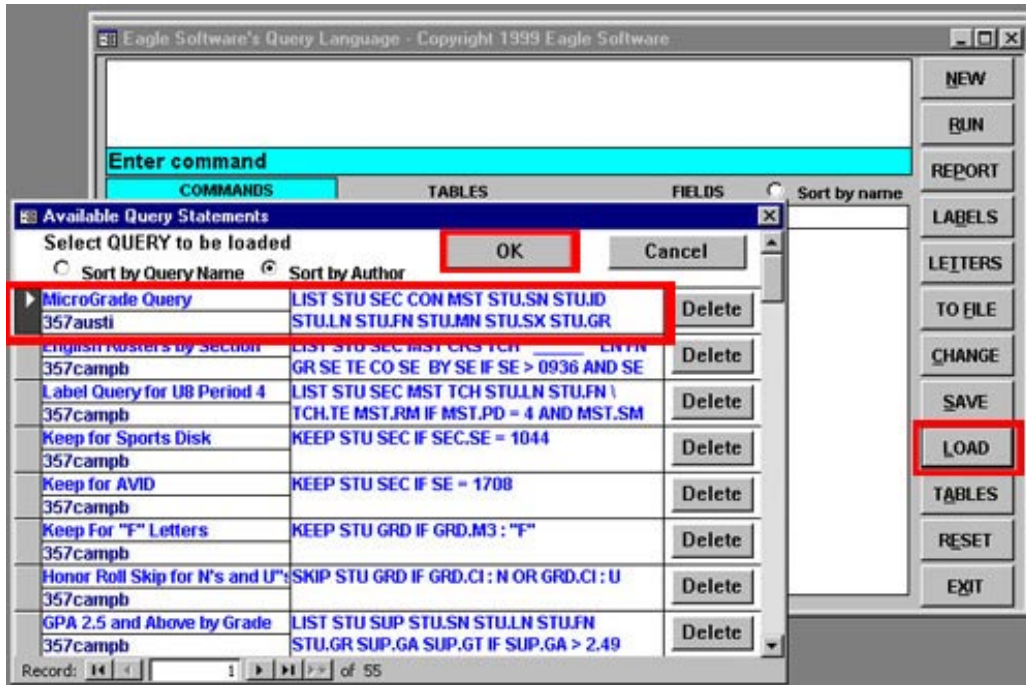
Exporting User Information from Aeries

Launch Aeries.

Click the "Query" button.



From the "Query" window, Click the "Load" button on the right of the screen.



From the "Available Query Statements" window, select your MicroGrade Query from the list then click "OK". (If you don't have the MicroGrade query, you can create it, using the query structure located below.)

If this is the first time you are using this query, you'll have to construct it, following the guide below:

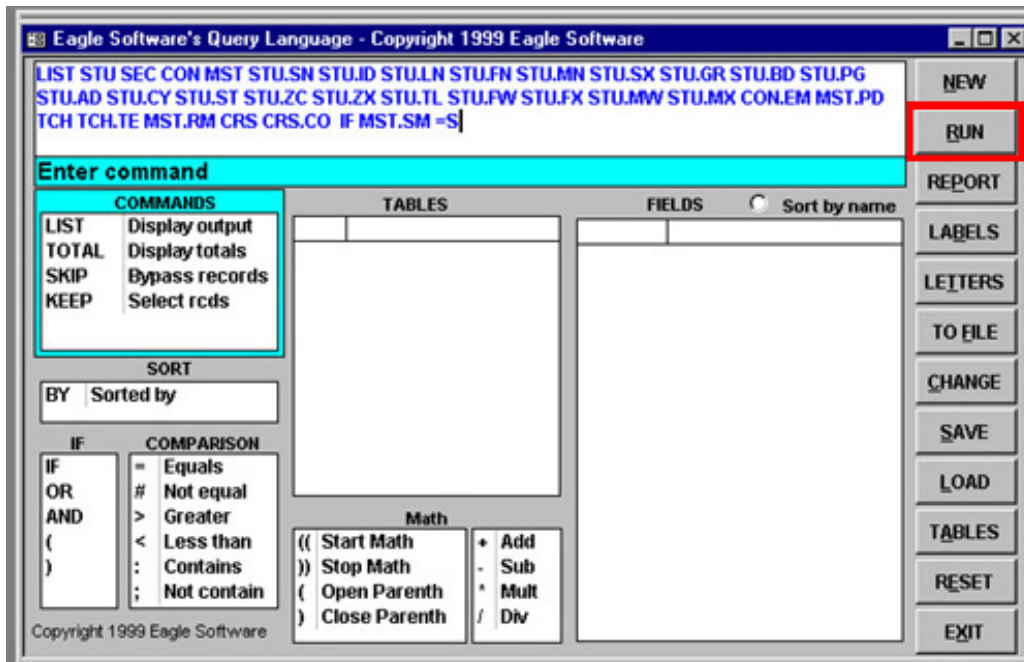
```
LIST STU SEC CON MST TCH CRS STU.SN STU.ID STU.LN STU.FN STU.MN
STU.SX STU.GR STU.BD STU.PG STU.AD STU.CY STU.ST STU.ZC STU.ZX
STU.TL STU.FW STU.FX STU.MW STU.MX CON.EM MST.PD TCH.TE
MST.RM CRS.CO IF MST.SM =S
```

Note: the "S" in the last section specifies the "semester". Your site tech might use some other abbreviation. You can see a guide for the query structure on the following page.

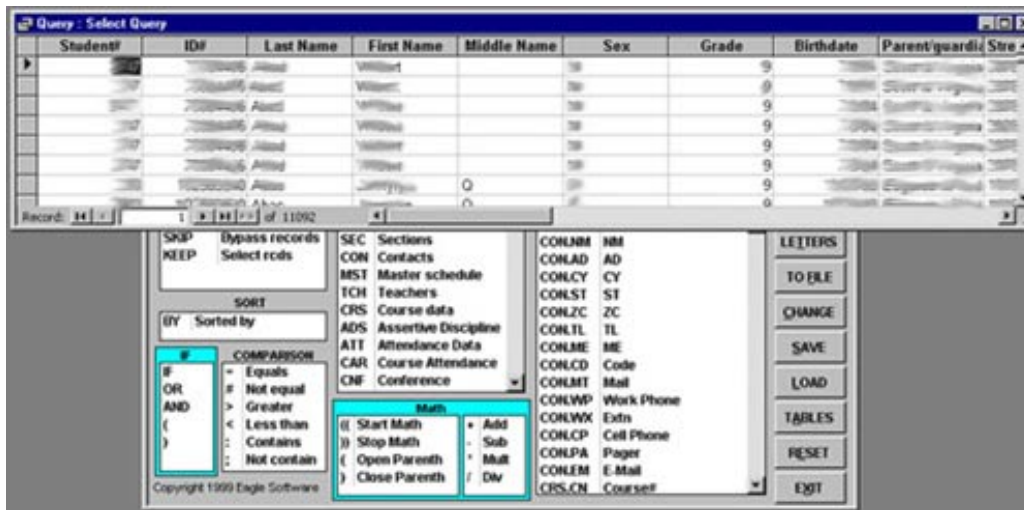
This is a content key for the query structure, which might prove helpful for schools using a student information system other than AERIES:

| Query Object | Contents | | |
|---------------------|-----------------|---------------|--------------------|
| LIST | | STU.CY | City |
| STU | Student Data | STU.ST | State |
| SEC | Section | STU.ZC | ZIP |
| CON | Contacts | STU.ZX | ZIP + 4 |
| MST | Master Schedule | STU.TL | Home Phone |
| TCH | Teacher | STU.FW | Father's Work |
| CRS | Course | STU.FX | Father's Extension |
| STU.SN | Stu # | STU.MW | Mother's Work |
| STU.ID | District ID | STU.MX | Mother's Extension |
| STU.LN | Last Name | CON.EM | E-mail address |
| STU.FN | First Name | MST.PD | Period |
| STU.MN | Middle Name | TCH.TE | Teacher |
| STU.SX | Gender | MST.RM | Room # |
| STU.GR | Grade Level | CRS.CO | Course Title |
| STU.BD | Birthdate | IF | |
| STU.PG | Parent/Guardian | MST.SM | Semester |
| STU.AD | Address | = | |
| | | S | Spring |

Once you've loaded or built the query structure, it's time to apply it to your student database:

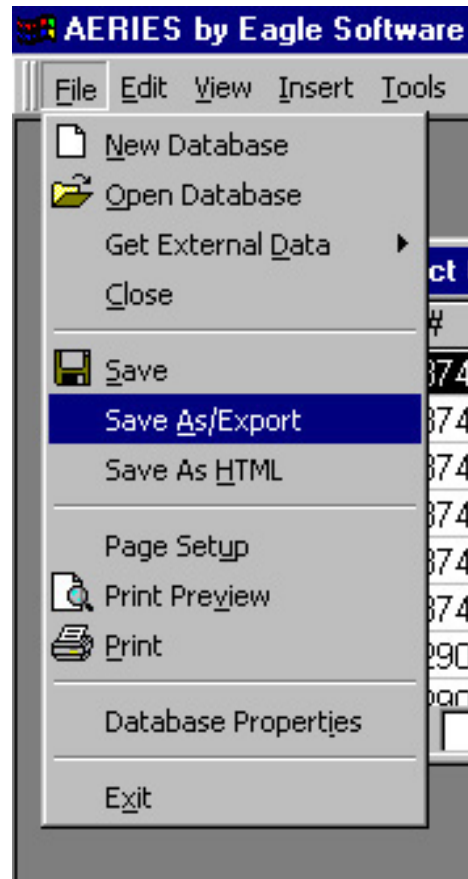


Click the "Run" button from the right side of the window.

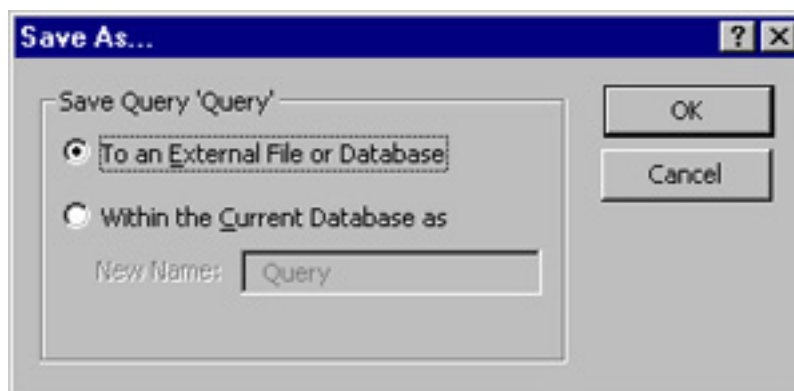


Take a quick look at your data in the "Select Query" window (We've blurred our data for the sake of student privacy). **Hint:** In a six instructional periods situation, the total number of records should be about six times the population of your school.

When you are convinced this is the data you want go to the "File" menu at the upper left of your screen and select "Save as/Export".

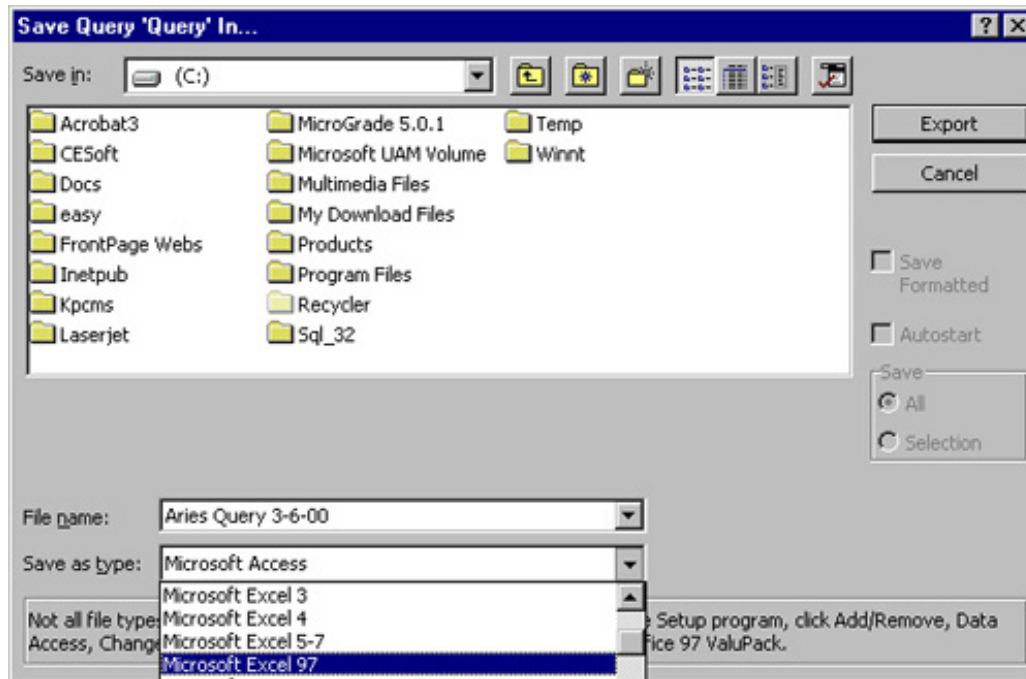


Click the "To an External File or Database" radio button, then click "OK"



From the "Save Query 'Query' In..." window

- Select the location to save the file in the "Save in:" menu. (I suggest "Desktop", so it's easy to find.)
- Type in a name for the file to be saved as in the "File name:" text box.
- **In the "Save as type:" menu select "Microsoft Excel 97". (Very Important!!)**
- Click "Export"



After the file has been exported you are finished with Aeries. Take a deep breath, and prepare for the next step, ... Excel.

Having finished the student information portion, you should have a large chunk of data that contains a record for each student during each class period of the day. If your school has six instructional periods, you want to wind up with data that includes all pertinent student data (first, last, middle, ID, address, city, state, ZIP, home phone, work phone, parent name, gender, period, teacher name, room number, and course title).

For a school with roughly 2,000 students, the file size is close to 3 megabytes, and as such, might create some file transfer problems. I recommend using a ZIP disk to transport, but your school may have the network capabilities to handle file transport. In any case, once you've got the goods, it's time to start working with Excel.

Excel

I happen to love Microsoft Excel. There, I've said it. I know that many of the features I like so much are more suited for a database program, but I find that Excel has all the features I need, and far fewer than Microsoft's database applications.

I recommend launching Excel, and then attempting to open the data file. Unless you've saved your data query in an Excel format, the lack of an .xls file extension will prevent you from simply double-clicking on the data file. You'll most likely have to change the "list files of type" option to "all files" before the data file will show up in the "open" dialog box.

Note: You may have trouble opening a file of this size on a workstation that's starving for RAM.

Because Excel doesn't recognize this raw data format, it will launch an "import wizard" that will walk you through the necessary steps.

Sorting and Saving

Once you've got your database imported into Excel, you can begin to customize the format, so that it's easier to use.

(You may have a difficult time doing this on a workstation that's starved for RAM.)

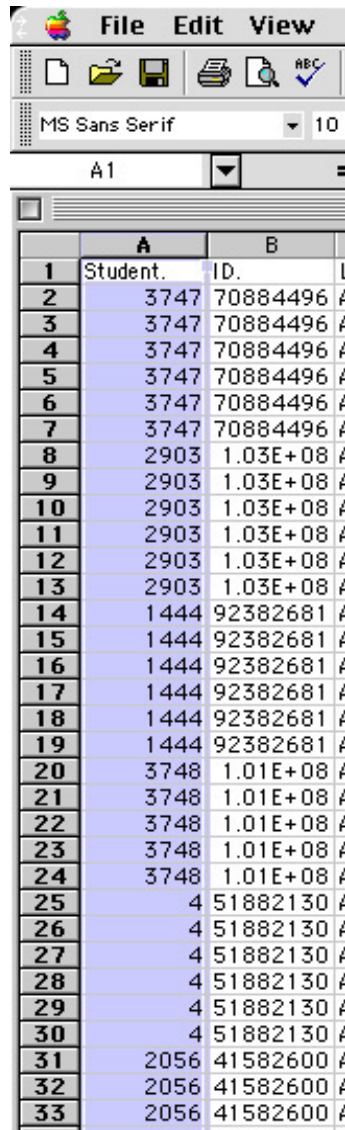
(To insure student privacy student information will be blurred.)

The screenshot shows an Excel spreadsheet titled "Aries 3-6.xls". The spreadsheet has a header row (row 1) with the following columns: Student, ID, Last Name, First Name, Middle Name, Sex, Grade, Birthdate, Parent/guardian, and Street Address. The data rows (rows 2-25) contain student information. Two rows in the ID column are circled in red: row 8 (ID: 2903 1.03E+08) and row 20 (ID: 748 1.01E+08). The text in the "Student" and "ID" columns is formatted with scientific notation or unusual spacing, which is noted as needing change in the text below.

| Student | ID | Last Name | First Name | Middle Name | Sex | Grade | Birthdate | Parent/guardian | Street Address |
|---------|----------|-----------|------------|-------------|-----|-------|-----------|-----------------|----------------|
| 3747 | 70884496 | W... | W... | | M | 9 | | | |
| 3747 | 70884496 | W... | W... | | M | 9 | | | |
| 3747 | 70884496 | W... | W... | | M | 9 | | | |
| 3747 | 70884496 | W... | W... | | M | 9 | | | |
| 3747 | 70884496 | W... | W... | | M | 9 | | | |
| 3747 | 70884496 | W... | W... | | M | 9 | | | |
| 2903 | 1.03E+08 | J... | J... | Q | F | 9 | | | |
| 2903 | 1.03E+08 | J... | J... | Q | F | 9 | | | |
| 2903 | 1.03E+08 | J... | J... | Q | F | 9 | | | |
| 2903 | 1.03E+08 | J... | J... | Q | F | 9 | | | |
| 2903 | 1.03E+08 | J... | J... | Q | F | 9 | | | |
| 2903 | 1.03E+08 | J... | J... | Q | F | 9 | | | |
| 1444 | 92382681 | J... | J... | Ann | F | 11 | | | |
| 1444 | 92382681 | J... | J... | Ann | F | 11 | | | |
| 1444 | 92382681 | J... | J... | Ann | F | 11 | | | |
| 1444 | 92382681 | J... | J... | Ann | F | 11 | | | |
| 1444 | 92382681 | J... | J... | Ann | F | 11 | | | |
| 748 | 1.01E+08 | A... | A... | Kuulei | F | 9 | | | |
| 748 | 1.01E+08 | A... | A... | Kuulei | F | 9 | | | |
| 748 | 1.01E+08 | A... | A... | Kuulei | F | 9 | | | |
| 748 | 1.01E+08 | A... | A... | Kuulei | F | 9 | | | |
| 748 | 1.01E+08 | A... | A... | Kuulei | F | 9 | | | |
| 451 | 82130 | A... | A... | Andreas | F | 12 | | | |

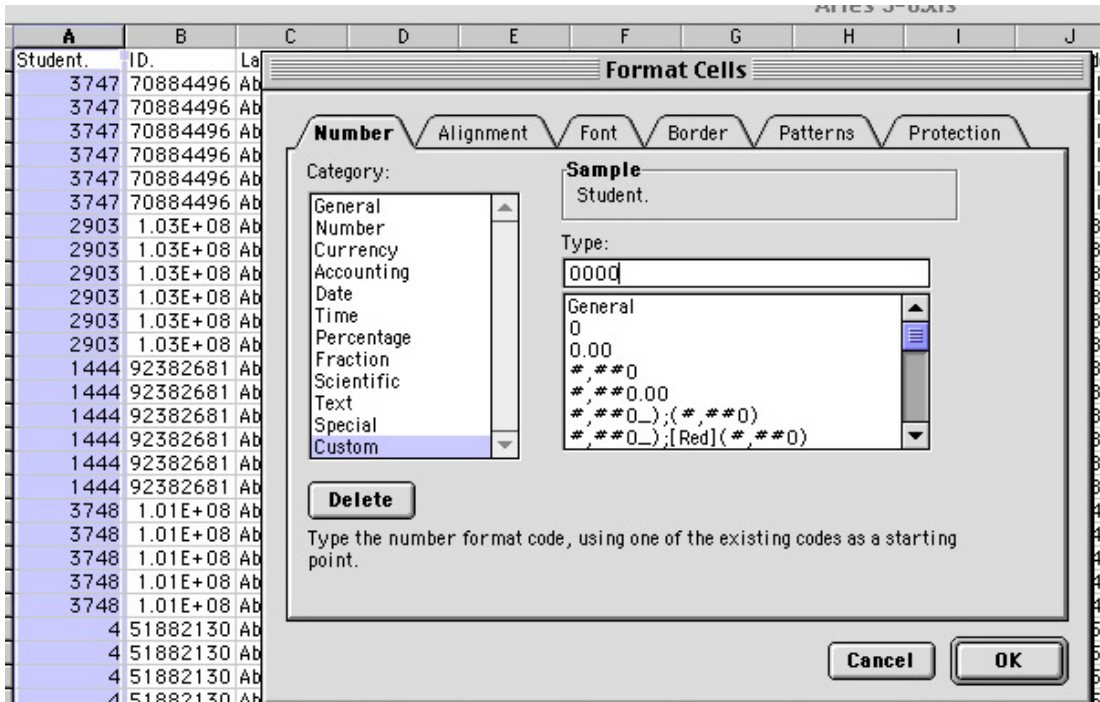
Notice that the columns of the import are all the same size and the text in the "Student" and "ID" columns has some strange formatting. These layouts will need to be changed in the following ways.

1. Select the Student column, and then format those cells.



| | A | B |
|----|----------|----------|
| 1 | Student. | ID. |
| 2 | 3747 | 70884496 |
| 3 | 3747 | 70884496 |
| 4 | 3747 | 70884496 |
| 5 | 3747 | 70884496 |
| 6 | 3747 | 70884496 |
| 7 | 3747 | 70884496 |
| 8 | 2903 | 1.03E+08 |
| 9 | 2903 | 1.03E+08 |
| 10 | 2903 | 1.03E+08 |
| 11 | 2903 | 1.03E+08 |
| 12 | 2903 | 1.03E+08 |
| 13 | 2903 | 1.03E+08 |
| 14 | 1444 | 92382681 |
| 15 | 1444 | 92382681 |
| 16 | 1444 | 92382681 |
| 17 | 1444 | 92382681 |
| 18 | 1444 | 92382681 |
| 19 | 1444 | 92382681 |
| 20 | 3748 | 1.01E+08 |
| 21 | 3748 | 1.01E+08 |
| 22 | 3748 | 1.01E+08 |
| 23 | 3748 | 1.01E+08 |
| 24 | 3748 | 1.01E+08 |
| 25 | 4 | 51882130 |
| 26 | 4 | 51882130 |
| 27 | 4 | 51882130 |
| 28 | 4 | 51882130 |
| 29 | 4 | 51882130 |
| 30 | 4 | 51882130 |
| 31 | 2056 | 41582600 |
| 32 | 2056 | 41582600 |
| 33 | 2056 | 41582600 |

When you select Custom from the list of Categories, you'll need to type four zeroes into the highlighted field as indicated:



The screenshot shows a spreadsheet application window with a menu bar (File, Edit, View, Insert, Format, Tools, Data) and a toolbar. The active cell is B1, containing the text "ID.". Below the toolbar, a table is displayed with the following data:

| | A | B | C | D | E |
|----|----------|-----------|-----------|------------|-------------|
| 1 | Student. | ID. | Last Name | First Name | Middle Name |
| 2 | 3 | 070884496 | Ab | W | |
| 3 | 3 | 070884496 | A | W | |
| 4 | 3 | 070884496 | A | W | |
| 5 | 3 | 070884496 | A | W | |
| 6 | 3 | 070884496 | A | W | |
| 7 | 3 | 070884496 | A | W | |
| 8 | 3 | 102583540 | A | W | |
| 9 | 3 | 102583540 | A | W | |
| 10 | 3 | 102583540 | A | W | |
| 11 | 3 | 102583540 | A | W | |
| 12 | 3 | 102583540 | A | W | |
| 13 | 3 | 102583540 | A | W | |
| 14 | 3 | 092382681 | A | W | |

Once you've applied this format, your Student ID field should look normal and include "leading zeroes"

| | A | B | C |
|----|----------|----------|-----------|
| 1 | Student. | ID. | Last Name |
| 2 | 3747 | 70884496 | A |
| 3 | 3747 | 70884496 | A |
| 4 | 3747 | 70884496 | Ab |
| 5 | 3747 | 70884496 | A |
| 6 | 3747 | 70884496 | A |
| 7 | 3747 | 70884496 | A |
| 8 | 2903 | 1.03E+08 | A |
| 9 | 2903 | 1.03E+08 | Ab |
| 10 | 2903 | 1.03E+08 | Ab |
| 11 | 2903 | 1.03E+08 | Ab |
| 12 | 2903 | 1.03E+08 | Ab |
| 13 | 2903 | 1.03E+08 | A |
| 14 | 1444 | 92382681 | A |
| 15 | 1444 | 92382681 | A |
| 16 | 1444 | 92382681 | A |
| 17 | 1444 | 92382681 | A |

Next, we have to perform a similar format change to the field that has the student's permanent ID in column B (This time, enter nine zeroes.)

| | A | B | C | D | E |
|----|----------|------------|-----------|------------|-------------|
| 1 | Student. | ID. | Last Name | First Name | Middle Name |
| 2 | 3747 | 070884496 | Ab | W | |
| 3 | 3747 | 070884496 | A | W | |
| 4 | 3747 | 070884496 | A | W | |
| 5 | 3747 | 070884496 | A | W | |
| 6 | 3747 | 070884496 | A | W | |
| 7 | 3747 | 070884496 | A | W | |
| 8 | 2903 | 0102583540 | A | W | |
| 9 | 2903 | 0102583540 | A | W | |
| 10 | 2903 | 0102583540 | A | W | |
| 11 | 2903 | 0102583540 | A | W | |
| 12 | 2903 | 0102583540 | A | W | |
| 13 | 2903 | 0102583540 | A | W | |
| 14 | 1444 | 092382681 | A | W | |

When you apply this change, district ID's should all be a uniform length, regardless of leading zeroes.

Now that the data is formatted correctly, we'll shift our focus to making the worksheet itself more usable. We'll do this by using the Autofit feature.

First select all of the data in your table by clicking the upper left box in the table (Highlighted in red). Then from the "Format" menu at the top of the screen, select "Column" then "AutoFit Selection". This function will automatically re-size your columns based on their respective data

Next step is to use the "Autofilter" function in Excel. Select "Filter" then "Autofilter" from the "Data" pull-down menu. You'll notice that each column now has a simple pull down menu, which will allow you to sort the entire record set by teacher, and/or by period, etc.

At this point, you'd be smart to save this file, as an Excel workbook, with a read-only attribute. You'll want to keep this file in a safe place, as it contains lots of student information.

The trick here is to keep in mind that you're going after chunks of data, based on individual teacher requests. Now that you've got this block of data imported into Excel, and ready to sort, it's time to take a look at the request forms that your faculty members have provided you.

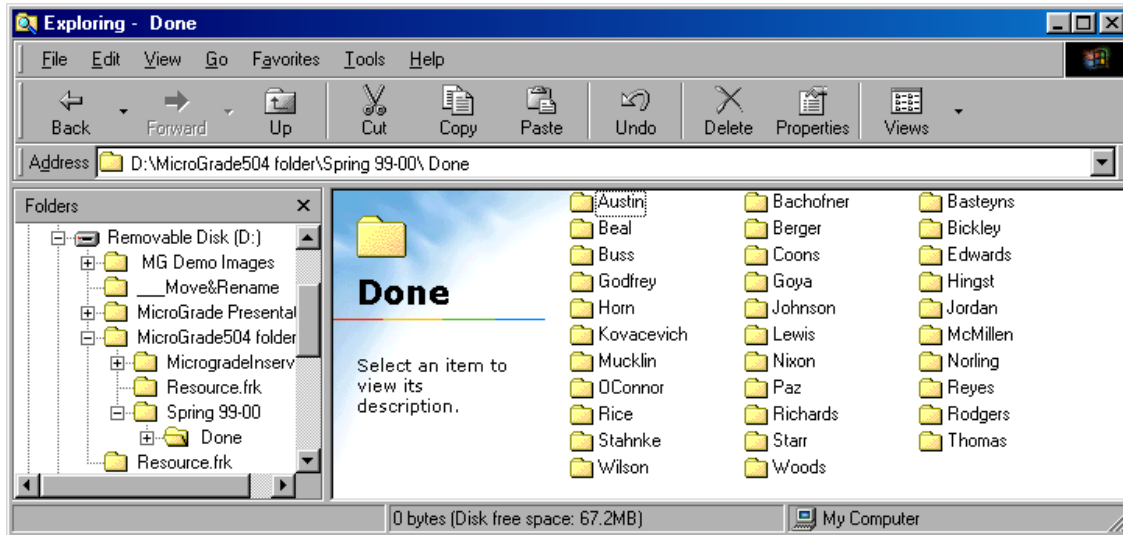
If instructors have requested that you group their students by period, then you'll first select the instructor name from the Teacher pull-down, then one period at a time, saving the results individually.

If instructors have requested that you group their students by subject, then you'll first select the instructor name from the Teacher pull-down, then one subject at a time, saving those results individually.

Once you've narrowed a group of students down (either by period, or by subject), it's time to save this info into a format that MicroGrade will easily import. This is how you do it.

- Select the range of cells that contains your student information (without the header info). Be sure to include all pertinent information.
- Copy this information to the clipboard, and then paste it into a blank worksheet. (If you don't have a blank worksheet in your open workbook, you can create one by using the Insert menu, and selecting Worksheet)
- Use the Save As feature, and select **Tab Delimited** from the "Save as type" menu, and give the file a distinctive name (I typically use an abbreviation for the either the subject name, or simply the period number), and save them to a folder/directory you've created for this instructor. Note: Excel will warn you

that you're going to lose some formatting by saving to this file type. It's OK, you haven't lost any data.



- Continue this process until you've sorted and saved all the needed student data, then move on to the MicroGrade file creation leg of the process. I know that the Excel portion is a bit painstaking, but when you consider the time you're saving your faculty, and the impact this process will ultimately have on technology integration, and parent/teacher communication, I think you'll agree that it's a worthwhile venture. Besides, once you get into a groove, it's over before you know it.

MicroGrade import

This is the easy part, ever since the folks at MicroGrade created a user-defined import feature. You should have a separate directory for each instructor, which you created in during the Excel portion of this process. What you'll do here is to open the MicroGrade template file (the one you created with all the global preferences, e-mail settings, etc.), import student data, and save MicroGrade files to their respective instructor directory. Again, this process is repetitive, but no one ever said that being a hero was going to be fun!

Creating the template MicroGrade file

There are several small "tweaks" that I'd recommend giving some thought to, before creating a slew of MicroGrade files for your faculty. Most of them have to do with preferences that are just generally good ideas, but there are an equal number of step-saving recommendations here as well.

Keep in mind that these are not requirements; they are just a handful of ideas that I've found to be useful. I'll describe each, and then explain why I've chosen to include it in the template file.

The first “tweak” is in the preferences for **Grades and Scores**. In the unscored options portion of that dialog box, I check the “on partly scored assignments”. What this means is that the minute you enter the first score for an assignment, all students without a score are affected as if they had a zero for a score. Now, while this may seem a bit harsh, my experience is that it tends to help alert students who might have missed a day, or for some reason, not turned in an assignment. If you do not activate this “tweak”, and fail to enter a zero for students who have not turned in assignments, you might wind up lulling students into a false sense of confidence. Trust me, it's a good idea.

The next tip is in the **Display and Sorting** preferences, and it deals with highlighting of grades below a particular letter grade. By default, this is set to highlight only the letter grade of “F”. I think this is such a great feature, because it gives instructors a visual cue of student performance. But why wait for students to turn in a failing grade? Why not raise the hurdle a bit, and highlight anything that's below a “C”? This feature only changes the color of scores on the computer monitor, and I've found that raising the threshold to something like a “C” will help instructors pick up on a performance trend before it's too late.

While in the **Display and Sorting** dialog, I generally switch student names from First Last, to Last, First (I've found that my faculty prefers it that way). You might also select the “**Show Points, Percent for Categories, Assignments**” as I find that many teachers request that “tweak” sooner or later.

In the **Student Information** section of the preferences, I would recommend two changes. While I think that both Student ID and WebGrade passwords should be required, I'd recommend that they both be switched to being generated “manually”, rather than “automatically”. In addition, I'd recommend that you “unclick” the “required” check box for WebGrade passwords, as it tends to confuse teachers who may choose to add students to their class files later. These are odd switches, but they will prevent users from having to deal with some awkward error messages later on.

If you were going to be creating class files in an environment with multiple class periods, I'd recommend that you **create a student attribute** for class period, and create a range of values for it. This will allow you to import the period number along with the rest of the student information. MicroGrade's import feature will detect the presence of any attribute that exists in the file, so this tip might prove useful to you, even if it's not a period attribute you're importing. Reminder: Importing attributes like period will allow instructors to sort students based on those attribute values.

The next recommendation deals with preferences for **electronic mail**. If instructors are using the application in a networked environment, it makes sense to include the **SMTP Server** information in your template file. Student e-mail domain can also be entered, which will allow you to limit the e-mail portion of the student record to the account name. I generally include the domain portion of the instructor e-mail address (i.e. @school.edu), so that this portion is a little easier to complete before handing files off to faculty members.

Your faculty will really love you if you set up the **attendance feature** for them, and you can do that in one fell swoop with the template file (saving your teaching staff from having to set it up themselves). If your school site uses some creative attendance code (or they simply differ from the default codes provided by MicroGrade), you would be wise to edit those here too. MicroGrade let's you have up to 16 attendance codes, so feel free to get creative!

One final recommendation deals with the creation of a MicroGrade file password. While there's not much security in a single, site-wide password, it might be better than the absence of a password! You might save your template file with a temporary password, and instruct faculty members to change it to something that only they know. Worst-case scenario, they won't change the password. In that case, at least you've provided them with a little protection.

Be sure to save this template file. MicroGrade won't allow you to save it as a read-only, so you'll have to be careful with it.

The Final Leg

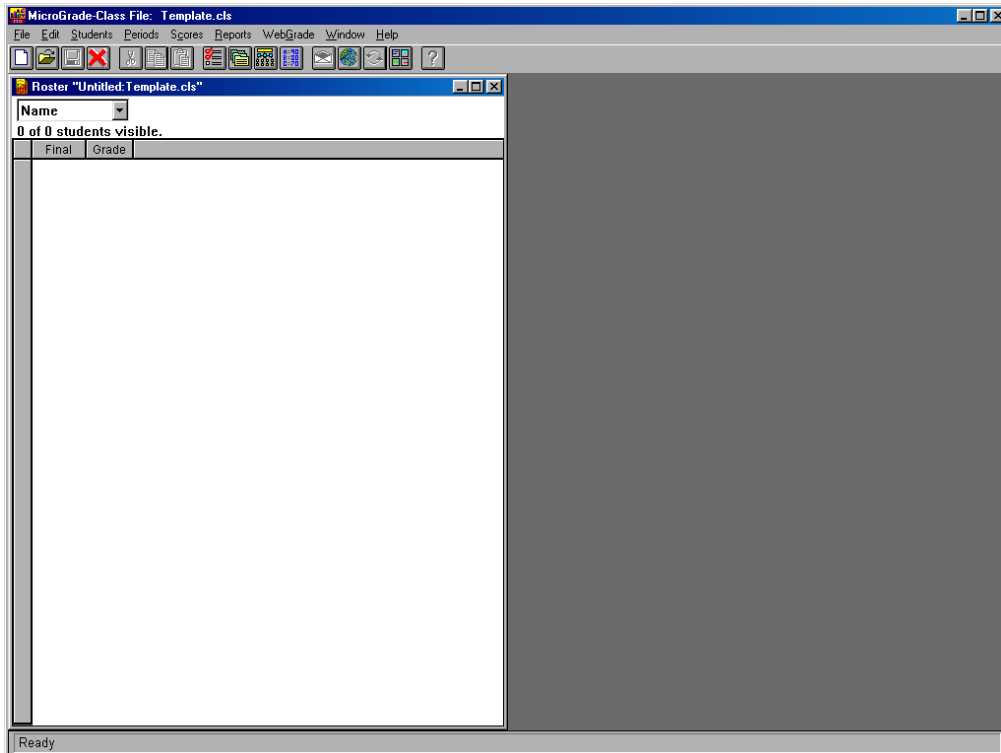
This portion of the process is about as exciting as sorting and saving from Excel, but you can take some refuge in the fact that it's the last step! Actually, this is my favorite step, as you finally get to see the result of your labor.

Let's review for a second. We began this process by querying the student information system. We exported the student data to an Excel file, then sorted and saved data (based on teacher requests) to comma-separated files. We then created a MicroGrade template file, setting some key preferences, so that we can use it as a starting point for the class files we're about to create.

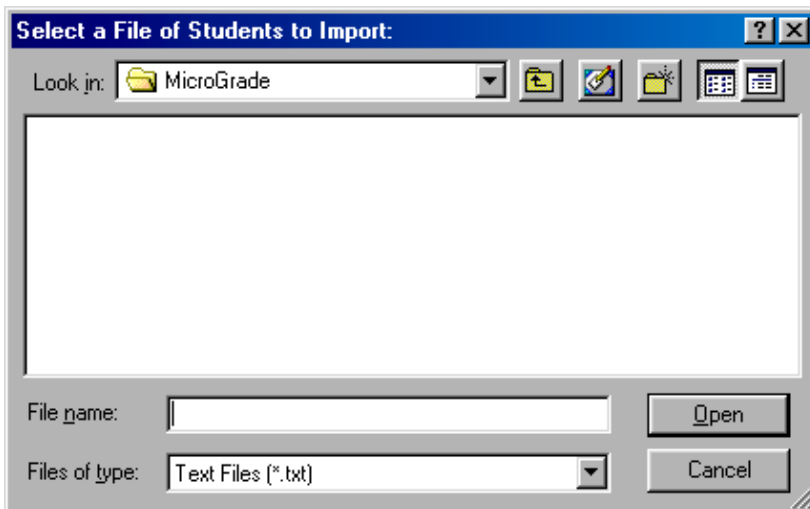
Now we're going to use MicroGrade's import feature to migrate student data into that template file, and save the finished MicroGrade files into the same directory we created for the comma-separated files.

Here we go.

MicroGrade Import Steps

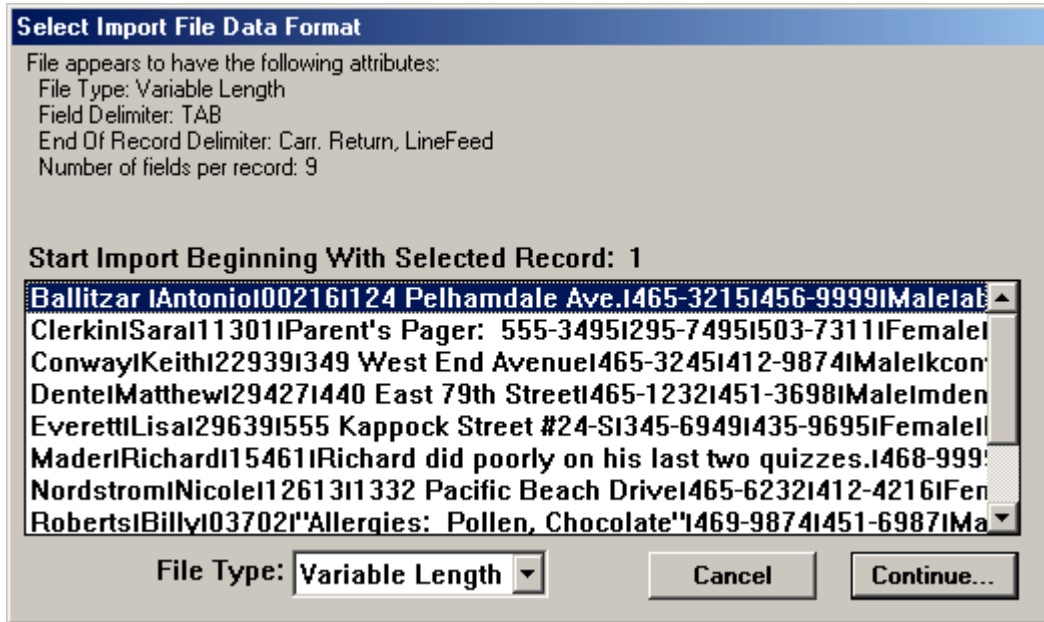


You begin by opening the template file. Keep in mind that you'll come to a point in each import when you'll be prompted to save changes to this file. Because MicroGrade doesn't allow you to save a file with read-only attributes, you'll have to be careful.



From the **Student** pull-down menu, select "**User Defined**" from the **Import Students** menu. You'll be prompted to select a file of student information to

import from. Because the comma-separated files we've prepared are not formatted as text files, you'll need to change the **Files of type** option to **All Files**.



Once you've selected the student data file, MicroGrade will begin the process of importing that data with a window that looks like this one. This step of the import is real easy, as you simply confirm the "variable length" file type by clicking the "Continue" button!

Specify Import Fields

Field Separators: **TAB** End Of Record: **Carr. Return, LineFeed**

Contents of Starting Record:
 Ballitzar Antonio 00216 124 Pelhamdale Ave. 465-3215 456-9999 Male
 aball@school.edu W00216 1

Ballitzar
 Antonio
 00216
 124 Pelhamdale Ave.
 465-3215
 456-9999
 Male
 aball@school.edu
 W00216
 1

To import a field, hilite the field in the ListBox and select the field type from the 'Import Fields' menu.
 To de-select a field hilite the field and select the 'Blank' item from the 'Import Fields' menu.

Import Fields:

Notes 1 and 2 can be used repeatedly to add data to separate lines of a note record.

Save Import Field Specification... **Back...** **Cancel** **OK**

The second stage of the this import selects the first record in your student data file, and waits for you to associate an import field (from the pull-down menu in the bottom right corner) with each of the fields in your student data file.

A couple of point of interest here:

- If you've created any attributes (like the period, etc.) in your template file, they will show up at the bottom of the "Import Fields" pull-down menu, allowing you to import and assign any information that your faculty finds useful.
- If a student record has an empty field (see the second to the last above), it means that this student data record simply did not have an entry in that field in your student information system. In this situation, that field represents a parent e-mail address, and this student's parents simply hadn't provided one.
- Some data (first, last, ID, etc.) is pretty self-explanatory. Other information (parent name, street address, etc.) can be stored in one of the two "Notes" fields. Coolest improvement here is the ability to store multiple items in the same Notes field. For example, you can select the parent name, and assign it to Notes1, the select the street address and do the same. Those two pieces of data will appear on separate lines in the Notes field of the student record. MicroGrade automatically adds a line number, based on the order in which you assign them. (See window below)

- A note about middle names: I don't recommend importing them. They tend to make the student name portion of each MicroGrade window wider, and most school rosters don't include them, making them a bit of a hassle in MicroGrade.

Specify Import Fields

Field Separators: End Of Record:

Contents of Starting Record:
 Ballitzar Antonio 00216 124 Pelhamdale Ave. 465-3215 456-9999 Male
 aball@school.edu W00216 1

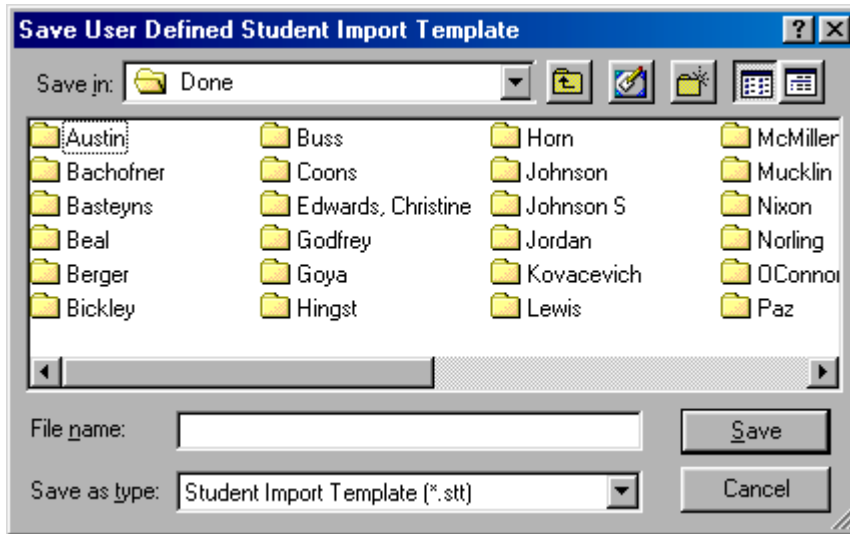
Last Name->Ballitzar
 First Name->Antonio
 ID->00216
 Notes 1 (line 1)->124 Pelhamdale Ave.
 Phone 1->465-3215
 Phone 2->456-9999
 Gender->Male
 Email 1->aball@school.edu
 Password->W00216
 Period->1

To import a field, hilite the field in the ListBox and select the field type from the 'Import Fields' menu. **Import Fields:**

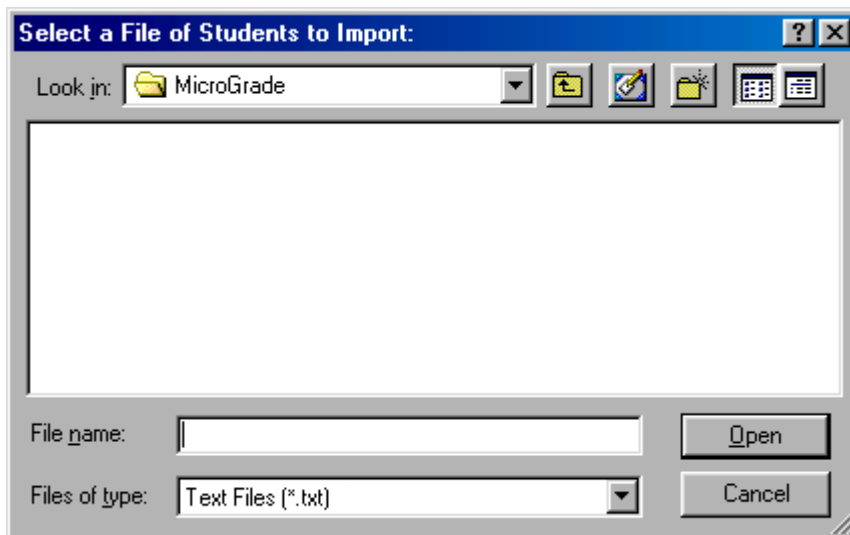
To de-select a field hilite the field and select the 'Blank' item from the 'Import Fields' menu. Notes 1 and 2 can be used repeatedly to add data to separate lines of a note record.

Once you've assigned import fields to all data fields, you'll want to **Save Import Field Specification**, so you can skip this step in later imports.

Note: It's wise to name these files carefully, and to save them in a directory that's close to all the student data. Otherwise, you'll wear yourself out navigating between the two.



I typically save this Student Import Template just outside the directories that contain each teacher's student data files. In order to prevent confusion, I name the file **Student Import Template**.



Once you've saved the student import template, you will be asked which student data file you'd like to import. You'll need to change the **Files of type** to **All Files**, as we did not save student data in text format.

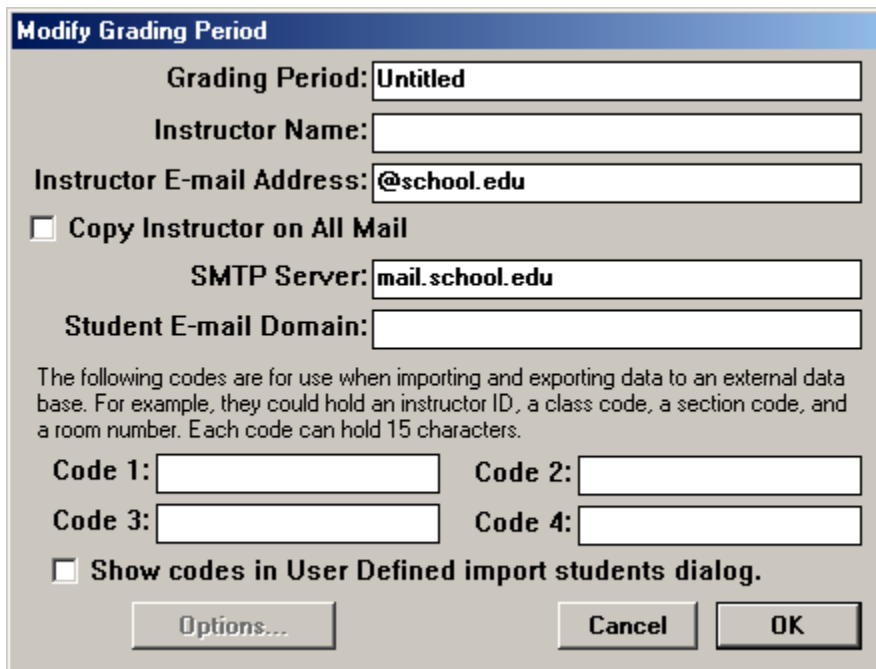
Once you've selected a file, and clicked the Open button, you'll get a dialog box confirming that the import is completed.

Now it's time to have a look at the student records (from the Student pull-down menu), so you can see how much data you just saved someone from typing in. I know that it took quite a few steps to get this far, but I think you'll agree that it's worth the effort.

Edit Student Records

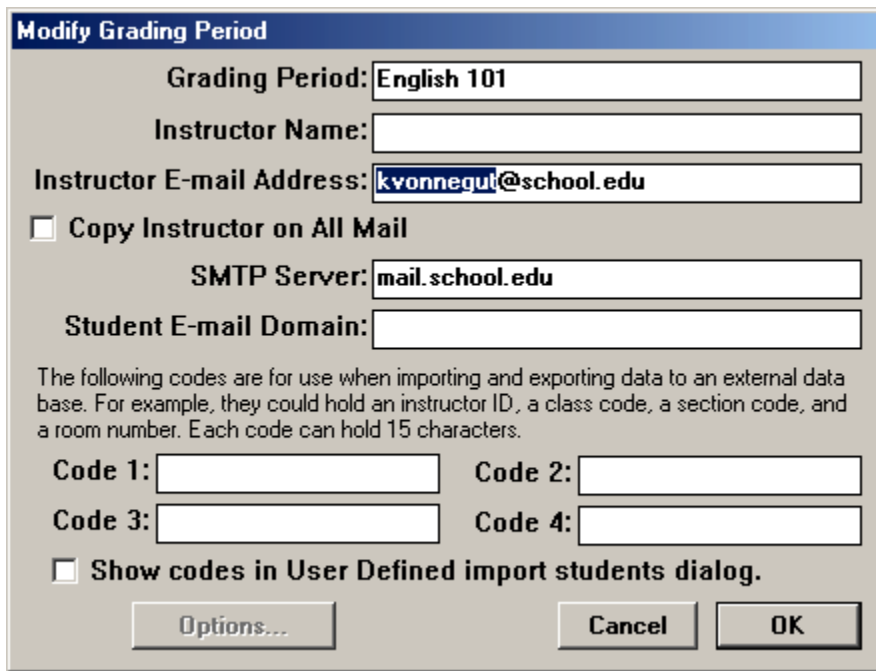
| | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li style="background-color: #4F81BD; color: white; padding: 2px;">Antonio Ballitzar <li style="padding: 2px;">Sara Clerkin <li style="padding: 2px;">Keith Conway <li style="padding: 2px;">Matthew Dente <li style="padding: 2px;">Lisa Everett <li style="padding: 2px;">Richard Mader <li style="padding: 2px;">Nicole Nordstrom <li style="padding: 2px;">Billy Roberts <li style="padding: 2px;">Klaude Sniffer <li style="padding: 2px;">Carla Worthington | <div style="border: 1px solid gray; padding: 5px;"> Student Information: Last Name: <input type="text" value="Ballitzar"/> First Name: <input type="text" value="Antonio"/> Student ID: <input type="text" value="00216"/> Gender: <input type="text" value="Male"/> Phone 1: <input type="text" value="465-3215"/> Phone 2: <input type="text" value="456-9999"/> E-Mail 1: <input type="text" value="aball@school.edu"/> E-Mail 2: <input type="text"/> WebGrade Password: <input type="text" value="w00216"/> Notes 1 <input type="text" value="1"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Don't Show This Note in Reports or Student Summary <input type="text" value="124 Pelhamdale Ave."/> <hr/> Assign Student Attributes: Period <input type="text" value="1"/> </div> |
| Students in Class : 10 Students Visible : 10 Students Dropped : 0 | <input checked="" type="radio"/> Edit Active Students <input type="radio"/> Add Students <input type="radio"/> Edit Dropped Students |
| <input type="button" value="Drop"/> <input type="button" value="Enter"/> <input type="button" value="Edit Student Attrs..."/> <input type="button" value="Finished"/> | |

Tip: I generally configure the teachers e-mail address (and course title) at this point, adding their account name in front of the e-mail domain that we saved in our template file.



The screenshot shows a dialog box titled "Modify Grading Period". The "Grading Period" field contains "Untitled". The "Instructor Name" field is empty. The "Instructor E-mail Address" field contains "@school.edu". The "Copy Instructor on All Mail" checkbox is unchecked. The "SMTP Server" field contains "mail.school.edu". The "Student E-mail Domain" field is empty. Below these fields is a paragraph of text: "The following codes are for use when importing and exporting data to an external data base. For example, they could hold an instructor ID, a class code, a section code, and a room number. Each code can hold 15 characters." There are four "Code" fields (Code 1, Code 2, Code 3, Code 4), all of which are empty. The "Show codes in User Defined import students dialog." checkbox is unchecked. At the bottom are three buttons: "Options...", "Cancel", and "OK".

Figure 1: Before

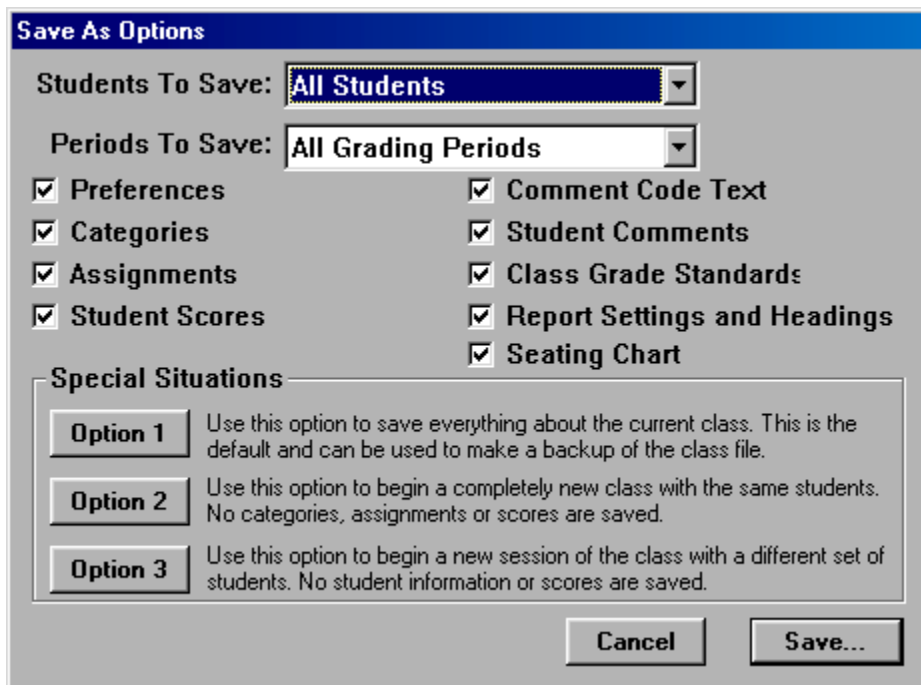
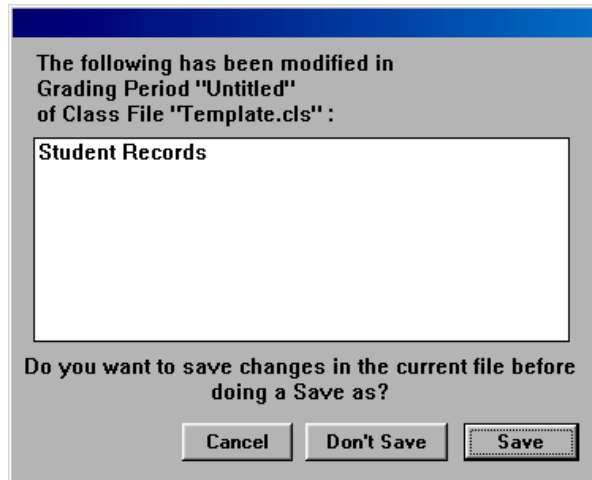


The screenshot shows the same "Modify Grading Period" dialog box, but with updated information. The "Grading Period" field now contains "English 101". The "Instructor Name" field is still empty. The "Instructor E-mail Address" field now contains "kvonnegut@school.edu". The "Copy Instructor on All Mail" checkbox remains unchecked. The "SMTP Server" field still contains "mail.school.edu". The "Student E-mail Domain" field is still empty. The explanatory text and the four empty "Code" fields are the same as in Figure 1. The "Show codes in User Defined import students dialog." checkbox remains unchecked. The "Options...", "Cancel", and "OK" buttons are still present at the bottom.

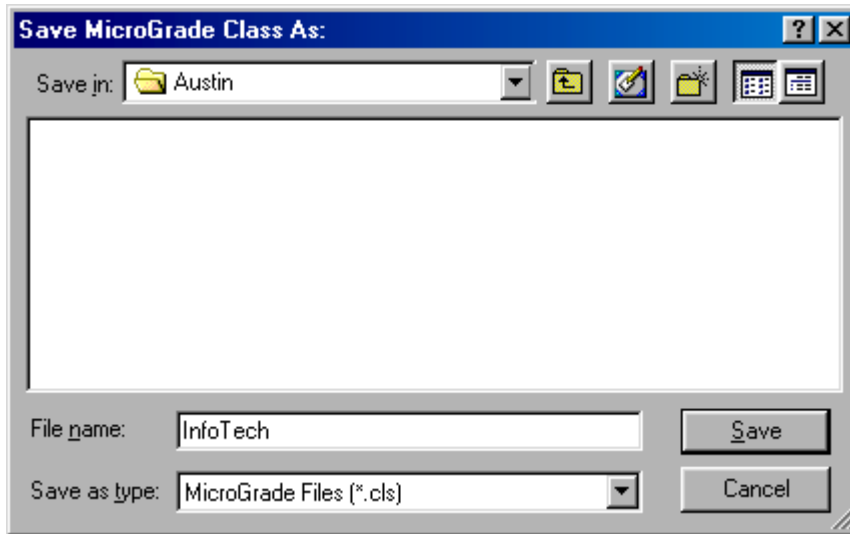
Figure 2: After

The final leg of this portion is to save the grade file in the appropriate teacher directory (using your own naming convention, or one that they've specified). When you access the **Save As** option, under the File menu, you'll immediately be prompted to save changes to the original "Template.cls" file.

It's important that you select "**Don't Save**" at this point. Otherwise, you'll be adding student record information to your template file, and that's not your goal.



The Save As Options box that appears next will allow you to save the imported student data into a new file. Use the Save button here, there's no need to change any other settings.



Enter a file name, select the appropriate teacher directory, and Save.

Some final thoughts

If you've just begun to entertain the notion of preparing MicroGrade files for your faculty, and given this documentation a read, I hope that it hasn't given you second thoughts. While developing this technique, I've stopped countless times and thought "is this really worth it?" Believe me when I say that it is.

Before you know it, your faculty (even the ones that have kicked against the use of a computerized grade management program) will be telling you how much time you've saved them, or how much easier it is to stay in contact with their students/parents regarding progress.

I know, because I've heard these stories from dozens of teachers at my own site. This service is the single biggest effort you can make to help your staff integrate technology in their classrooms. It's equally valuable to teachers of all subjects, at all grade levels, and it just might be the hook that convinces a reluctant teacher to embrace technology as a whole.

Your faculty is waiting.