

Computer virus hobbles Mounds View schools

By [PATRICE RELERFORD](#), Star Tribune

Last update: February 12, 2009 - 6:00 AM

Mounds View School District students had trouble using lunch accounts, teachers didn't receive e-mails and parents couldn't check up on homework online Wednesday after a virus shut down the district's computer servers and e-mail system.

Classes in the north metro district continued and will continue today, but the problem led to long lines during lunch periods. District officials first noticed the problem on Tuesday.

"We're going to solve this," said Colin Sokolowski, a Mounds View School District spokesman. "It's not as if anything [academic records and payment information] has gone permanently missing."

All students received meals regardless of their ability to pay cash. Parents accustomed to logging online and e-mailing teachers were told to pick up the phone.

Sokolowski said the district's IT staff went from school to school Wednesday testing computer equipment. District residents received automated voice mails about the problem before noon. Sokolowski said the district, like other large organizations, uses antivirus software.

Symantec Corp., a California antivirus software company, said the virus is a low-risk malicious program that was discovered Feb. 4 and affects computers using Microsoft Windows operating systems.

An estimated 1,000 computers have been infected worldwide. The virus infects programs on the PC, and may also download additional files from the Internet. The damage level to the infected computers is considered "medium," Symantec said.

Sokolowski didn't know whether other schools or businesses experienced similar problems but said district staff had heard rumblings that Mounds View's computer troubles weren't an isolated incident.

District residents who need to reach a teacher or other school officials can call 651-621-6000 or visit www.moundsviewschools.org for a directory of phone numbers.

Staff writer Steve Alexander contributed to this report. Patrice Relerford • 612-673-4395