

NC DPI
Using Schoolnet to Adjust Assessment Philosophy

Frye: **James Frye**

Frye: Welcome, everybody. My name is James Frye, and I'm an English teacher in the Newton-Conover City school system in Catawba County, North Carolina. I'm here to talk to you just a little bit today about ways that you can use Schoolnet in an innovative fashion. What I'm going to talk to you about today specifically is how you can use the Schoolnet software to adjust your grading and assessment philosophies in the classroom.

 Okay, so as we know it on the surface, Schoolnet is a tool that we can use to design and assign standards-based assessments to our students. We've been adopting this software for about a year and working out the kinks, and it's really starting to come to fruition very well and work for us as an advantageous tool for the teacher. But how many of us have actually taken the time to think beyond that software's immediate application, which is to test students and to, you know, see their performance and to gather data? How many of us have taken the time to actually brainstorm implications for what that data can do for us and how it can revitalize our classroom practice?

 So in a time when we're making so many transitions in our field, it really seems like there's a lot to make sense of in terms of what we can do with these transitions from traditional learning to digital learning, and from our former standards to Common Core standards, Essential Standards and new curriculums everywhere. We have these Common Core and Essential Standards that we're all

using to design, you know, fresh, new, engaging and creative curriculum around, but how can we use the tools available to us—not just Schoolnet, including others, but especially Schoolnet—to support our transition and improve our instruction? What I want to, you know, obviously specifically think about first is assessment philosophy.

So, in a contemporary classroom, our students and teachers are working with a curriculum that's deeper than it is broad. The Common Core is a curriculum that is narrower, but it digs deeper into critical topics and subjects. In English curriculum, especially from my perspective, it's really neat because I get to spend longer amounts of time with seminal texts that are actually going to open new doors for my students, as far as understanding goes. I can talk about inference and things like that for a longer time, and really make sure that my students have mastered those individual standards before I move forward.

And another thing about this: all classrooms should be 21st century. That's why I use the word "contemporary." Because really, we're 15 years into the 21st century. This term is really anachronistic now and problematic for our use as educators. Our new standards afford us the time to dig in and build student proficiency in a way that we haven't really grasped until now. Learning is becoming more open-ended for us.

So why are we not assessing our students based upon mastery of individual standards? There are a lot of conversations going around about mastery-graded learning and, you know, grading by individual student mastery standards. And so that's going to lead us into the next part.

So there's this new grading practice—it's, you know, fairly new, in the last, you know, several years—called standards-based grading. Many of you have probably heard of it. Schoolnet is a software that lends itself well to standards-based grading because standards-based grading involves measuring student proficiency on well-defined course objectives.

So when we're talking about grading by standard, it's not necessarily about assigning, you know, grades to students that reflect, you know, their performance on an individual assignment that may have covered more than one standard. It's about taking, you know, maybe a group of three assignments that were designed to assess one standard and one student's mastery of that standard, and using that to determine whether or not they've actually grasped the material. It's really more personalized and more individualized, and it's going to benefit you and your students more in the long run because the data is going to be something that you can really work with to improve your instruction.

So you can see, this is like an overview of standards-based grading. So scores are going to look differently, obviously. It's not going to be necessarily numeric. A score of "P," pass, meets the grade level standard by demonstrating proficiency of the content or processes for the measurement topic. "I" means in progress toward meeting it; you haven't quite gotten there, but you're not—you're on track. "N," not making progress or making minimal progress toward meeting the grade level standard. "M," missing data, that, you know, that's the same as a traditional grade book [ph]. And then not English-proficient, you can use that for English-as-a-second-language students for two marking periods [ph].

So, this is just an example of a rubric. Your standards-based grading can be a whole lot more dynamic and prolific than what you see here in this example. This is just an example of how it works. It's kind of like a red light, yellow light, green light system for student proficiency. It also doesn't punish students for, you know, not mastering a standard two months prior when they may master it two months later and fully grasp it. It doesn't punish them for that 60 they may have earned on an assignment, because they did prove later on that they had mastered the material that was in that assignment.

So now you're probably wondering, "How can I use Schoolnet to reimagine and redefine my assessment philosophies?" We talked about Schoolnet as a software. We've talked about these assessment philosophies, specifically standards-based grading.

The first thing you can do is align your assessments in Schoolnet that you create to your standards, but here's the trick: do it one standard at a time. If you do this, you're going to get data on your student performance specific to that standard that's going to help you guide your instruction. This is, you know, a no-brainer for most of us, but if you have that data in hand, you're going to really be able to personalize your instruction, no matter how many students are in your class. So really that takes the whole discussion about human capacity out of the picture, and makes it more possible for you to have a one-on-one working relationship with your students, in terms of that data.

Okay, so the second thing you're going to do is take the data from the single standard assessment that you gave through Schoolnet to determine your

students' proficiency on that standard. This helps you know what you need to do to reteach appropriately. That's just basic, you know, using the data that's given to you.

Third, you're going to reteach and redesign your assessments based upon that, what that assessment tells you about each individual student's strengths and weaknesses. This also really lends itself well to standards-based report cards, and that's something that's going to give parents really a window into their child's performance, especially if standards-based report cards were adopted using a tool like Schoolnet to support it throughout, you know, K through 12. Parents could really track, as well as teachers, students' progress and where their weaknesses really lie, and that's a powerful, powerful platform for student growth and teacher growth as well.

And then finally, fourth, this is a method that we can really use to guide us to the most individualized instruction for our students. You can reassess, as needed, to determine each individual student's mastery of those standards, and then that really gives you the data that you need to fuel that standards-based grading framework. So the—you know, the green light, the standard has been mastered, or maybe the red light: The student really isn't getting this and I can tell you exactly why, it's because their inferential skills and their close reading skills aren't quite on par, they may—really didn't understand meiosis or mitosis, we need to spend a little bit more time on that.

So, another question you may be thinking: why on earth does this matter to me? Why do I need to take extra time out of my day to design these

assessments and give these to my students? Why do I need to redefine what I'm doing? Maybe you're a teacher who teaches with traditional practices and they work really well for you. Well, there are several reasons why this is a beneficial strategy.

The implication is that first, obviously, it gives a way [ph] to the standards-based report cards that we've already talked about. It gives you a window into the soul of the student that maybe you couldn't have seen before, as far as their strengths and weaknesses. Another thing, it improves instruction and facilitates growth not only for the student, but also for the teacher. It shows you what works about your practice and what doesn't, and helps you to improve, and it gives that insight for growth. Third, it gives a specific analysis of student weaknesses and creates a strategy for improvement. And then finally, it encourages reflective practitioners in our profession, which is something that's critical; we really need to focus on encouraging a growth mindset, as opposed to a fixed mindset, among our teachers to, you know, grow and give teachers the idea that they really can—you know, empower the teacher and give them the agency to succeed.

And you know, as a teacher who is in the classroom right now, I can really say that that's what teachers need. I've been given those opportunities by an amazing school system in Newton-Conover City schools, and those opportunities are what we need to build our teachers up, in our state. So, yes, absolutely, I think that all of these implications are well worth using Schoolnet.

So, that's just a short presentation on how you can use Schoolnet innovatively in your classroom. So if you want to learn more about me, there's more information embedded in the last slide of the presentation on the NCDPI webpage. Also, if you would like to learn more about how to create assessments in Schoolnet, and maybe you're not at the level of, you know, being comfortable with creating assessments in Schoolnet yet, please click this presentation. It's hyperlinked in the final slide. It includes full video tutorials for several aspects of using Schoolnet for creating your own benchmarks and assessing students' progress.

Also, I do other videos as well. I do some flip [ph] videos. Some interesting things with the students that I teach at Lenoir-Rhyne University. So if you'd like to see those videos, check out my YouTube channel. Please, please, please do connect with me on Twitter. I do tweet quite frequently about innovative practices and digital teaching and learning. And then connect with me on LinkedIn if you'd like to learn more about me and my professional background. Thank you so much, and have an excellent day.

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