

Home Base Weekly Update



December 19, 2013

NEW THIS WEEK

- **Efforts Underway to Improve Home Base Functionality**
- **Is Your Home Base Implementation Team Well Rounded?**
- **Resolutions on Issues in Assessment Admin within Schoolnet**
- **Save Fewer Numbers of Scores in Gradebook to Avoid Known Timeout Issue**
- **More Information on Roles and Permissions**
- **News from the Partnership LEAs**
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- **Webinar on PowerTeacher Gradebook Now Online**
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IN CASE YOU MISSED IT

- **Mark Your Calendars: Home Base Symposium on Tap in February**
- **Best Tips for Logging Tickets with Our Home Base Support Center Now Online**

NEW THIS WEEK

Efforts Underway to Improve Home Base Functionality

The NCDPI and Pearson top leadership met last week to assess where things stand in Home Base and to determine how we can improve functionality and dependability over the coming weeks.

Afterward, State Superintendent June Atkinson reached out to local superintendents to share these next steps and action items starting now:

- We are assigning a Pearson project manager and at least one NCDPI staff member to each of the regions to work on a case-by-case basis for system solutions. This relates directly to the fact that there are 253 separate instances of PowerSchool.
- We will begin weekly webinars in January to inform users of the status of PowerSchool updates and fixes. Watch your e-mail and this enewsletter for announcements and invitations.

- We are committed to providing more timely feedback on Support Center tickets immediately.
- We are organizing a Chief Technology Officers' February workshop regarding system capacity for simultaneous usage. (We also will offer a special session for superintendents on this topic.)
- We will publish and keep up-to-date a comprehensive calendar for PowerSchool updates.
- We will ensure that you and your team receive e-mail reminders about new information posted to the Home Base website. In addition, a Best Practices Guide to help you communicate about Home Base effectively will be ready in January.
- Also in January, we will send a detailed schedule of professional development to enable school personnel to do 2014-15 student and teacher schedules.

As these new work streams get underway, LEAs/charters are identifying their Home Base implementation team members so we can ensure that we are communicating with the appropriate people.

Is Your Home Base Implementation Team Well Rounded?

Speaking of those Home Base implementation teams, many of you may recall the RESA-sponsored implementation workshops that offered suggestions on putting together a cross-functional team as well as some exercises for working through "discovery" questions to assist with implementation.

Does your school or district team, for instance, include staff representing communications, curriculum and instruction, technology and professional development? Does it include principal and teacher reps? Would a parent representative also be appropriate at this point in your planning especially as you roll out the parent portal?

Resolutions on Issues in Assessment Admin within Schoolnet

In recent communications regarding the upgrade of Schoolnet 15.2, we noted two outstanding issues that we knew still needed resolution. One of the issues was related to the ability to search for items in Item Central when building tests. The other issue impacted the ability of teachers to preview tests and the ability for students to take the tests online (specifically, tests with images). In both cases, teachers and students got an "Our Apologies" error in Schoolnet.

Pearson applied a fix to the Schoolnet system on Dec. 16 that addressed those issues. Since then, the NCDPI and Pearson team members have conducted testing to confirm that this fix works consistently. During internal testing, we found the issue to be resolved. In addition, the Home Base Support Center staff have been checking back with LEAs that have logged tickets associated with these two issues. This week so far, the Support Center team has already received confirmation from some of the LEAs that their staff and faculty can search for items and preview online assessments and that students are able to take online assessments in their district or charter school.

We are encouraged by both our testing and initial responses from LEAs. We believe that users across the state are now able to consistently search for assessment items, preview tests, and administer online assessments to students.

If you are still encountering errors while using the assessment admin module, please report the problem along with a screen shot of the error to the support center at homepage.incidents@dpi.nc.gov. We keep track of these issues and will work with you as we get fixes such as these to make sure your issues have been resolved.

We appreciate your patience as we improve your instructional improvement system.

Save Fewer Numbers of Scores in Gradebook to Avoid Known Timeout Issue

There's a workaround for a timeout error some teachers are getting when saving assignment scores in PowerTeacher Gradebook. You may get a Socket Timeout error message if submitting scores for 21 or more distinct assignments at a time.

Depending on the number of assignments for which scores are being entered, PowerTeacher Gradebook and PowerSchool process the score updates differently. Once scores are submitted, PowerTeacher Gradebook will wait three minutes for a response from the server before timing out.

In some districts, updating scores for 21 or more distinct assignments at a time results in a long-running query and causes teachers to see a Socket Timeout error. Not all districts are being affected.

Note: While the Socket Timeout error occurs, the submitted scores continue to process on the server and are eventually saved.

Workaround: When entering scores, only submit scores for fewer distinct assignments at a time. For example, enter scores for only 10 assignments at a time, then save those scores. Once they've saved properly, continue entering scores for the next batch of assignments in batches smaller than 21.

A fix is planned during the January 2014 maintenance weekend. Thank you for your patience.

More Information on Roles and Permissions

Have you been wondering how to set up an account for a teacher who needs access to create benchmark assessments? If so, you should find this new document related to roles and permissions helpful.

The document, just posted online, is specific to the roles needed for a teacher to have access to benchmark assessment items for creating benchmark assessments at the district level. This is only one scenario; we know users have requested more information on the setup process, so we are working on additional scenarios and will be adding these documents to the website as they are completed.

Access the new document, *More on Roles and Permissions - Access for Teachers to Build Benchmarks*, at:

<http://www.ncpublicschools.org/homebase/getting-ready/implementation/category?category=User%20Roles%20and%20Access>. And stayed tuned for more information on

additional guides for how to set up roles and permissions for the users in your districts and schools.

News from the Partnership LEAs

As we approach the halfway point of the school year, almost all of the partnership sites have engaged in a strategic planning meeting with members of the Home Base partnership team with a focus on establishing instructional goals and objectives for implementation of the Instructional Improvement System (IIS) applications within Home Base.

As these are determined, the LEAs/charters and their site coordinators will work together to develop action plans and identify resources to help them meet these goals. As expected, each site has a different vision for how Home Base can be used to benefit students and teachers, and all sharing great feedback.

The varied nature of these meetings and the great conversations that come from them really reinforce the unique nature of each LEA. The partner sites are all in different phases of implementation, and are making sure to do what is best for their students. We look forward to continuing work with them in the future!

Additional Updates Added During Maintenance Weekend

Several updates were performed over the previous maintenance weekend that were not listed in the North Carolina Release Notes dated Dec. 5. These included:

- Adding F4K - Career Cruising to the Special Functions page,
- Running a data cleanup script to remove bad track values from students in non-track schools, and
- Updating Teacher Information screen so that Teacher ID field is no longer editable.

If you have questions concerning these or any other changes made during the maintenance weekend, please contact the Home Base Support Center at homebase.incidents@its.nc.gov. The North Carolina Release Notes are viewable at http://www.nc-sis.org/Documents/requirements/North_Carolina_Release_Notes_5-Dec-2013.pdf.

Webinar on PowerTeacher Gradebook Now Online

The NCDPI hosted a well-received webinar Dec. 12 on using the PowerTeacher Gradebook. Co-presenters were Lynn Bullock, implementation training manager from Pearson, and Rosalyn Galloway, Student Information System (SIS) program manager.

More than 250 people participated, and many of them expressed their appreciation for the opportunity to hear directly from these presenters.

MORE INFO: A recording of the webinar can be found at www.nc-sis.org/recordings.html.

Next 'Update' Will Be Jan. 9

We wanted to remind you that we won't publish *Home Base Weekly Update* on Dec. 26 or Jan. 2 because of the holidays. The next edition will be Jan. 9. Have a safe and happy holiday break.

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT

Mark Your Calendars: Home Base Symposium on Tap in February

The 2014 Home Base Symposium is set for Feb. 17-19, 2014 at Greensboro's Sheraton Four Seasons, Koury Convention Center. We know you don't want to miss it!

This year's theme is "All Roads Lead to Home Base," which describes our ultimate goal of integrating Student Information, Standards and Curriculum, Instructional Design, Practice and Resources, Assessments, Data Analysis and Reporting, and Professional Development and Educator Evaluation into one system with single sign-on capability.

Great strides have been made in this massive project we call Home Base, and as we continue on this journey, we want to provide you, the users, a clear roadmap of how we plan to get there together.

This will be the 28th year for the conference but our first as the Home Base Symposium — as most of you know, this replaces the former NC WISE conference (just as the new student information system, PowerSchool, replaces NC WISE as the SIS tool).

Cost is \$115 for registration postmarked by Jan. 31, 2014, and \$250 for late registration postmarked on or after Feb. 1, 2014. The \$250 fee applies to on-site registration as well. So take advantage of early registration now.

In the lead-up to the symposium, we'll tempt you with program and speaker highlights in coming issues of *Home Base Weekly Update*, so keep checking your "in" box.

REGISTRATION INFO: Online registration is available at <http://www.nc-sis.org/symposium14.html>. Remember, registration is not complete until payment and a copy of the completed registration form are received at NCDPI. When completing registrations, please ensure your email address is correct. Certificates of Attendance will be sent to the email addresses entered on the registration form. More details on the conference and instructions on when and where to send payments can be found here:

http://www.nc-sis.org/documents/symp_2014/Home_Base_Symposium_Letter_2014.pdf.

ROOM RESERVATIONS: Several rooms have been reserved at the Sheraton Four Seasons Hotel for Home Base Symposium guests. Find the hotel reservation form here:

http://www.nc-sis.org/documents/symp_2014/Home_Base_Hotel_2014.doc. Please complete the form and mail or fax it to the Sheraton Hotel address/phone number listed on the form. Do NOT submit the hotel reservation form to NCDPI. Please remember to state that you are with the Home Base Symposium when making reservations.

MORE INFO: Please contact Terra Dominguez at terra.dominguez@dpi.nc.gov.

Best Tips for Logging Tickets with Our Home Base Support Center Now Online

We've reported here a few times previously what we call "best practices" for logging tickets when you need help from the Home Base Support Center (HBSC). We've now gathered these tips to create a one-page Home Base Support Center Help Guide available online.

You can reach this document from a couple of places: first, as one of the six major links from the website landing page's Home Base Toolkit:

<http://www.ncpublicschools.org/homebase/>. Click on the middle link, second row, "How to Get Home Base Help."

Second, you can go to our Resources page to the new Support Center link there:

<http://www.ncpublicschools.org/homebase/resources/support-center/>

That page not only features the Help Guide but also direct links to the Leads list for both LEAs and for charter schools. Each school district and charter school was asked to identify their own "lead" and back-up lead for the three main areas of Home Base — student information system (PowerSchool), instructional improvement system (Schoolnet) and the educator effectiveness system, which includes professional development (the TNL tool).

Here's the LEAs Leads list link:

<http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/homebase/resources/support-center/lea-leads.xls>

Here's the charter schools' Leads list link:

<http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/homebase/resources/support-center/charter-leads.xls>

The Leads list is your first go-to for help, but you can also reach out to the HBSC by phone, 919.807.4357, weekdays 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. or by emailing homebase.incidents@its.nc.gov. That email is how a ticket gets logged in Remedy, the software program the center uses.

MORE INFO: Lastly, here's the direct pdf link to guide in case you want to save or print it:

<http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/homebase/resources/support-center/help-guide.pdf>.

HOME BASE WEEKLY UPDATE INFO

We encourage you to share this Update, and for past issues of Home Base Weekly and Biweekly Updates, please visit <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/homebase/updates/biweekly/?year=2013>

***LINKS: PC users might need to press the CTRL button when clicking on a hyperlink in this document.