

Home Base Weekly Update



January 16, 2014

NEW THIS WEEK

- Performance Improvements for the Instructional Improvement System (Schoolnet)
- Person County Assistant Principal Reports Successes in Schoolnet
- Home Base Symposium Registration and Hotel Update
- Coming Soon: Best Practices Guide to Help You Communicate Home Base

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT

- Next Maintenance Weekend is Feb. 7-10

NEW THIS WEEK

Performance Improvements for the Instructional Improvement System (Schoolnet)

The NCDPI and Pearson are aware that the system performance of the Instructional Improvement System (Schoolnet) has been poor during the first few weeks of January.

Pearson has organized a team of engineers to assess the performance problems and take action to correct them. The performance improvement team consists of hosting engineers trained to optimize the computing hardware architecture, network engineers to analyze and improve the efficiency of the flow of data across the network, and software engineers who specialize in optimizing SQL calls (the “structured query language” searches) to the database.

As of Jan. 12, the team has taken the following actions:

- Moved the SQL Server Database from a virtual server to a dedicated physical server with four times more RAM and significantly more processing capacity,
- Added five additional virtual web servers to spread the processing load,
- Added three indexes to the Schoolnet database to optimize performance of database calls, and
- Made adjustments to firewalls to provide more efficient flow of data.

These actions resulted in improved Schoolnet system performance during the week of Jan. 13 as reported by many LEAs and as observed with our performance monitoring software.

However, we recognized that we still need to improve performance. Pearson will continue their system performance analysis over the next several weeks and will be implementing performance improvements periodically each week until system performance is acceptable. Currently, the team is further evaluating all aspects of the computing environment including the firewall, web servers and load balancers, and will be taking actions to make improvements as findings emerge from the analysis. The software engineers have identified a Top 20 list of SQL calls to the database that they will be rewriting to operate more efficiently.

We greatly appreciate the feedback that we have received from LEAs concerning the performance issues. Your specific feedback has enabled us to share very specific performance issues with the Pearson engineers. Please continue to log a ticket with the Home Base Support Center if you have performance issues: homebase.incidents@its.nc.gov or by calling 919.807.4357.

Thank you for your patience as we work to improve your Instructional Improvement System.

Person County Assistant Principal Reports Successes in Schoolnet

During a Schoolnet refresher session in Region 3, a Person County assistant principal discussed the positive experiences she and her team have had with using Schoolnet for common assessments and district benchmarks.

Assistant Principal Ashley Warren of Southern Middle School said, "Although we have experienced some difficulty when creating benchmarks, the bright side is we were able to administer a district benchmark to approximately 600 students with few problems. "

Her English Language Arts and Math teachers are offering positive feedback overall. In addition, some of her Social Studies teachers are using the program format to write and administer their own test items.

MORE INFO: We'd love to highlight your successes in Home Base here in the *Weekly Update*. Contact Kathy Newbern, NCDPI Communication and Information Services, at Kathy.Newbern@dpi.nc.gov.

Home Base Symposium Registration and Hotel Update

Registrants for the Feb. 17-19 Home Base Symposium may view the status of their registration in this online document:

http://www.nc-sis.org/Documents/symp_2014/2014_Symposium_Registrants.pdf. Please remember registrations are not complete until payment and a copy of the completed registration form are received at the NCDPI. Payment and forms should be mailed to: NC Department of Public Instruction, Cash Collections, 6336 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, NC 27699-6336. Checks should be payable to NCDPI Cash Collections.

Note: Processing of payments once received at NCDPI can take up to 10 working days. Please review the registrant list weekly for updates at:
<http://www.nc-sis.org/symposium14.html>

Hotel Reservations: The block of rooms reserved at the Sheraton Four Seasons Hotel, Greensboro, for symposium participants will be released today, Jan. 16, so we encourage you to make your hotel reservation for guaranteed availability. View the hotel reservation form here: http://www.nc-sis.org/documents/symp_2014/Home_Base_Hotel_2014.doc

Please return the hotel reservation form to the address listed on the form and NOT to NCDPI.

MORE INFO: Send symposium questions to Terra Dominguez at Terra.Dominguez@dpi.nc.gov. For registration or payment questions, contact Yolanda Wilson at Yolanda.Wilson@dpi.nc.gov.

Coming Soon: Best Practices Guide to Help You Communicate Home Base

Each LEA/charter has its own vision on how to communicate Home Base, which is a large and complex initiative. Toward that goal, a new Communications Best Practices Guide with tips from the field, questions-and-answers and fundamental info will be shared statewide by the end of this month. Stay tuned.

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT:

Next Maintenance Weekend is Feb. 7-10

The next scheduled maintenance weekend is Feb. 7-10. View the list of all scheduled maintenance weekends here:
http://www.nc-sis.org/Documents/maintenance/Home_Base_Maintenance_Sched.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=2014>

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