

From: Adam Larsen, Assistant Superintendent

To: Board of Education

Cc: Thomas Mahoney, Superintendent

Re: April 2021 Board Report

Schoology Implementation

Teachers have completed their initial training on Schoology, our new learning management system (LMS). The feedback about the training modules was mixed but generally quite positive. Most teachers indicated that they feel comfortable enough to get started using the LMS, but widespread adoption is not expected until the fall. However, several teachers have reached out with questions and issues that they have found while using it, so we know that they are navigating through the pages and beginning to push content out to students.

Very few teachers indicated that they would like to have in-person or one-on-one training in the LMS. That may change in the fall when they are expected to be using the system more fully, but as for now, we are not sure that we will need to conduct any in-person trainings yet this spring. We are currently reviewing the final survey data from our teachers and will reach out one last time to see if we have enough interested to run a few sessions as we close out the semester.

Our final push this year is to roll out the portal to our families so they are aware that teachers will be using this portal in the next several weeks and as the new school year begins. We have worked to deepen the integration between PowerSchool and Schoology even beyond how the two products are designed to work. For one, we developed a way to pull the parent access codes (randomly generated on the Schoology side) back into PowerSchool so parents can see those codes in the PowerSchool parent portal. While these portals may someday converge or at least have single sign-on, that is not a reality today. Our current best effort is to convey to families what the two systems are used for in a side-by-side comparison and then provide the login details needed to jump from PowerSchool to Schoology.

Assessment Season

We are currently in the middle of the spring assessment season. As of this writing, students in grades 3 through 8 are taking the Illinois Assessment of Readiness (IAR). This is the general-purpose summative assessment for the school accountability formula. It assesses all students in English/Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics.

The Illinois Science Assessment (ISA) is taking place as well, for students in grades 5, 8, and 11. This has recently increased from a single-unit test to a three-unit assessment that spans multiple sessions.

The ACCESS test for English language learners was completed a few weeks ago. The Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM) test for students with significant disabilities is an ongoing assessment that is administered over the span of several weeks.

With one-to-one Chromebooks, the IAR and ISA assessments can be administered to the entire school at once, which is a return to the feel and pace of the paper tests of the ISAT days (through 2014). In the PARCC years (2015-2018) and the first year of IAR (2019), we were still testing students in PC labs, which necessitated a complicated and tight schedule in order to push all of the students through. Now that students have their own devices, all students can test at the same time, which results in less disruption, fewer testing sessions, and a shorter testing window than our experience in previous years.

Juniors at the high school are taking the SAT in April, along with locally-administered practice SAT assessments for the freshmen and sophomores. ISBE decided to cancel the pre-SAT for those grades a few weeks ago, but we elected to administer our local version of the practice assessments anyway. Using some optical scoring software and some custom Excel workbooks, we can score and report out on this assessment in a couple of hours each time.

The last remaining test is our local administration of the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP), which will begin at the end of April. This the benchmarking tool we use three times per year. We receive instant information about the results of this assessment, unlike all of the others previously mentioned.

LearnPlatform

We are currently implementing a new piece of software called LearnPlatform that will accomplish a couple of important tasks. First, LearnPlatform installs as a Chrome extension that tracks our usage of various educational technology platforms. This includes information about users as well, so we will have a sense of which tools are being used by which grade levels. Next, the platform has a process built into it where teachers can request the ability to use tools that are not currently approved. LearnPlatform has user agreements on file for many of the vendors in the educational technology space, which means our team can quickly identify if there are any privacy concerns or issues with legal compliance. For other simple tools which may not require approval, the platform provides constant auditing of what is in use, and if there are any issues with those software providers. Taken together, this will help us stay on top of what our teachers are using, whether we need to purchase new software to fill needs, or whether we need to restrict certain vendors

Another key feature of LearnPlatform is its ability to merge data from student demographics, software usage, and student outcome data. Its IMPACT tool allows us to push data to it and run reports that tell us how the various educational technology tools contribute to student learning. Because they already know and understand the usage statistics from the popular vendors, they will save us significant time in parsing and using these files. Our goal is to be able to determine which learning tools contribute positively to student outcomes and which tools should no longer be used. Because LearnPlatform also holds data about how much our licensing costs, we can also make judgments about return on investment (ROI) in these tools. We could (and do) perform these analyses without this particular tool, but the work is complicated and unwieldy. Our hope is that streamlining this process will allow us to put the data into the principals' hands more easily, and ultimately, make better decisions about what we use and where.

Respectfully Submitted,



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