Blackboard Inc.

Enhancing Classroom Instruction

Blackboard K-12 Solutions

Serving the Needs of K–12 Teachers

The teaching and learning environment of Blackboard Learning System™ is ideally suited to serve the needs of K-12 educators who are eager to extend their face-to-face classrooms in an online environment. Teachers from kindergarten through high school are utilizing Blackboard to extend the classroom community beyond school walls in ways including:

• Posting course materials and handouts on the Web
• Providing online forums for class discussions
• Collecting and annotating Internet-based curricular resources
• Using online assessments to help students prepare for standardized tests
• Differentiating instruction for exceptional populations (gifted and talented, special education, advanced placement) using group tools
• Conducting review sessions and parent conferences via real-time virtual classroom and chat tools
• Communicating more easily and effectively with parents

Focus On Teaching, Not Paperwork

Working with Blackboard, teachers not only provide tools and information for student success and parent communication, but also free up much of their day previously spent with time-consuming administrative tasks. Providing handouts online reduces time making extra photocopies for students who are absent or lose papers frequently. Online grades and information for parents reduces time spent communicating simple data to parents. Objective tests and quizzes are graded automatically by Blackboard, so teachers have more time to focus on the useful data to assist with curriculum planning.

Select Blackboard K–12 Clients

• Henrico County Public Schools (VA)
• Phillips–Exeter Academy (NH)
• Louisiana Department of Education (LA)
• Lancaster-Lebanon Intermediate Unit 13 (PA)
• Peoria Unified School District (AZ)
• Springfield Public Schools (IL)
• Poway Unified School District (CA)
• Fairfax County Public Schools (VA)
• The Hill School (PA)
• Oakland Schools (MI)
• Cobb County Public Schools (GA)
• Houston Independent School District (TX)
• Huron Valley Schools (MI)
• Cherry Creek Public Schools (CO)
• Baltimore City Schools (MD)
• Wichita eSchool (KS)
• Education Service Center 4 (TX)
• Calcasieu Parish Schools (LA)
• Seminole County Schools (FL)
• Harrison Central School District (NY)
Posting Course Materials Online—Blackboard Makes it Easy

Many K-12 teachers understand the benefits of having course materials available on the Web for students, but few teachers have the time in their busy schedules to learn how to build highly functional Web pages themselves. With a simple, intuitive interface, Blackboard makes it very easy for teachers to post course materials on the Internet. Knowing little more than how to navigate a browser or use a mouse, teachers use Blackboard to create class Web sites that include organized folders with handouts, presentations, lecture notes, and other course content.

One of the major advantages of using Blackboard to put materials on the Web is that teachers can post their content in existing format. If teachers already have handouts in electronic format (written in a word processor, etc.) then it is simple to add those files to a course Web site. If a teacher is comfortable using Microsoft Word to create handouts, he/she can post documents in Word format or any other format that students can access. If everyone in a school has PowerPoint, the teacher can post lecture notes in the PowerPoint format that he/she has always used. No rebuilding of content or conversion to HTML is necessary.

Creating new course content in Blackboard is even easier—teachers simply type into a text box, and Blackboard converts the text to HTML automatically. Posting images, sound files, and video clips is as simple as attaching a file to an email message.

Beyond the Bell: Providing Online Forums for Class Discussions

Every teacher feels disappointment when the bell rings just as students have become engaged in a thoughtful discussion or debate. If great class discussions are often interrupted or cut short when the bell rings, teachers can create online discussion areas that allow students to continue and expand a discussion online. This medium allows students time for reflection before responding, encourages students to improve their written communication skills, and provides an audience for student writing.

Innovative teachers have also used the Blackboard Discussion Board to allow students in different sections of the same course, in different grade levels, or in diverse schools to communicate with each other about topics of shared interest. This medium allows students to interact with learners from other backgrounds in a way that would not be possible within the confines of the traditional school day.

Collecting and Annotating Web-based Curricular Resources

A wealth of valuable information to supplement the curriculum is available on the Internet for all subject areas. It is often difficult, however, for individual classroom teachers to search for this content, review it, organize it, and present it to students in a usable format. With Blackboard, teachers can easily collect and annotate links, organizing them into a structure that follows chapters or units of study in class.

Many teachers have collaborated with other teachers in the same discipline or grade level and used Blackboard’s External Links feature to build an annotated library of links to Web sites related to course content. This library of links could be shared among all related courses or could be copied as part of a course template for a particular department, course subject, or grade level.

“My Blackboard course site provides communication with parents and helps with less responsible students who otherwise lose their work. Using Blackboard has freed me from a lot of clerical work by automatically grading things like practice tests. This gives me more time to help my kids whenever they need it.”

—Jay Turner
McPherson Magnet School
Orange Unified School District (CA)
Standardized Test Preparation

The pressure of preparing students to succeed in high-stakes standardized testing programs means that many teachers must spend valuable class time administering practice tests. Often, these paper-based tests are not a useful gauge of overall class progress because teachers can not afford the time investment involved in processing, calculating, and evaluating overall student results.

With Blackboard, teachers can allow students to practice and review for standardized tests online, which frees up class time for instruction. Tests are automatically graded by Blackboard so teachers are able to quickly identify those students who need intervention and remediation. Detailed statistics for each question show teachers what specific curricular areas and concepts need to be reviewed or re-taught for the entire class.

Collecting Assignments Electronically

Teachers using Blackboard no longer have to lug home huge bags full of student essays or wade through endless stacks of ungraded papers. The Digital Drop Box allows students to submit assignments electronically—they simply save a word processing file and upload it to the Drop Box. Blackboard provides a useful record to show exactly on what time and day each student submitted an assignment, and teachers can return graded papers to students through the Drop Box as well. No paper necessary!

Using Real-Time Chat

Blackboard’s Virtual Classroom tool includes text chat capabilities, an interactive whiteboard, moderated question mode, and a group Web browser. It is used by K-12 teachers in many ways, including conducting online review sessions, hosting online guest speakers, and providing a real-time online workspace for student group projects. In addition to text chat and moderated question features, the group browser allows teachers to conduct online “field trips” by guiding students through Web sites, and the interactive whiteboard can be used to work through mathematical equations or complex problems collaboratively.

In addition, when parents find it difficult to attend parent conferences during school hours, teachers have used the Virtual Classroom to host online parent conferences.

Communicating With Parents

When course materials, project descriptions, grades, and assignment due dates are posted on Blackboard, parents have a wealth of information at their fingertips to stay involved and follow student progress. The easy-to-use navigation in Blackboard courses allows parents to participate fully in the online classroom environment. Teachers can create parent discussion boards to allow parents to interact with one another. The Virtual Classroom can be used to host web-based parent conferences when parents are not able to meet with the teacher during school hours. Online practice tests allow parents to see what content will appear on standardized tests and help their children to prepare for testing from home. Parents can check the Drop Box to confirm whether homework has been submitted or returned. Blackboard provides teachers the flexibility to decide what areas of the course or sections of the gradebook will be available for parent viewing.

“We have used the Virtual Classroom in different situations. Our Geometry teachers will log on to Blackboard in the evenings and answer problems from students, using the whiteboard to draw out their explanations. Other teachers will simply use the chat feature to answer questions from students.”

—Blair Cook
Brophy College Preparatory (AZ)
No Student Left Behind

Using Blackboard, teachers can easily help students who would usually fall behind in class because of extended absences due to illness, disciplinary suspension, temporary re-location or trips. It is easy for students or parents to check in to Blackboard daily for new announcements, handouts, and assignments. Students can submit homework to the teacher and participate in class discussions and online chats or test review sessions at home.

A Safe Environment For Publishing Student Work

With the flexibility to decide what areas of a course are open to guests, teachers can choose to publicly showcase some student work to the greater school or district community, while keeping other materials (including student names or photos) in secured areas that are open only to enrolled users. Parents and teachers can have the confidence that students are working online in a safe environment.

Contact the Blackboard K–12 team today at 1.800.424.9299 ext. 860 to learn more about how Blackboard products, services and the K–12 client community are transforming the way teachers learn on the Internet. Or visit http://www.blackboard.com/k12 today.

“Blackboard has saved me countless times when preparing for a substitute. We had a terrible cold and flu season this year, and I have put student assignments on Blackboard so the absent students can get them at home. Blackboard has been especially helpful for reaching suspended students and even those home-bound due to lengthy illnesses.”

—John Daly
Lake Shore High School
Macomb Intermediate School District (MI)