The Only Classroom Website You'll Ever Need

A closer look at Schoology as *YOUR* classroom website

Schoology

What is Schoology? Better yet how do you pronounce it?

★ Pronounced "skoo - luh - jee", Schoology is a learning management system created by four college students who were dissatisfied with the lack of useful education technology. Their program is used by teachers to manage an online platform for learning outside of the classroom.

★ The purpose of Schoology as stated on the website is, "To have a learning management system (LMS) that aligns with the needs and learning style of education in the real world."

Schoology

Check out this brief intro video for how to get started with Schoology…

You can also access a student tutorial version of the video by clicking *this link.*

Is the School's Vision for Technology Use Supported?

★ The technology mission of Cobb County schools is to equip students with twenty-first century technology skills to demonstrate, apply, and communicate their learning.

★ Schoology supports the vision for technology as students can use the this technology platform to not only obtain classroom materials but to apply classroom concepts further through discussion board posts and blogging which also takes into account the communication factor.

Additional Correlations to the County's Technology Visions

★ The county's vision also states that students and teachers will use technology to extend learning beyond the classroom and the school day.

★ Schoology will allow students to take online quizzes, watch lecture videos, post on discussion boards, and message the teacher and other students.

★ The county's vision also states that students will use technology to connect and collaborate with classmates, educators, and experts around the world.

★ Schoology allows for students to collaborate with their teacher and their peers just as easily as collaboration could occur within the classroom.

Additional Correlations to the County's Technology Visions

★ One final applicable part of the county's vision states, "Students, teachers, and educational leaders will use technology to assess, monitor, analyze, and report student performance data immediately to inform instructional planning and provide timely targeted feedback to students and teachers."

★ Schoology has the ability for students to take formative and summative assessments and immediately grades these assessments to give both students and the teacher instantaneous feedback.

Schoology Objectives

★ The main objective for using Schoology in the classroom is to give students an easy to navigate, all-in-one platform to enhance classroom learning outside of the classroom.

★ Schoology will also give teachers a simple platform to post classroom blog updates, discussion boards, classroom materials, and student assessments.

Key Benefits of Schoology

★ Students can access all classroom materials outside of the classroom.

★ Teachers can post assignments, lecture videos, and helpful web links all in one place for student access.

★ Students can take formative and summative assessments and see their results instantaneously, plus be able to see what the correct answer is for tests corrections.

★ The teachers have the ability to create courses to post materials for different classes and keep a running schedule of upcoming dates for students.

Target Population of our County

★ Cobb County has 112,708 students making it the second largest district in GA

★ Because 44.8% of students qualify for free/reduced lunch, I anticipate that internet access may be a struggle to come by in many student's homes.

★ The benefit of this tool is that while many students might not have internet at home, a majority of students have access to a cell phone with the capability to access the app.

★ The particular tool will be targeted at middle and high school students. Middle school is when students are first exposed to multiple teachers. The environment of middle and high school requires students to stay organized and have a common platform to access classroom materials.

Target Population of our County

★ With many students having their own devices, Schoology can be easily accessed within school and outside of school.

★ A majority of high schools also have computer labs and laptop carts available for checkout via the media center or department, but with only 5-6 laptop carts available for checkout, that leaves roughly 75 teachers attempting to share these carts with their students.

★ Ideally, classroom sets of laptops or tablets would be the most beneficial for achieving the full benefits of this program.

Equipment & Software

★ Schoology is a completely free program for teachers to create accounts and for students and parents to join.

★ There is also an enterprise option that the district could purchase.

★ The enterprise option allows for custom system settings and permission controls among other options which would allow for safer use, but it would be best to try the free version first, to determine if it works for our schools.

★ Average class sizes of 30 or more mean there would be a need for a minimum of 30 devices in each classroom including items like cellphones, laptops, or tablets.

★ Wireless access or phone data is required to access the program or app.

Technical Support

★ Cobb County has many individuals working for the tech department that can easily help troubleshoot basic problems that may occur.

★ A teacher in each school should also be trained as an "expert" to help their colleagues with any problems that may arise.

★ The Schoology website has countless links under the resources tab as well. Teachers can choose from topics such as "The Surprising Simplicity of Schoology Quizzes" or "Five Simple Ways to Set Up Your Courses."

★ There are also webinars titled "Back to School" and each part has a different focus for teachers regarding the initial setup of a Schoology course.

Limitations

★ Because Schoology will be accessed at school and at home, students will need to download the app onto a smartphone or tablet or have a home computer to be able to access the website.

★ At school students can also use the app if they have a personal cell phone or have a school laptop or tablet to be able to use the program during class.

★ Students may also need access to YouTube for viewing videos teachers may post or additional videos to supplement classroom learning.

   ○ *YouTube access outside of Schoology could be a potential safety issue, but within the Schoology platform, students are safe and their identities are secure and only visible to the instructor.*

Cost of the Technology

★ Schoology is 100% free! Teacher, students, and parents can all create free accounts.

★ If the district is pleased with the overall use of Schoology, an enterprise option could be purchased for unity across the district.

★ To enable access for all, classroom laptops or tablets could eventually be purchased for classroom teachers to have a set.

★ Class sets of technology would reduce the cost when compared to the 1:1 model many schools use.

★ Pcmag.com lists several budget-friendly tablet options for schools, with some starting as low as $129 per tablet.

Potential School Funding

★ The PTSA offers several grant options at the beginning of each school year.

★ Last year, Cobb County did a version of Shark Tank called "Cobb Tank" which awarded $10,000 grants to the winners. If this happens in the future, this would be a great opportunity.

★ I have also included several potential grant opportunities listed below and provided links for more information.

- Walmart Foundation

- McCarthey Dressman Education Foundation

- The NEA Foundation

- Computers for Learning

- For students without computers at home, Computer Recycling Center has a great alternative.

How Can Teachers Use Schoology?

★ The list of possibilities of Schoology use in the classroom is endless!

★ Teachers can create and maintain courses for students. Once students have enrolled in the course, Schoology generates parent login codes that are specific to each student.

★ Parents have individual login access so they can view assignments, submissions, and blog updates, but cannot submit anything themselves.

★ Teachers can post videos, either embedded or linked, to solidify classroom material for students outside of the classroom.

★ All classroom handouts can be posted within course folders for student access.

How Can Teachers Use Schoology?

★ Teachers can create quizzes and tests within Schoology and set several options including: timed assessments, available times, how the correct answers are displayed, and how many submissions students are allowed.

★ Quiz and test results can be displayed in chart format per question or for the assessment overall which helps with data analysis of content standards.

★ Teachers can create a "question bank" which means each student gets a different assortment of questions, which minimizes cheating.

★ Teachers can post reminders and important announcements via blog updates.

How Does Schoology Promote Our Specific Learning Goals

★ Two major Cobb County goals apply specifically to the use of Schoology:

  ○ Vary learning experiences to increase success in career paths

  ○ Differentiate resources for areas/schools based on needs

★ For varying learning experiences, Schoology allows students to learn and review content material at their own pace outside of school. In addition, the flexibility of formative assessments via Schoology also varies learning experiences.

★ For differentiating resources, teachers can post a variety of resources on Schoology that are specific to advanced students, special education students, english language learners, and other students needing differentiated content resources.

How Does Schoology Promote Student Technology Standards

★ Schoology allows for an authentic learning environment for all students because of the ease of relation to all other online platforms. Students can connect via videos, discussion boards, and blogs to enhance a real-world learning experience.

★ Schoology also encourages collaboration by allowing students to make discussion board postings and then comment on peer posts. Google Drive can allow for further collaboration on peer projects as well.

★ Students are also able to practice their writing and through the use of podcasts posted to the site, are also able to practice speaking and listening skills in addition to peer reflection.

How Does Schoology Promote Student Technology Standards

★ Schoology also allows parents, students, and teachers to communicate with each other. The messaging function allows students and parents to message teachers and vice versa.

★ This messaging ability works well for questions students might have outside of class while working on assignments or assessments.

★ Students and teachers can also create collaborative groups for students to communicate with each other as they work together on projects.

Differentiation

★ Schoology is a great way for teachers to post resources for students, but teachers can also post additional items for student support.

★ Today's teachers have a wide array of learners from special education, to english language learners, to gifted students, and sometimes all in one class.

★ Teachers can post additional practice worksheets, supplemental videos for reinforcing the classroom content, and practice assessments so students can better prepare for the major unit tests.

Communication & Collaboration

★ The collaboration opportunities of Schoology are endless!

★ Students can collaborate in the following ways:

○ Post thoughts about classroom topics on the discussion board

○ Reply to peer or teacher comments on discussion boards

○ Create collaboration groups within Schoology for ease of access while working on projects

★ The messaging feature also allows for instant communication. Students and even parents can message the teacher and the teacher can reply. This is especially easy to do within the app as messages pop up as alerts on a student or teacher's phone allow for instant reply.

Research Evaluation

★ Schoology only recently launched in 2010, so there has not been much research done.

★ According to an interview of the creators, Schoology works so well because it filled a niche. Most schools did not have (or still do not have) a learning management system platform.

★ Schools that have used Schoology also report more collaboration and more classroom effectiveness both in the classroom and out of the classroom.

Research Evaluation

According to [consumers](), Schoology has been reviewed as having the following positives & negatives:

POSITIVES

- ★ Student engagement

- ★ Messaging capability

- ★ Versatile

- ★ Calendar feature

- ★ Data tracking

- ★ Assessment features

NEGATIVES

- ★ App not as functionable as website

- ★ Some missing features without the paid enterprise version

- ★ Not able to "create" students as an instructor

- ★ Inability to bulk editing across class periods

Research Evaluation

★ Of the consumer reviews, many of the negatives are specific items that do not necessarily impact classroom use, they are just simply conveniences in my opinion. Teachers can do more than other platforms like Edmodo while still only using the free version.

★ In a study by Joshua, Kom, & Si (2015), after using Schoology in schools in Indonesia, they found the following benefits of its use…

　○ Helps learner motivation

　○ Increases collaborative learning

　○ Learning achievement influence on learners

Professional Learning

★ To be able to understand and use the full benefits Schoology has to offer, some professional development will be necessary.

★ First, one teacher minimum at each school needs to be or become an "expert" on Schoology. This teacher can then help troubleshoot during the school day and will be more accessible than the tech specialist.

★ During the 1st day of pre-planning, a brief "get acquainted" session should be held for teachers to learn the basics of creating a Schoology site for their specific classes.

   ○ Teachers will be asked to create courses, create an assignment, and upload the class syllabus

   ○ Teachers will also be given a list of helpful websites for tutorials and troubleshooting

Professional Learning

★ All teachers will reconvene at the end of pre-planning to address any questions or get help with basic troubleshooting.

★ Teachers will be asked to download the app on a personal device prior to this meeting to address how to use the app, especially because most teachers will be asking their students to download the app.

★ Once/if tablets are purchased, the Schoology expert teacher will do a lunch-and-learn session to instruct teachers on how to use the app on the tablet.

Reflection

★ When I was initially exposed to Schoology, I assumed it was just like Edmodo and was really not interested in using the program.

★ Only recently, after a peer actually demonstrated the program to me, did I realize how **great** Schoology really is!

★ The amount of collaboration and reflection that can occur outside of class is wonderful. Especially because the current school platform, Typepad, is a very basic blogging site.

★ I plan to fully implement Schoology for my classes, especially because next year I will be teaching STEM biology which encourages constant reflection and collaboration.

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