Tech: Online Grading for Assignments and Assessments

This resource is related to the “Use the Right Tools” section of the “Technology:” chapter of the book First Aid for Teacher Burnout: How You Can Find Peace and Success. It will help you select and use technological tools to help you use online grading for assignments and assessments.

First, understand how this setup can work. Students can complete their assessments or assignments online using any device with Internet access. A software program can be used to then automatically score the work (or at least all portions that can be objectively-scored) as soon as students submit finished work. Open response questions and tasks can be incorporated, too (the scoring of those items is merely put on hold until you can view and score them). Some software can also automatically email the student an account of his or her performance. You can even use free tools to accomplish this.

See the “Grading:” chapter for more details on how online grading works in a classroom.

At Hopewell Valley Regional School District, where teachers used an assessment system called Performance Matters, teachers discovered online assessments held the following advantages over paper-and-pencil assessments (Pinelli, 2015):

- teachers’ time is saved;
- student thinking is made visible;

Online Tutorial

Watch a 3-minute video showing how Flubaroo can automatically score assignments or assessments you put into Google Forms:

- “Demo of Flubaroo”
  www.flubaroo.com/instructional-videos
• teachers can make instructional decisions more quickly;

• a record of student progress is kept for conversations, conferences, intervention meetings, IEP meetings, etc.;

• student needs are better addressed (e.g., program-participation decisions);

• test-taking skills are developed that can help students later and show educators technical limits like what their server bandwidth can handle for tests with higher stakes;

• efficiency improves; and

• more information is gathered that makes a difference in instructional effectiveness.

One study revealed a 41 percent reduction in missed assignments due to use of an online grading system, as well as an average student grade improvement of nearly one full grade level (Sledge, 2016).

Next, assemble the specific tools itemized below (if using other tools, follow instructions specific to and provided by those software programs):

1. Choose software that will allow you to place the assignment or test online. For example, Google Forms (www.google.com/forms/about) is a free tool you can use to add each assignment question and answer options. Students can then complete the assignment online in the same way they would complete a survey.

2. Also choose software that will grade the assignment or test. For example, Flubaroo (www.flubaroo.com) is a free tool you can use to assign correct answers to the assignment or test you created online. Flubaroo will then automatically score each student’s performance.
Edmodo (www.edmodo.com) is a free online program you can use to post quiz-style assessments or assignments, which Edmodo scores for you after students answer the questions online. Other programs provide similar automated grading. Warren (2014) suggests using Carnegie Learning (www.carnegielearning.com), Study Island (www.studyisland.com), or USA Test Prep (www.usatestprep.com) to assign some homework that will be instantly graded for you.

3 Get appropriate devices if students will complete work in class. Work with your administration to explore your options. Virtually any mobile device or computer can handle online scoring, as long as they have up-to-date software and Internet access. Sample problems include:

- Your district insists all devices use Internet Explorer (which, despite its popularity, has traditionally had many limitations, though this fluctuates by version).
- Your district controls yet doesn’t maintain related software updates (like Java and Flash).

In cases like the above, your students could encounter technical glitches. For this reason, test your online assessment process on any device your students might use for it. Also, be sensitive to your district’s bandwidth limitations in order to avoid technical disasters. For example, if the entire 11th grade class is taking the High School Graduation Exam on Monday, don’t plan a whole-class assessment for the same day.

4 Ensure students have appropriate devices if students will complete work at home.
Communicate any limitations to students (e.g., you can’t take this particular quiz on your smartphone) and communicate your tech needs to those who can help you (e.g., District Office IT Department).

In the case of at-home assignments, be sure you make special arrangements for students who don’t have Internet access and/or technology at home. Giving students options for how to complete an assignment (e.g., online or on paper) can remedy this while still cutting most of your workload. Another option could involve asking for your school’s tech lab or library to
remain open after school for students who need it. Perhaps a different after-school intervention teacher can hold his or her class in there each afternoon (with the schedule rotating) so no added staff has to be hired.

**Finally,** considering the steps below as one approach to using webcam grading for assignments and assessments:

1. Create your assignment or test as a Google Form (see http://www.google.com/forms/about/, click “Help” anytime you need it, and note the varied question types you can use). This way students will be able to answer questions online and input responses to prompts.

2. Use Flubaroo (see http://www.flubaroo.com/flubaroo-user-guide for step-by-step help) to set up the automatic scoring of each student’s performance on this particular assignment or test. Basically, Flubaroo needs to know what the right answer to each question is so it can grade students’ responses.

3. Instruct students to use the form’s URL (which you give to them) to complete the assignment or assessment online (the form will function like an online survey). It is also possible to give students a more detailed assignment or directions (e.g., homework sheet) to refer to while using the Google Form to input responses.

After students’ responses are scores, you can copy/paste scores into most grading programs (e.g., whether that’s a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet or gradebook-specific software). Plus, Flubaroo lets you opt to have scores automatically emailed to students as soon as the item is graded.

**References**
Pinelli, P. (2015, April 2). 6 reasons it’s important to create your own online assessments.

eSchool News. Retrieved from http://www.eschoolnews.com/2015/04/02/creating-online-assessments-431/?ps=drjrankin@gmail.com-001a000001JOTLm-003a000001g6MmL
