



The Netter

THE SCHOOLNET NEWSLETTER FOR DATA-DRIVEN DECISION MAKING

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Welcome

Welcome to the second issue of The Netter, the Schoolnet newsletter for data-driven decision making and student achievement. The Netter is written for educators who regard technology as an important component in the success of our districts, schools, teachers, and students. In this issue, Schoolnet shares an interview with Albemarle County Public Schools and what we have

been brewing for this summer's EduStat University, you'll read about an exciting new Schoolnet Instructional Management Suite (IMS) feature, benefit from Schoolnet's IMS tips and tricks section, and much more.

As always, we want to hear from you! Send us your feedback or visit us at one of our upcoming events!

From the Desk of Denis Doyle

Denis Doyle's latest Viewpoint from [The Doyle Report](#):

Race to the Top:

"Race to the bottom" has become an all purpose description of the woeful state of American education. The New York Times, for example, joined the chorus March 11, 2009 in an editorial which enthusiastically endorsed Mr. Obama's use of the phrase in his first major education speech. (www.nytimes.com, Ending the "Race to the Bottom.")

In these parlous times a bit of hyperbole must be forgiven but it is important to remember that the very fact that we can determine whether our schools are rising or sinking is due to the reform fever which grips the nation.

NCLB may be seriously flawed and in need of repair but credit is due – for example, the simple expedient of data disaggregation was a major step forward, an example of transparency that makes a difference.

So too, demanding that states adopt standards was a step forward – weak standards are better than none. But it is clearly time to move beyond the halting first steps represented by NCLB, which, regardless of its faults, represented a significant political victory. It established a bi-partisan principle that has been taken to heart by Mr. Obama and Secretary Arne Duncan: high quality, demanding education for all is the new front in the battle for civil rights.

[Continue reading...](#)

From the Education World *The Obama Effect*

Luyen Chou has written in the past on his Viewpoint "[Need to Know](#)" about [Claude Steele's](#) research regarding what he calls the "Stereotype Effect," which shows that students under-perform (or in certain cases, over-perform) when reminded of their race or gender. Now, researchers at Vanderbilt University have documented a related phenomenon that they call the "Obama

Effect" – as the New York Times describes it, the study "showed that a performance gap between African-Americans and whites on a 20-question test administered before Mr. Obama's nomination all but disappeared when the exam was administered after his acceptance speech and again after the presidential election." Read the [full viewpoint and NY Times article](#).



Mid-year online testing setup at one of Albemarle's high schools

Client Spotlight

Schoolnet talks to Albemarle County Public Schools

Albemarle County Public Schools (ACPS) is currently using Schoolnet's Formative Assessment, Reporting and Analysis, and Curriculum Management tools that comprise Schoolnet's Instructional Management Suite (IMS). The district has over 12,500 students and 26 Schools. ACPS will be the official district host for this summer's EduStat University, taking place in Charlottesville, VA, July 19-21. You can read more about EduStat in this newsletter.

Melissa Anderson, Systems Coordinator, Department of Accountability, Research and Technology and **Chris Gilman**, Coordinator of Research and Program Evaluation from Albemarle County Public Schools spent some time talking to Schoolnet to share the effect that the Schoolnet IMS has had on the district. Here is an excerpt of that conversation:

Schoolnet: What were the district goals that spurred the search for such a system?

Melissa: Schoolnet is one of a suite of information management tools we have implemented in Albemarle County. Some of our goals with Schoolnet included the need to establish a framework for administrators to measure performance, plan improvement, and to monitor progress; to define meaningful reports that administrators and teachers could use to analyze data; and to provide teachers with the ability to analyze the progress of their classes and students by standard. Overall, we really needed a way to identify student trends to enable teachers to make actionable decisions on ways to improve student learning and differentiate instruction.

Schoolnet: How would you say Schoolnet has helped the district achieve these goals?

Chris: The integration and collaboration that is happening in our schools has by far been the biggest impact Schoolnet has had in our district. Now, all the information teachers need is readily available; teachers are collaborating on the assessments that they give and then jointly reviewing the data. This has improved our working relationships, which is of benefit to teachers and students. This sharing of their best practices has resulted in a much better finished product. Schoolnet has allowed us to dramatically shorten the cycle between a student taking an assessment or a test, and the teacher providing individualized and effective instruction.

Schoolnet: Can you tell us more about these conversations?

Chris: Administrators are collaborating with teachers to identify underperforming students to apply appropriate interventions. Additionally, we have principals and teachers running reports where they find kids who fall below a particular benchmark on a given assessment to provide added instruction, and then track their performance using formative assessment to see if they are able to get above that benchmark. Thus, Schoolnet has really informed our data driven decision making process. In fact, I just participated in a quarterly review at an elementary school where all of the data was pulled out of Schoolnet. It was impressive to see all the teachers sharing the results with the principal and division level administrators. The teachers were showing how they were using the data that was housed within Schoolnet to make valuable instructional decisions for students. Before Schoolnet, it would have been very time consuming and difficult to pull all this data together, especially because students switch classes and can have up to three teachers in a day, and so teachers would have had to meet about every student to pull his or her strengths and weakness. And now, all the information is automatically shared amongst all the teachers that work with the student.



Client Spotlight

Schoolnet talks to Albemarle County Public Schools

Schoolnet: What are some other ways in which Schoolnet has had an impact on your schools?

Chris: We have a very robust item bank of over 12,000 items. Many of the items were created by our teachers or professional learning communities and were vetted by our instructional coordinators, others have come from state-released test questions from our state tests, and the rest is from purchased content. With Schoolnet we can easily create tests at the district level, down to the classroom level, with high-quality questions. This has been tremendously helpful to us. With this item bank and the Schoolnet assessment tools, we can do both online and paper and pencil testing, and we use both multiple choice and open-ended questions and answers to create a balanced assessment model.

Melissa: Having a central place for data related to standardized tests, grades and benchmark assessments has allowed us to really take a giant step forward.

Schoolnet: Has the Schoolnet IMS been adopted equally among all your schools?

Melissa: There is, in fact, a variance when it comes to adoption. In schools where there was a technology and curriculum integration partner (CTIP) to champion the project, they came on board quickly, over the course of the first year. We still have some schools that have been slower to adopt Schoolnet because they don't have a person with dedicated time outside of the classroom serving in that Schoolnet role.

Chris: In addition to that, some of the schools with the highest adoption were further behind in terms of achievement, and saw Schoolnet as an equalizer. In these schools, we have seen great achievement gains in the first year. They heavily relied on the system for collaboration and data driven instruction and ended up seeing larger gains in end-of-year achievement. Overall, the schools that have adopted it fully have experienced accelerated student growth.

We have a lot of schools that use Schoolnet every day; their adoption was quick and the learning curve exponential. We are now trying to work more with the people that are comfortable with the way they have been doing things, and for them, the transition is more philosophical and less technological or logistical.

Schoolnet: So have you seen a higher increase in student achievement this past year in these struggling schools that have been your early adopters?

Chris: Yes. In fact, one of the principals was trying to create a sense of urgency and quoted research to show that teachers and schools that look at data more frequently are ones that see the biggest positive change in student achievement, and this is because they are the most focused on student outcomes. And for us this turned out to be true as well: the schools that are carrying this out are realizing a higher rate of growth in student achievement. Schoolnet has been their "access point" and has encouraged teachers to look at data more frequently; this process has truly shifted student achievement.

Schoolnet: Lastly, what would you say is Dr. Pamela Moran's involvement with Schoolnet, and the data it offers your educators?

Melissa: Dr. Moran has been actively involved with Schoolnet throughout the rollout process. It is my understanding that when Dr. Moran meets with a school-level administrator, she requires that they both are logged into Schoolnet for the duration of that conversation. She is strongly focused on technology and innovation and has seen the impact that data analysis provided through Schoolnet has had in schools. She is also an active participant in "Schoolnet.com", an online community of education professionals.

Schoolnet: Thank you so much for spending some time talking to us about all the amazing things that you are doing. EduStat is going to be highly focused on data driven instruction this year, and we really look forward to partnering with you!

Chris and Melissa: Yes, we understand our teachers and administrators have so much to share that they are fighting over the slots for the presentations and workshops!



EduStat University 2009

EduStat®

UNIVERSITY 2009

REIMAGINE EDUCATION

July 19-22, 2009
Charlottesville, Virginia



Who Should Attend:

- Principals and Teacher Leaders
- Assistant Superintendents
- Chief Academic Officers
- Chief Information Officers
- Directors of Education Technology
- Directors of Professional Development
- Schoolnet Project Teams

Schoolnet will host EduStat University from July 19 – 22, in Charlottesville, VA, in partnership with Albemarle County Public Schools, The University of Virginia’s Curry School of Education, and the Virginia School University Partnership. With Jay McTighe and Tony Wagner as a keynote speaker, Schoolnet University 2009 in Charlottesville will focus on “connecting curriculum, instruction, and assessment in the digital generation”. Our goal is to spark innovation and solutions for educators preparing the digital generation to excel in the rapidly changing global society. Join visionary educators focused on connecting curriculum, instruction, and assessment for the digital generation.

Date: July 19-22, 2009 **Location:** Charlottesville, Virginia **Featured Presenters:** Jay McTighe and Tony Wagner

The schedule (draft) includes:

- District Case Studies: What Works and What Doesn’t in Building a Data Informed District
- Keynote and workshop by Jay McTighe on Schooling by Design
- Keynote by Tony Wagner on The Global Achievement Gap
- Workshops on The Classroom Focused Improvement Process: The Real Work of School Teams
- Best Practices in Using Schoolnet to Support District Goals and Initiatives

For more information and registration, please visit our website at www.edustat.com.

We encourage you to visit the archives section to see highlights from last year and, you can also read a play-by-play account of the event written by EduStat’s very own blogger, Scott Noller. Scott’s coverage of the event can be found at: www.schoolnet.com/viewpoints08/edustat.

Tips & Tricks

As we mentioned in our first issue of The Netter, after years of working with the nation's largest school districts, we have amassed a compendium of valuable and insightful tips and tricks for our customers. Again, Amy Cook, Schoolnet's Senior Instructional Designer, shares a few of her favorite tips. You can find all of Amy's Tips and Tricks anytime at Schoolnet.com tips and tricks:

STUDENT PROFILE TIPS

1. **Topic: Using the Content Editor Web Part in My Schoolnet**
Audience: Schoolnet System Operators

The My Schoolnet tab is generally the first page users see when they log in to Schoolnet. Did you know that you can create your own custom web parts to communicate whatever information you need to? Web parts can differ for various audiences: teachers, principals and students can see information specific to their needs. Use a My Schoolnet content editor web part for:

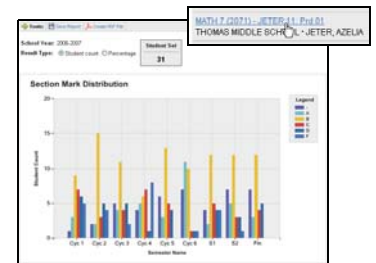
- Linking to external curriculum material not yet incorporated in Align. Examples include Netteker, Discovery Education, state curriculum we sites, etc.
- Communicating Schoolnet updates, such as upcoming trainings, location of support material, etc.
- Instructions and deadlines for upcoming benchmark administration.

For details, refer to Activity Sheet: Adding a Web Part.



2. **Topic: Grade Distribution Chart within the Account and Align tabs**
Audience: Everyone

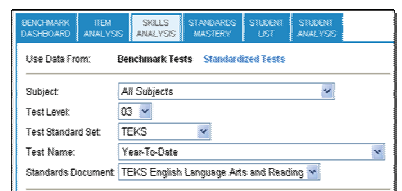
In the Student Profile you can see students' grades by section. By clicking on the course, you can see how one grade compares to other students in the same section. Click on a course and choose a period to see how many students received a specific mark. If you have access to the Account tab, you can save this chart to your saved report bank.



2. **Topic: Skills Analysis Year-to-Date in the Align tab**
Audience: Teachers

Now that students probably have results for more than one benchmark, it may be useful to consolidate results and look at skills mastery to date. You can select 'Year-to-Date' for the Benchmark Skills Analysis report. This will display student-by-student results for each skill covered so far this year.

For details, refer to the Skills Analysis section of Activity Sheet: Generating Benchmark Reports in Align



The screenshot shows the 'BENCHMARK DASHBOARD' with the 'SKILLS ANALYSIS' tab selected. Below the dashboard, there are two tabs: 'Benchmark Tests' and 'Standardized Tests'. The 'Use Data From:' section is set to 'Benchmark Tests'. The 'Subject' dropdown is set to 'All Subjects', 'Test Level' is '03', 'Test Standard Set' is 'TEKS', 'Test Name' is 'Year-To-Date', and 'Standards Document' is 'TEKS English Language Arts and Reading'.



Product Spotlight

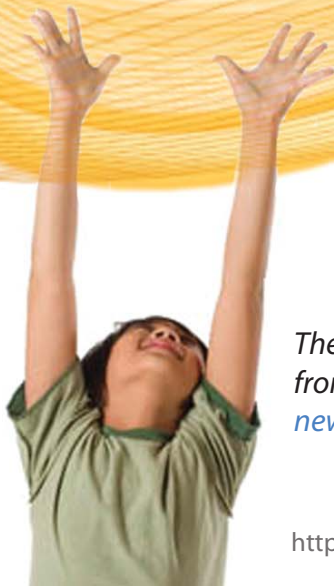
The Student Experience

Schoolnet has successfully enabled thousands of teachers and administrators with unique tools and features that ultimately improve the instruction their students receive. Now, we are launching specific tools to engage students in their own educational experience!

Students will be able to access their profiles to view their enrollment record, standardized test scores, and benchmark test reports. They will have access to an overview of recently-taken tests (a birds-eye view similar to what teachers see through Benchmark Assessment) and will be able to review their results by standard or by question.

From this same student dashboard, they can also access the online testing portal. Online testing, which we also recently launched, enables districts to expand their test administration options. It includes constructed response functionality to encourage students to type their answers directly online. Moreover, the immediacy of the benchmark results presented in actionable reports create instantaneous and extremely valuable teaching moments.

The Student Profile and Online Testing features are all available with the Schoolnet Instructional Management Suite (IMS) and current IMS clients can receive this new functionality in the next product release!



The Netter is always looking for suggestions, comments, and ideas from our readers. Feel free to send your thoughts to newsletter@schoolnet.com.



Upcoming 2008 Events

Sign up for Edustat University! [Click here](#)

• 4/21-4/24
CGCS COO, Fort Lauderdale, FL

• 6/3/09 -6/6/09
CGCS CIO, Cleveland, OH

• 5/6/09 – 5/8/09
ACPE, Mt. Hood, OR

• 6/28/09 7/1/09
NECC, Washington, DC

About Us

Schoolnet is the national leader in data-driven instructional and professional development management for K-12 school districts. Schoolnet's award-winning Instructional Management Solutions (IMS) suite gives districts a group of integrated, web-based software tools to analyze district-to-classroom data, manage curriculum and benchmark test administration, communicate intra- district and with parents, and manage professional development.

Over 40 school districts of every size across the country, including Chicago Public Schools and The School District of Philadelphia, use Schoolnet's IMS successfully as part of their everyday educational process. Schoolnet has been recognized in Inc. Magazine's Top 500 List and in Deloitte's Fast 50 and as one of the fastest growing private companies.

The Schoolnet Team

Schoolnet has always valued input from our customers and we want to make sure that we have an open, honest dialogue about what works well, and what we can improve. For your reference, below is the list of our senior management team. Feel free to drop them a line about The Netter, at newsletter@schoolnet.com, or any other thoughts you might have about Schoolnet.

- Jonathan Harber, CEO
- Mark Chernis, President and COO
- Denis P. Doyle, CAO
- C. Andrew Johns, CFO

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