Getting Started with Canvas Blog Series - Introduction: The WHY

Learning Management Systems (LMS) like Canvas provides opportunities for educators and students to interact with each other within digital and physical classroom settings. Ultimately, we want to provide opportunities for our students to access instruction, curriculum, and content whenever they have access. Whether they are synchronously in class or asynchronously, we want to provide students with access points to all of these facets. By building it into an LMS like Canvas, we are working towards providing greater equity and access. Additionally, we are creating systems to help us foster and build classrooms and instruction with the goal of making the job of teaching much easier. While at the beginning of anyone's journey with an LMS may seem difficult, with a bit of time and frontloading the work, it will ultimately become easier over time and will take less time for preparation and planning.

As we start using Canvas or we are building our skills further using this tool, the goal is to provide opportunities and examples for you to see how it works and to utilize Canvas efficiently and effectively to meet your teaching needs along with your students' needs. Throughout this five-part series, we will describe how to use Canvas and deliver instruction to students within any classroom setting (in-person, online, or in a blended format).

1. **Introduction: Why a Learning Management System? Why Canvas?**
2. **Getting Started with Canvas - Important Navigation Toolbars and Management**
3. **Building Content on Canvas - Pages and Assignments**
4. **Assessing Student Work and Student Progress - Feedback and Communication**
5. **Integrating Other Tools Into Canvas**

At the end of this series, we hope this series of blog posts will help you not only learn many of Canvas' many tools and features but also make teaching and planning easier for you now and in the future.

Why a Learning Management System?

An LMS is like an airport for you and your students. It helps you direct your students to a central location to then go on many different learning journeys. The assignments, assessments, and content we create and place on our LMS provide students with these many journeys. It ultimately is a single hub where they can be directed to various places where they can receive instruction and feedback from their teacher.

Additionally, an LMS gives teachers the opportunity to add content that can be long-lasting. Not only can it be utilized now for this group of students, but it can also be used for future students. Content, assignments, and quizzes can be used again and in the future as well as refined. Over time, you will have a repository of content, assignments, and assessments developed for your students.

Last, LMS' can be placed for interactivity. Students can collaborate with their peers and teach on tasks to help them build the skills and content knowledge they need to complete the course.

Why Canvas?

Canvas is an LMS that provides many options and opportunities for teachers and students with its many features. Included below are its many features:

- **Content pages**
- **Interactive assessments**
- **Assessments**
- **Discussion forums**
- **Blogs**
- **SpeedGrader**
- **Learning analytics**
- **Student Communication**
- **Integrations: Google, Youtube, Pear Deck, Nearpod, Flipgrid, etc.**

Many of its features are very similar in how to use them. Once you are able to create a page on Canvas and organize it within a module, you can do nearly the same process with assignments, assessments, discussion forums, etc, which allows for ease of use for teachers and students as they create content and interact.

For the next blog of the series, we will jump into Getting Started with Canvas and how to navigate its various toolbars and managing the platform.

More Helpful Information on Canvas

Learn more about Canvas by watching **this video** introducing Canvas and its many tools. Also, our consortium provides a wide range of Canvas Resources and Supports. Check out the list below as well as the four other posts of this blog series to help you in implementing Canvas as well as learning many integrations and strategies of how to use it with your students.

- **ETCN EdTech Website**
- **ETCN Exploring Canvas' Basic Functions PD Recording and Slideshow**
- **ETCN Canvas Support Page**

- [ETCN Canvas Resource Page: Templates, Buttons, Home Page Templates, & Course Cards](#)
- [20 Teacher Created Tips on How to Use Canvas from Ditch That Textbook](#)
- [Canvas Commons - Templates of Courses, Assignments, and Quizzes Teachers Can View on Canvas from Teachers Across the World](#)