



The School-Wide Learning Commons

Crossing the Moat of the Content Management System

[Whole School Learning Commons Basics](#)

Crossing the Moat of the Content Management System

Unless you know something we don't, we have yet to discover a content management system that has a constructivist rather than directive teacher approach. We therefore approach the crossing of this moat by "tricking" a directive CMS program into a system that works for project based learning, genius hour, self-directed learning, inquiry, knowledge building centers, and design thinking projects.

For most types of constructivist learning experiences, we want a collaborative space where all the classroom and small groups have "rooms" in which they are doing their collaborative work. It must also allow for individuals to lodge their on self-directed learning projects. It must allow for variable assessment types and a way to report either grades or project reports. It must be equitable in nature so that every student and adult can access the system from anywhere and on any preferred device. It needs to be able to have multiple adults as "owners" and editors in the planning, assessing, and in the implementation of the various learning activities.

Here is how we trick the systems that we are familiar with. And, of course, all of them are on a program of continuous change, so one needs to check out the latest features.

Examples we are familiar with and use appear below, but here is a place we would appreciate comments and suggestions for systems that are not so top down. From your suggestions, we will edit this page as we find better ideas.

Google Classroom

This one is free but also has a number of fee based addons. It's main collaborative feature is that for any unit of instruction, two or more adults can be editors. Many teachers use this system for a list of assignments. We suggest that links made to a Google Site KBC is probably the best way to change from directive from more constructivist learning experiences.

Schoology

Schoology is free for individual teachers. For a true content management system, though, a district should adopt Schoology. Recently, Schoology was acquired by Powerschool, a popular Student Information System, and although Schoology integrates seamlessly with many S.I.S. this partnership will provide customers of Powerschool with a more robust experience for their staff, students and parents. Like many other CMS platforms, Schoology's power is in how it provides the ability for teachers to go beyond a digital assignment that's given online and submitted online. Schoology also provides the following:

- Embedded and user-created rubrics that align to standards
- Mastery-Based grading
- Integration with Gradebook in the S.I.S. for streamlining work for teachers
- Ability to provide differentiated lessons/content/materials/assignments to individual or group of students
- Discussions
- Analytics that inform teacher instruction

A system such as Schoology - or others that include rubrics, S.I.S. integration, differentiation and analytics but also provide a separate view for parent access also provides an easy school-home communication and partnership.

In order to consider innovative scheduling such as Blended Learning, Discovery Learning, Virtual PD or Snow Days, it is critical that one of the CMS tools is adopted by the School Learning Commons.

Canvas

This CMS system is quite elaborate and can be used for sophisticated directive units of instructions complete with rubrics and chat rooms when asynchronous learning is preferred. Again, for us at San Jose state who want to be more constructivist, we just link to a KBC that uses pieces or parts of the Canvas structure as needed. Many schools use Power school for the grading piece, but canvas have a system for grading assignments, both individual and group assignments. New features are added regularly and the system as a whole is not cheap.