

Classroom Tech and Test Prep

As 2015 has rolled in, the push in our school has been to develop activities supporting the academic and technology demands of the Badger 38 exam, that dreaded 38 which up until a week ago was still in flux. A team of English language arts and math teachers got together to develop templates and examples of assessments that mirrored the computerized adaptive testing and the performance tasks that make up the 38. These materials were then demonstrated and distributed to the rest of our staff in order to provide a system for structuring questions and online class assignments that would enhance students' skills and familiarize them with the Badger 38 testing format.

Our focus is not to teach to the test, but rather to prepare students for the high level critical thinking demanded by the standards using the lessons we already teach. We also recognized the need to give our students the access to technology and tasks that would prepare them for the discrete skills that would bog down an unmotivated or unfamiliar student. Essentially, we wanted to take the testing format out of the anxiety equation for students, so that they are able to focus on demonstrating their skills instead of navigating the test itself.

Technology

For the technology portion, we realized the most beneficial tool would be to have students getting used to dual screens. To achieve this, we used Dualless, an extension for Google Chrome that students can add to their browsers for free. After installing, students can use the Dualless icon to view two tabs simultaneously on a split screen, which mimics the left-side text and right-side questions of the 38.

For the questions, we favored the versatility and ease that Google Forms provided. Teachers utilized the same tools as the test, such as selecting the sentence from the text, with cutting and pasting into a form of their own design.

For the texts, Google Docs also provided a convenient and easy way for students to highlight and show critical thinking skills by annotating the text. They can make a copy of the articles and link them into the form when completed. There are also other extensions, such as Clearly from Evernote, that make online texts simple and easy to read in a digital format.

Content

What made these test prep lessons different from many others, is that the content was driven by what our school was already teaching, instead of the random sample questions provided by the testing companies. Questions focused on students' abilities to determine a main idea, find supporting details, use context clues, determine author's purpose and determine why the text is organized in a specific way. The team provided teachers with sample skill-based questions that followed the Common Core and were worded similarly to the questions from the 38 practice materials. Teachers then wrote questions using their own texts.



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