



Using iPad for formative assessments, quizzes, and exams

Discover how to make exam day feel like any other day in the classroom

Three significant initiatives are widely being implemented across the United States:

1. Improving student understanding through richly enhanced digital content
2. Technology readiness for conducting online high-stakes exams
3. Use of iPad as the technology tool for student learning

These initiatives generate challenges for institutions going down all three paths: how to provide engaging content, conduct large-scale online assessments, and enhance the classroom experience using iPad.

With an increased number of institutions investing in these technology programs—while at the same time preparing for online, high-stakes exams—it is imperative to consider their scope and interdependence. A few years ago these initiatives were featured in isolated discussions. Today, it's crucial that all are considered collectively.

Alternatively, if the readiness for conducting online exams is placed above instructional needs, there is potential for conflict between promoting solutions that support exam day or the learning environment. With that said, the ideal solution fully supports both, and makes exam day just like any other day with the help of great learning tools such as iPad.

A LEARNING TOOL LIKE NO OTHER

The iPad is an amazing device for learning that offers the affordances needed to conduct enhanced question types on exams, promote higher order thinking, and provide access to a secure ecosystem for transformational learning. While some may feel another device adequately supports conducting the exam, they are likely sacrificing the quality of experience, focus on learning, and possibly setting students up for a unique exam environment that doesn't match their daily experience.

The major testing consortiums creating the upcoming CCSS exams require the capability to place the device in a secured, locked-down environment. They have approved certain iPad devices for meeting this criteria and for possessing an appropriate screen size and ability to accept an external keyboard.

IPAD TACKLES SECURITY AND COMPLEXITY

Large-scale testing also requires the simultaneous execution of exams across multiple grade levels, multiple rooms, and school buildings. This can be an extremely time-consuming task in both physical IT support and complexity. However, the need for a secure environment is not just to conduct CCSS exams. Institutions need to engage their iPad devices year round through formative assessments, quizzes, and tests to fully prepare students

and teachers for high-stakes exams. This helps eliminate anxieties and familiarize teachers and students with the device and structure of all levels of assessments.

It is these less formal, more frequent assessments that effect the daily use of the technology and need to be considered as important as supporting high-stakes exams. Certainly the summative exams don't want answers getting out, but neither does the math teacher with students taking the same quiz later in the day or term. For those institutions that have chosen iPad for their technology solution, they seek a simplified process to conduct secure assessments across the board.

TAKE GUIDED ACCESS TO THE NEXT LEVEL

On a computer, desktop, or laptop, this ability has been available for years. But not until recently has the same capability been possible on an iPad. Apple made "Guided Access" available with iOS 6. While it's an acceptable solution to lock an iPad into an individual app, to initiate this on each student device requires a time-consuming, hands-on process with several steps.

Imagine how long it would take for individual teachers/proctors to perform manual tasks on each device in a class size averaging about 30 students? Doing this across multiple locations, in every room, would require a significant dedication of time and personnel. Initiating the assessment, quiz, or exam should not be the major focus of the proctors and certainly should not take valuable time away from what is already needed to conduct each evaluation. To address these challenges, a simple, scaled solution that can be implemented by each classroom teacher is necessary.

IS MOBILE DEVICE MANAGEMENT THE ANSWER?

Mobile Device Management (MDM) solutions are providing answers, but the dilemma is that some options are not actually practical on a large scale and also don't support the day-to-day, or moment-to-moment needs of teachers. When these times arise, IT has to be on hand and involved in each situation. Unexpected disruptions such as students being absent or needing to leave the testing environment for any number of reasons will always occur, so teachers need to be able to stop and start the exam accordingly. There is also the case of IT being called away or simply understaffed to support district-wide simultaneous testing.

As it stands, there are three options to utilize an MDM to support simultaneous testing. The first two require continual involvement by the systems IT who manage the MDM. In the first scenario, the system administrator pushes a profile to lock the app or website on the device. In the second, the system administrator schedules a time to push these profiles to each device. This requires even more coordination, including a method of setting an app to auto-lock when launched. That means a well-timed session that had an unexpected disruption would require significant high-touch modification by IT.

The third—a more practical and scalable solution—utilizes MDM without continuous involvement by IT. This option puts the capabilities directly into the hands of teachers, giving them the desired power to easily start and stop exams right from the classroom. Technology that keeps the learning process with the teachers—and not heavily reliant on IT—will prove more successful in the digital classroom.

A MORE TEACHER-FOCUSED SOLUTION

The ideal solution facilitates simple, secure, and scaled locking of an iPad to a testing application. In seconds, large groups of iPad devices can be simultaneously locked into an app remotely. This ability streamlines and

simplifies the process for utilizing iPad for test taking and formative assessments. Rather than requiring IT to do this from a backend system, teachers have the ability to do this right in the classroom.

This allows the classroom teacher to quickly (and from their own iPad, iPhone, or iPod touch) select the group of students, choose the app to be used, and initiate “Guided Access” remotely. To place the entire class into Guided Access, the teacher first chooses the app or website. Students are then switched to and remain locked into that app or website until released by the teacher. Nothing is done manually on the students’ device, and each device is locked into the app or website and ready to move forward.

NO ONSITE IT IS NEEDED

This functionality can be used to securely administer high-stakes exams or routine daily quizzes all from within the classroom. Such a tool also makes it easy to conduct formative assessments which support instruction and ensure students have a full grasp of the material. Teachers can invoke one of several apps or websites to quickly gauge the classroom’s understanding without hindering the learning experience.

Conclusion

One solution has proven up to the task of empowering teachers to run the digital classroom as they see fit, without added support from IT. Casper Focus from Jamf helps teachers regain valuable instruction time through improved classroom management. From the mundane tasks of resetting passcodes to securely preparing students for exams, Casper Focus is turning the iPad into the ultimate teaching tool. Exam day is just another day in the modern classroom when the right tools are in place.



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