Implementing TK20 Assessment System: A Collaborative Effort

By

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to share results of a collaborative effort introducing the TK20 assessment system in the Department of Education and Human Development at the College of Brockport, State University of New York. The authors will define and explain the TK 20 assessment system and its relationship to accreditation and standards. We will discuss the process of pilot testing and implementing this assessment system. We will also describe the interdisciplinary efforts for effective collaboration into a college wide assessment system. We will share the impact of such a system on students using a firsthand voice. Readers can take away ideas for similar implementation efforts and assignments.

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In the fall of 2011, the Department of Education and Human Development, along with several other departments, participated in a pilot test of TK 20 assessment system. TK 20 is a comprehensive learning outcomes software tool purchased to support the assessment of student learning on Brockport's campus and beyond. With so many assessment demands placed upon colleges and universities, the need is growing for an organizational environment that allows the higher education infrastructure and student body to co-exist and co-create supportive systems through online collaboration (Fallon & Brown, 2010). This can be accomplished by utilizing the features, assessment, folders, and other evaluative tools available to faculty and students in TK20.

Why Use an Assessment System?

Brockport is a college that holds national standards for our students. Therefore, we are an accredited institution and many of our programs are consistent with state and national standards. In any given syllabus, course objectives are coded with whatever professional standards that are met within the course requirements. In the same way, the assessments on TK 20 are coded to the same standards as evidence of performance meeting those standards. In summary, instructors must predetermine the key assessments in a course that meet these standards, measure students' performance on the assessments to those standards, and provide feedback to students through an assessment system such as TK 20 (Angelo & Cross, 1993).

This is an incredible system for both providing evidence of skills and archiving that evidence in such a way as to demonstrate growth. There are two reasons why TK 20 is useful for instructors. The first is that course instructors may want to assess and track student learning within a course on key course assignments. The second reason is that accredited programs need

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to show student performance on professional standards. TK 20 is an assessment system that can track and archive student work that meets professional standards.

Every instructor develops key assessments for his or her course based on course objectives laid out in the syllabus. TK 20 can be used to share key assessments electronically with the students in the class, for students to share their work back to the instructor as evidence of meeting course requirements, and for the instructor to provide the students with grades on their performance. TK 20 uses this process of sharing files between instructor and student electronically. Results are then archived with each student who then has an electronic academic record of his or her performance in the course. Why might students want an assessment record of their performance developed? Every student has access to a complete record of their performance within a class and across a program. This may also be used in job hunting or as evidence of professional growth and development.

What are Interdisciplinary Collaboration Issues Among Stakeholders?

Working across disciplines is an integral part of a major and minor, your scholarly self, what you bring to education, your passions, and yourself in a multifaceted way. Using TK 20 allows people from various disciplines, but who have a stake in information/assessment data collected, to have access to relevant data and information. For example, in the case of our experiences working together, two of the authors of this paper are instructors in the same program (and even phase of the program), but we have different perspectives regarding the needs of our mutual students. Using TK 20 bridges gaps in information with regards to assignments in each of the courses we teach. Additionally, by running reports of data we collect individually, we can get a stronger understanding of our students' strengths and weaknesses. This data can reveal strengths and weaknesses in our program that may go unseen if looking at data collected from our

individual courses alone. To add to this, the work that is done can be made accessible to the TK

20 system administrator who has a focus on unit accreditation needs and requirements. She has a

"bigger picture" of the programs and uses data to substantiate changes that needs to be made

based on myriad checkpoints from a variety of courses within programs. Having her expertise

helps course instructors think about what they are doing individually within the larger context of

the program. As the use of TK 20 grows, so too will the potential for collaboration and

programmatic changes that will be substantiated using data analysis.

The potential benefits of using TK 20 are truly limitless depending on how stakeholders are

defined, given the example of working closely with people within the education program;

however, knowing that Education is not a major at our college brings with it the challenge of

knowing what students are doing in their majors that may help an instructor understand them and

their experiences beyond my course. Having critical assignments outlined for all courses will

allow different departments to gain perspective of how we fit together in the bigger picture, and

will allow conversations that will reveal potential opportunities for collaborations that will

support our students to the fullest degree possible.

How can we support each other when using TK 20?

For strong collaboration to happen, lines of communication need to be open to allow the

sharing of ideas among faculty and students alike, as well as express challenges that are standing

in the way of using the TK 20 system to its full potential. For students, having the ability to

organize and present their work in ways that will showcase their growth as a professional as a

result of our programs. In fact, even realizing the full potential for using TK 20 can only be

achieved by finding spaces for these conversations to take place.

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Last semester, students in the Department of Education and Human Development were asked to locate and upload assignments from courses that represent work they have done throughout the program, and that align with Council for Exceptional Children program standards, in order to showcase how the program has helped support the students to reflect upon and develop skills necessary to teach students with disabilities (Salend, 2005). The process of implementation presented some organizational issues for students. Some students were unable to locate work from previous courses. Others found that simply uploading assignments did not represent standards for their program. Policies had to be implemented to manage these issues. If the students were not able to locate a particular assignment, they are not required to redo previous assignments at this point. The fact that the students are participating in student teaching confirms that they have met the requirements throughout the program to a satisfactory degree. As one student said, "I have become much better at understanding New York State Standards and their relationship to course assessments since working with TK 20."

Meetings and verbal conversation, as well as other forms of communication, will help to meet these ends. While it is understood that challenges will arise, attention should be paid to providing support to help move forward with the sophistication with which we use the TK 20 assessment system. The more individuals who are required to use the TK 20, the more "bumps" will be revealed and will need to be attended to. Once resolved, new "bumps" will come up. Therefore, successful implementation of TK 20 large scale should not be looked upon as a single "roll out," but rather a process of rolling out and making necessary adjustments, and the rolling out again.

Recognizing this process means a commitment to keeping the lines of support flexible. The following is an example of this process in action. It is with this spirit that the *TK 20*

Frequently Asked Questions or Issues (FAQ, 2012) sheet was prepared and distributed. Two of our faculty worked closely with Director of Field Experience and college supervisors to help understand challenges in implementing TK 20 with student teachers as they meet requirements for their students with disabilities portfolios (SWD). One faculty member brought back a list of questions facing college supervisors, and worked with another faculty, created a FAQ sheet to provide college supervisors that focused on specific concerns and questions posed by them. The FAQ sought not only to answer questions asked, but also to help support CS to empower themselves and their students to problem solve by using resources already in place in the TK 20 system – either within TK 20 itself, or tailored specifically to the needs to Brockport faculty, staff, and students by the TK 20 administrator based on her experiences with the system and feedback she has received by others. Once college supervisors gain confidence and skills using TK 20 it is expected that new challenge may arise that will need attention. This give and take is an essential aspect of working towards successful collaboration and meaningful support for individuals using the TK 20 system.

What the Students' Perspectives on TK 20?

The reaction to the implementation of TK 20 with students has been remarkably positive for students, having the ability to organize and present their work in ways that will showcase their growth as a professional as a result of our program. This will allow students to be reflective about what they are taking away from our program that will support them in their professions. Two dedicated servers for the TK 20 system servers allow students to store a range of artifacts that allow students not only access during their academic term at Brockport, but also as alumni. It will make it possible for instructors to have another way to analyze data based on what our intended outcomes for assignments are compared to how they were received by students.

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Students are now able to upload artifacts in response to necessary class assessments posted in TK 20 by individual instructors. The posted assessments meet New York State Standards, as well as each program's academic standards. Once uploaded, the student is able to compare their work against these standards. It is a way of making sure that the submission meets or exceeds the required standards. In this way, students are taking responsibility for their submissions, as well as recognizing and understanding how standards, if used appropriately, can help maintain excellence in their work. One way to showcase student excellence is by using TK 20 tools to build a digital presentation portfolio.

A student presentation portfolio is a digital record of all the student's accomplishments, not only academic, but a professional record as well. The portfolio can help students create a richer picture of their skills and accomplishments than traditional methods, such as binders, might allow. Candidates can share exemplary work in customized presentations. Students control the creation, customization, and accessibility of this type of portfolio in TK 20. The presentation portfolio in TK 20 might be referred to as a "comprehensive resume." Multiple artifacts can be linked to a student's portfolio.

It is important that the students are in charge of representing their mastery of meeting the program standards using artifacts they create. These artifacts will serve as examples of their professional growth throughout the teacher education program – from initial phases to student teaching when they are being introduced to and practicing knowledge and skills necessary for teaching students with disabilities (Fallon, Zhang, & Kim, 2011). To truly demonstrate mastery, the students must be able to read and understand the program standards, create instruction that reflects an understanding of the program standards, and then present and speak to what they have developed and how it meets the program standards.   These are the challenges of implementation:

that students are able to truly "own" their work and clearly demonstrate that the work meets program standards.

<u>Summary</u>

As teachers, we naturally feel a responsibility to our students to guide them and help them understand what our expectations are. For successful collaboration on an interdisciplinary level, there needs to be an environment of support. This means that individual instructors must look beyond their own courses to embrace an understanding of the breadth and scope of their programs, and realistically, the role their courses have within the greater context of the college as a whole. We need to find the ways we are connected to each other with regards to academics and mentoring, and see how TK 20 can allow us to provide the strongest possible support for our students. This is not only important for the students as they push themselves professionally, but it is also a crucial aspect of accreditation requirements as we prepare for reaccreditation of our individual programs.

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