



THE STEW

Quarterly ESU 2 Data Newsletter

January 2021

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'Tis the Season...to Run Reports?

How eduCLIMBER Makes it Easy to Get the Answers You Need

Spotlight Feature: Thresholds

How many students are failing math class this week? Which kids racked up three or more minor behavior incidents last quarter? Has that school-wide tardy prevention initiative been working?

Running reports is a regular, and often time-consuming part of an instructional leader's job. Finding out which kids are struggling – in a timely fashion – is imperative in order to help.

Whether your data is in a Student Information System or a spreadsheet, getting the information you need can be cumbersome. And often, the reports generated by an SIS are not formatted in a way that is conducive to analyzing or sharing the data.

The "Thresholds" feature is eduCLIMBER's time-saving tool for identifying individuals or groups of students that present outliers within your data systems.

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Custom reports can be generated using any data available within the system, and can be based upon a single criterion (such as grades or attendance) or combine multiple measures. Other parameters include the ability to select specific time-frames and student subgroups.

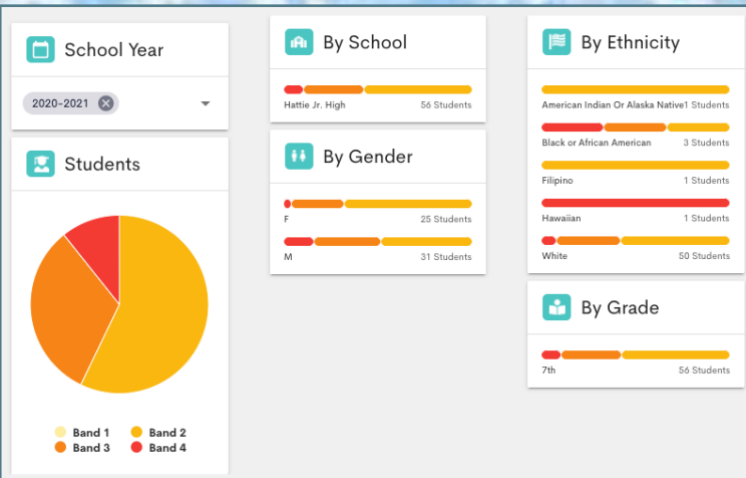
For convenience, the thresholds can be set to run automatically based on user preferences. Do you have a grade-level team meeting every Wednesday morning? Set it to run an hour before for up-to-the-minute data.

Results can be set to auto-save for future reference. The reports can also be sent automatically to specific users, so you can be sure necessary information is always in the right hands, right when it's needed.

Read on for some examples of how instructional leaders might apply this useful feature:

MTSS

Identify struggling, at-risk, and potential Tier 2 students by setting up custom thresholds. For example, eduCLIMBER will tell you when a student is failing two or more classes, has received three minor behavior referrals in the last 30 days, or has five or more unexcused absences this quarter – whatever measures and cut-off points you use in your MTSS systems.



High-Ability Learners (HAL)

The ability to scan eduCLIMBER to look for a combination of measures could be useful for identifying students qualified for differentiated programs. Thresholds allow users to include multiple standardized test scores/subscores, combined with school-level measures, such as grades. The option to use “weighted” or “unweighted” thresholds allows for filtering students in a variety of ways.

Integration with other eduCLIMBER Features

The Threshold feature also allows users to interact with report results in a variety of useful ways across the eduCLIMBER platform. Threshold reports can be shared with specific staff members. The reports can be set to automatically “tag” students within the system, or to apply smartFORMS, such as a SAT form or parental notification letter.

Threshold reports generate disaggregated data for a variety of purposes. Use single or multiple measures for any data found in eduCLIMBER.

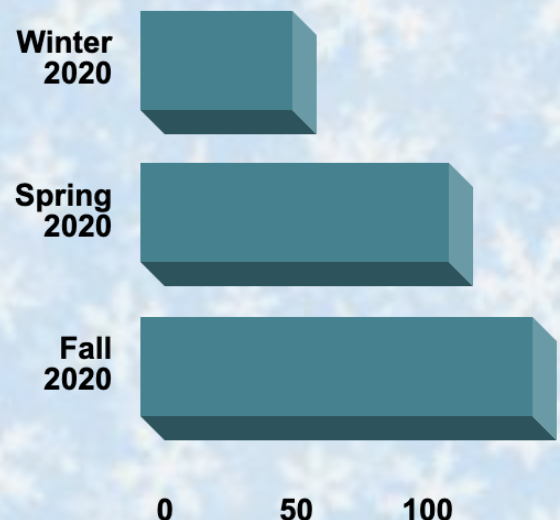
Canvas: More Than Just a “Pandemic Solution”

The Covid-19 pandemic has presented new and unique challenges to educational institutions and stakeholders. As educators have scrambled to adapt to these obstacles, it is abundantly clear that data is a critical component of sound decision-making.

Additionally, the leveraging of technology tools such as Canvas, a widely utilized LMS, has been universal. In this case, what was born of necessity may be here to stay. What does the data say about the proliferation of Canvas, and what does that mean for the future of both in-person and distance learning?

It is perhaps no surprise that Canvas usage increased significantly last March, when students across the country were asked to learn from home for several months. However, ESU 2 data shows that Canvas usage increased significantly *again* this fall when compared with last spring, even as most students across the state returned to in-person teaching and learning.

Canvas Usage: On the Rise Across ESU 2



**Page Views Per Student, Per Week*

There are likely many contributing factors to this phenomenon. Teachers and students have undoubtedly become more familiar with the LMS. In some cases, lagging student engagement during the first few months of the pandemic may have contributed to depressed usage rates despite the shift to distance learning. However, it's possible that many schools have come to realize that Canvas is a valuable tool regardless of the learning setting.

“Canvas isn’t a pandemic solution – it’s an everyday solution.”

**- Shara Johnson
ESU 2 Digital Learning
Coordinator**

ESU 2 Digital Learning Coordinator Shara Johnson believes that the LMS is more than just a distance learning tool. According to Johnson, “Canvas is another way for us to support student learning that isn’t necessarily ‘traditional’”. She notes that for a variety of reasons, many students may struggle to learn from day to day. Canvas is a platform that supports differentiation, helping teachers deliver multiple modes of learning and provide students with support and choice.

Indeed, while the implementation of an LMS like Canvas may be somewhat new to some educators, it has been widely used at the postsecondary level to support both on-campus and distance learning for years. User experience suggests that a familiarity with Canvas gained by high school students prior to going to college may be a benefit in and of itself.

In Johnson’s words: “Canvas isn’t a pandemic solution - it’s an everyday solution.”

Meet Team ACCESS: Expanding Mental Health and Social Services Across ESU 2

“Mental Health IS Health”. That’s the message being promoted by ESU 2 Team ACCESS (All Children Celebrated Educated Safe & Successful). Team ACCESS was formed in the fall of 2020 in order to support the overall well-being of students, families, and school district staff across the ESU.

Mental health and wellness supports are becoming more common in schools, accelerated by concerns about how the Covid-19 pandemic may impact children. Despite growing awareness, lack of resources can often be a barrier to providing the kinds of support students and their families may need.

Thanks in part to several grants, ESU 2’s Team ACCESS is working to expand services and programs that address the overall well-being of agency stakeholders, both inside and outside of school.

There are several initiatives that aim to support the mental health needs of students. For example, ESU 2 staff help coordinate services for students and families from outside agencies, such as professional therapists or community service providers.

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Number of referrals received and processed during the fall semester, ranging from counseling supports to assistance with food, internet access, and paying bills.

“I’ve learned that I can talk to a trusted adult...about my issues.”

- Small group participant (Grade 5)

Team Access Services Include:

- Screening and Assessment
- Individual Counseling
- Small Group Work
- Crisis Intervention and Support
- Classroom Behavior Support
- Teacher/School Staff Consultation
- Advocacy
- Resource Sharing/Collaboration

ESU 2 Team ACCESS staff also directly support students through a variety of direct programs and services.

Recognizing the important role of educators in caring for their students, ESU 2 also provides professional development for school staff. Topics include trauma awareness and self-care, as well as other topics supporting comprehensive school mental health. The goal of these trainings is to improve educational outcomes for students dealing with a variety of real-life problems and stressors.

Mental health awareness and supports are not just for students, either. The well-being of school staff is just as important to the overall success of the school and community. Teachers and others who work with children experience life and career-related stress that can affect their mental health and job performance. Team ACCESS staff is working to expand and build upon current programming to address the needs of adults in educational settings.

For more information about how ESU 2 can support your students and staff through these programs, please contact Taira Masek (tmasek@esu2.org) or Megan Reese (mreese@esu2.org).

Data “Bytes”: Musings of a Data Steward

I bought my son an electric guitar for Christmas. Okay, I’ll be honest - it was just as much for me as for him. He and I really bond over listening to rock music, and “rock star” has always been at the top of my list of dream jobs.

Learning to play has been...challenging. My fingers just do not seem to want to stretch as far as I need them to. My wrist starts to hurt as soon as I begin practicing, making it difficult to commit to the sustained repetition I need.

It really puts to the test the idea (one that I have tried to sell to my kids and my students over the years) that “learning is fun”. Again, if I’m being honest, I actually find *success* to be fun.

Proficiently shredding my favorite heavy metal riffs with my amp cranked up to “11” is fun! Or, at least, I assume it will be (someday).

Learning how to do that is *not* fun. It’s frustrating. Painful. Rage-inducing. Disheartening. I have been working on a few songs for the past month, and I’m now playing short pieces of them - poorly. I’m a long way from my ultimate goal of sounding just like my favorite legends.

Junior is struggling, too. Like so many of his peers and my former students, he definitely has that “fixed” mindset that can be so counterproductive to learning. Yet, it was he who helped me with my own perspective

this past week. While giving his fingers a rest, he watched me attempt to smoothly play the same power chord progression several times consecutively, only to miss the same transition over and over. Sighing (okay, growling) in frustration while shaking my left hand and wrist to alleviate the pain, he said:

“You know, dad? Last week you were making the same mistakes, but at half the speed. It still stinks but you’re doing it faster! At least you’re making progress?” He shrugged. Thanks, kid.

It felt better when I saw that my efforts were actually bearing fruit. He meant to tease me, but I realized he had also been giving me some relevant data.

There's a long road from rock star dreams to virtuoso. But all along the way there are milestones. How many chords can I play? How many scales? How fast?

Measuring our growth is an essential part of the learning process. It's hard sometimes not to focus on the end result, and in turn be discouraged when we haven't gotten there yet. However, the process seems much less daunting if we measure and celebrate our growth along the way. There are countless successes to be found on the path to achieving our goals.

I got to thinking about how often we share this kind of data with students. I felt like too often as a teacher, I was acting as a judge. "You are a '2' in this area, and we need you to be at least a '3'," I can picture myself saying.

While ultimately the standards we push students to reach are for their

benefit, we can discourage them by giving them binary data. Pass/Fail. Met/Unmet. We may not give enough credit to the efforts toward improvement. How much different does it sound if I had said, "Hey, you're a '2' now! Remember how last week you were only a '1'? I bet if you keep working just as hard, you'll be a '3' in no time!"

And what about the students that are already a '3'? Don't we need to encourage their growth, too?

While I may not be in the classroom anymore, I will try to remember this as I strive to achieve my own goals, as well as encourage others to do the same.

If learning isn't really all that fun (but success is!), then I will intentionally use data to track progress and identify more frequent successes. Now, where was I? Alright fingers! From the top...

Upcoming Events:

Illuminate Education
Spring Webinar Series
(February 9 – 19)
"Spring Forward: Charting
the Course for Growth"

Virtual conference featuring over 60 sessions regarding a variety of educational topics, including one co-hosted by our very own Dr. Joshua Snyder (Wahoo Public Schools Director of Learning) and, ahem...yours truly. To register for a session visit:

illuminateed.com/events/



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Educational Service Unit #2
2320 N. Colorado Ave.
Fremont, NE 68025
Email: cpomeroy@esu2.org