



# Information Technology

*By Bill Westrick, IT Director*

## Canvas Learning Management System

Schooling during the COVID-19 pandemic has challenged us in many ways. Technology has critically assisted Fargo Public Schools in this reinvention, and using technology as a tool to educate students will continue to be part of the K-12 teaching and learning experience moving forward. One of the lessons we have learned during the past year is the importance of the District to invest in a universal learning management system. Beginning in the fall of 2021, FPS teachers and students in grades 6-12 will use the Canvas learning management system to post and access information about assignments and course progress. Additionally, Canvas is linked with Mastery Connect, a formative assessment tool for educators to collect data to track student progress toward proficiency of course learning outcomes.

### **What is a learning management system?**

A learning management system (LMS) is focused on the electronic instructional content for courses a student will take. It can contain videos, assignments, quizzes, the course syllabus, etc. A learning management system integrates with a student information system so that courses in the LMS are associated with a teacher and a roster of students. As an LMS, Canvas will contain the information that defines “what” a student will do in their classes.

Over the past three years, a task force made up of FPS teachers, library media specialists, administrators, and technology staff has been evaluating different learning management systems. The Canvas learning management platform with Mastery Connect is the system chosen by this group. Task force members were impressed with the easy to use interface and the rich set of resources and tools available to teachers for their courses.

### **Why is FPS adopting Canvas and Mastery Connect?**

Currently, middle and high school students and parents access attendance, grades, and course content in multiple systems: PowerTeacher Pro, EDUcal, and Google Classroom. Additionally, external resources such as electronic textbooks, subscription databases, free resources, and licensed resources can be integrated directly into Canvas. The adoption of Canvas and Mastery Connect will make it possible to house everything in one place for students and parents while maintaining the flexibility for teachers to embed external content as needed. Our goal is to increase access for students and families by streamlining the systems they use.

### **Who does this impact for the 2021-2022 school year?**

All middle and high school courses are expected to be hosted in Canvas starting in fall 2021. Teachers in these schools will no longer be posting assignments in EduCAL. Students will be auto-enrolled in their courses in Canvas, and assignments will be posted there. Parent/guardians of middle and high school students will have the opportunity to connect to Canvas and see all courses and assignments for their children in those schools.



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Grade six teachers will also begin using the Mastery Connect enhanced gradebook to track student progress and support their move to evidence based reporting. In grades 7-12, teachers use a traditional gradebook in Canvas to record assignment scores. Additional grade levels and content areas will be added to Mastery Connect in the future.

## **When will elementary schools move to Canvas and Mastery Connect?**

While the 2021-2022 implementation of Canvas is focused on middle and high schools, elementary teachers have the opportunity to introduce themselves to Canvas during that school year. Seesaw will continue to be the primary communication method for 2021-2022, and the Teaching and Learning team will work with elementary principals and teacher leaders to determine an implementation timeline for Canvas and Mastery Connect in the elementary schools.

