Successfully Conducting Online Assessments

How to prepare staff, schools and students for online assessments

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Introduction

- Online testing will be playing an increasing role in Australian schools over the next few years.
- This session will look at the direct practical lessons, tips and pitfalls we have learned from helping schools run online assessments with their students.
Some question on online testing

- Is online testing fundamentally different to paper-based testing?
  - Yes, No and Maybe

- Are student’s IT skills/digital competence a major factor in test performance online?
  - Probably not except for students with no familiarity with IT at all

- Many students are really confident on computers, are they really going to need preparation?
  - Don’t over-estimate student confidence with IT
Two models of online testing

On-demand assessments
- One or a few students
- Individualised tests
- Various points through the school year.

Large scale testing
- Whole classes/year groups
- All taking the same tests
- Within a short period (e.g. a week).
On-demand assessments have advantages

- Individualised tests
- One or a few students
- Various points through the school year.
Large scale online tests – a process

1. Prepare for the assessment
2. Organise a space for the assessment
3. Get student to and into the space and onto a computer
4. Get students onto the school network
5. Get students onto the internet
6. Get students logged into the assessment
7. Establish the start of the test - instructions, rules, timing etc.
8. Begin test
9. Actual test
10. Finish the test
11. Move on
What are the weak points in that process?

- Steps 4, 5 and 6

1. Get students onto the school network
2. Get students onto the internet
3. Get students logged into the assessment
4. Establish the start of the test - instructions, rules, timing etc.
What goes wrong?

- Most students have few difficulties logging onto school networks.
  - However, just one student who doesn’t know their password can tie up the class teacher’s time.

- One or two faulty devices can be very disruptive.
  - The class teacher will need to manage the specific individual whose machine isn’t working.

- If there is going to be an issue with the network or the bandwidth at the school…
  - … it is more likely to occur when all the students are accessing the same website at the same time i.e. when the demand is highest.
Preparing the technology

- Check all the devices well in advance of a formal assessment.
- Check all the devices a couple of days before hand as well. [Run updates!]
- Ensure the devices have an up-to-date browser. Preferably the recommended browser for the assessment. [NAPLAN will have its own distinct browser]
- NAPLAN will probably have a technical readiness test for checking that a device is compatible and that your bandwidth is sufficient. Run it on all the devices you can.
BYOD/BYODD will have its own challenges

- Ensuring devices are compatible
- Ensuring devices are ready for the assessment
- Ensuring devices are charged!
Preparing for the day

- Having more devices than students is preferable
- Have multiple adults in the room if possible
- Plan for contingencies
  - A power cut or a fire alarm or a lock-down will be more disruptive for an online test than a paper-based test
Preparing students

- If a practice site is available, then a dress rehearsal is a very good idea. [A practice site will be available for NAPLAN]
Helping students do the test.

- Paper is your friend
- Notes, working out, ideas are still important
Going back and checking answers is still important.

- Students typically appear to be more engaged by online tests than by paper-based ones.
- But that has a down side…
- Students may rush through a test online
Reading online

- Reading online is not necessarily the same as reading on paper
- Encourage students to use their time wisely
Styles of items

- Multiple choice
- Text entry/extended response
- Multiple choices
- Hotspots
- Gap match, graphic gap match, position object - “Drag and drop” style items
- Various other types

- Most styles of items are either familiar or designed to be more accessible/friendly
Students are best prepared for online assessment in the same way they are for paper-based assessment

- Encourage students to take the assessment seriously…
- …but avoid making it stressful or appear threatening
- Stick with positive messages that encourage students to try their best rather than fear of negative consequences of poor performance
- Last minute revision or multiple practice tests tend to be counterproductive
- Teaching-to-the-test tends to be counterproductive but being aware of what is tested makes sense
- Encourage students to use their time wisely
Other information

- NAPLAN Online technical requirements
- http://www.nap.edu.au/online-assessment/naplan-online/technical-requirements