

EDGENUITY - FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WHY IS TCSS IMPLEMENTING EDGENUITY?

The purpose of the Edgenuity online learning solution is to improve the quality and efficiency of remote learning offered by the Tuscaloosa County School System, for both students and teachers. Schoology, our current learning management system, and SchoolsPLP, our current curriculum for online learners, was provided to TCSS by the state. TCSS did not have to purchase either software. As this school year has gotten underway, it has become clear that our district needs a more robust online learning platform that is more user friendly than SchoolsPLP. This is why we are making the switch to Edgenuity. The timeline created by this pandemic has forced us to implement remote learning in a much different and more rushed way than we would under typical circumstances. We must learn and adapt our plan as we move forward. To have remote learning fully operational at this time, we need a more “all-in-one” system.

HOW IS EDGENUITY DIFFERENT FROM OUR CURRENT USE OF SCHOLOGY AND SCHOOLSPLP?

Edgenuity provides a student's instructional content in grades K-12, as well as on-demand tutors for grades 6-12. The content is aligned with state standards, is rigorous, and can be customized to meet students at their individual levels. It is accredited and NCAA-approved. Edgenuity tracks a student's progress through their course. There may be some Career Tech courses and electives that are not available through Edgenuity. Those courses may be taught using the same platform that is already in place.

Right now, our teachers have to create or modify content to send out through Schoology. This will not be the case with Edgenuity. The content is already built into Edgenuity. This will mean less time on the part of the teacher, and a better experience for remote learners, because there will not be the technical issues with Edgenuity that students have encountered with Schoology.

SchoolsPLP, the curriculum we currently have to use with Schoology, does not integrate seamlessly with Schoology. With Edgenuity, the content is already built into the delivery system.

It would be ideal for teachers to originate all content for all students, both on-campus and remote. But in a situation where we must provide both modes of instruction simultaneously, this is just not feasible at this time. The concept of having virtual-only teachers at each school does not always work, due to differing numbers of remote learners and availability of teachers to teach particular subjects. Edgenuity provides a more efficient way to provide high-quality, standards-based instruction to remote learners.

WILL REMOTE STUDENTS STILL HAVE A TCSS TEACHER?

Yes. Students will still be assigned to teachers, as they are now. But, teachers' efforts with remote learners should be focused on maintaining contact and a relationship, not the time it takes to create, upload, and grade student work. Teachers will still have the option of engaging with remote students through live classes, small groups, and by uploading videos.

WILL TCSS STILL USE SCHOOLOGY?

Yes. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Alabama Department of Education was already planning to purchase Schoology as a learning management system, and TCSS would have taken this school year to learn the program. Teachers will still receive professional development on Schoology this year, but without the need to create and send out lessons through Schoology. Teachers may still post information and resources, like a list of assignments or calendar for the week, in Schoology, and use it to communicate with students. As we continue to receive professional development in Schoology, we anticipate more activities being assigned through Schoology. We will determine as a system its best uses in our remote learning plan, on a long-term basis.

WHY DID TCSS PURCHASE SCHOOLOGY?

The state purchased Schoology, not TCSS. TCSS purchased the professional development for Schoology, so teachers would know how to use it. It was our hope that this state-provided learning management system would address our remote learning needs, without having to make an additional expenditure. However, now that we are able to see the tools in practice, it does not currently meet our needs of fully delivering remote learning. Schoology is a useful tool, and our teachers will continue to receive professional development in the platform, at the pace intended before the pandemic.

HOW WILL EDGENUITY HELP TEACHERS WITH REMOTE LEARNING?

Edgenuity is the content and delivery system in one. Right now, our teachers have to create or modify content to send out through Schoology. This will not be the case with Edgenuity. The content is already built into Edgenuity. This will dramatically reduce the amount of time required on the part of the teacher.

HOW WILL EDGENUITY HELP STUDENTS AND FAMILIES WITH REMOTE LEARNING?

While there have been successes with Schoology, students and families have experienced technical difficulties. With Edgenuity, students will find content that is aligned with state standards, is rigorous, and can be customized to meet students at their individual levels, already built into the program. In grades 6-12, on-demand tutors are available.

WHY DIDN'T TEACHERS HAVE THE CHANCE TO INFLUENCE WHAT REMOTE LEARNING PLATFORM TCSS USES?

Nothing about the implementation of remote learning happened as it would have in a typical situation. The state's Roadmap to Reopening Schools says local systems should provide a remote learning option, and we were provided Schoology and SchoolsPLP by the state. To best utilize our resources, we hoped these platforms would meet our remote learning needs fully. TCSS did not begin to receive Schoology training until July. Had we not been in the midst of a pandemic, this process would have been handled much more methodically, with direct teacher involvement.

Although we must provide remote learning at this time, TCSS is still formulating a more long-term vision of remote learning. Teacher and administrator input is and will be an important part of this process. But in order to fulfill the requirement of providing remote learning, we need an all-in-one system immediately, and the CARES Act provides us the funding for the purchase.

WHERE DID THE FUNDING COME FROM TO PAY FOR EDGENUITY?

CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security) Act federal funding will cover the cost of the purchase. This is not funding that would have otherwise been in TCSS's budget, and it is aimed specifically at needs, including technology, created by the COVID-19 pandemic. All expenditures with CARES funding have been carefully thought out so that we can get the most for our money. Edgenuity will serve the purpose of our remote learning program, and we will use it for credit recovery and summer school. Because we have purchased Edgenuity, we will have no need to purchase any other programs for these uses as we have in the past.

HOW WILL TEACHERS PREPARE FOR THE SHIFT TO EDGENUITY?

Our TCCS Department of Curriculum and Instruction will lead the Edgenuity implementation plan for schools, so that there is consistency district wide. Teachers will not have to prepare this system for implementation. Central Office resources will immediately be directed toward the implementation of Edgenuity, so that we can get this system up and running for our students and teachers, as soon as possible. The standards for each course will be grouped into nine weeks' worth of material to integrate with our instructional maps, so that remote students stay on a similar track as our on-campus learners.

WHEN WILL REMOTE LEARNERS BEGIN USING EDGENUITY?

Remote learners will begin using Edgenuity in the second nine-weeks grading period. Ahead of that time, students and families will receive much more information about Edgenuity.

WILL THE USE OF EDGENUITY BE EXACTLY THE SAME FOR ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY (MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL) STUDENTS?

No. There are some differences between elementary and secondary. These differences will be addressed in the implementation process and in the communication with students and families. Because of the differences between upper and lower grades, remote learning as a whole looks different at the elementary and secondary levels. Remote learning at the elementary level will be very similar to how it is now for the students. The difference will be the course content and how it is accessed.