



Griswold Public Schools Educating for Excellence

Superintendent's Update – September 30, 2013

The community of the Griswold Public Schools educates for excellence by empowering students to become compassionate, confident, creative, and resourceful members of society. - Griswold 2022

Excellence is never an accident. It is always the result of high intention, sincere effort, and intelligent execution; it represents the wise choice of many alternatives - choice, not chance, determines your destiny.

~ Aristotle

Calendar

- **Tuesday-Wednesday, October 1-2 – CODE RED review in all classes.** All teachers should take time during each period of these two days to review the classroom procedures for **CODE RED LOCKDOWN** in their classroom. Over the two days students should be aware of the procedure for each classroom in which they spend time during their day.

- **Wednesday, October 2 – BOE Policy Subcommittee in the Superintendent's Office, 4:00 PM.**
- **Wednesday, October 2 – GPS Building Committee in the GES Library, 6:00 PM.**
- **Wednesday, October 2 – Griswold High School Parents Advisory Council (PAC) in the GHS Library, 7:00 PM.**

- **Thursday, October 3 – Meeting for Teachers, Students, Parents, and Community members interested in traveling to China in June 2014 in the GMS Library, 6:00 PM.** Anyone interested in touring China in June should plan to attend this meeting. For more information in advance of the meeting contact psmith@griswoldpublicschools.org.

- **Friday, October 4 – Children First Griswold Meeting at GHS (Room 3103), 9:30 AM.**

- **Friday, October 4 – First HOME Varsity Football Game of the 2013 Season: Griswold vs. Woodstock Academy, 6:30 PM. Come to the Home Football Game and BRING A CAN! The Griswold Booster Club is organizing a FOOD DRIVE to benefit the St. Mary's Food Pantry.** The St. Mary's Food Pantry has issued a plea, as their supply is dangerously low. The Griswold Booster Club will have a truck at the first home GHS football game on Friday, October 4th at 6:00 PM, to gather donations of canned and non-perishable items! Please bring your donation to the concession stand at any time before, during, or after the game. Let's join together to assure that no family goes hungry! Thank you!



- **Monday-Friday, October 7-11 – National Fire Prevention Week.**

- **Monday, October 7 – Annual Flu Shot Clinic in the Auxiliary Gym at GHS, 1:30 – 5:00 PM.** The clinic is open to all employees and family members over 18 years old. Please bring your insurance card to the clinic.

- **Monday, October 7 – BOE Budget Subcommittee negotiations with the GEA in the GMS Library, 5:30 PM.**
- **Wednesday, October 9 – "Coffee and Chat" Superintendent's Advisory Council in the Superintendent's Office at GMS, 7:30 AM and/or 8:45 AM.** This month will focus on resources for schools and parents: Khan Academy, Bite Sci-zed, MOOCs and other sites that are designed to promote learning for all.
- **Wednesday, October 9 – National Honor Society Induction in the GHS Cafeteria, 6:00 PM.**
- **Monday-Friday, October 14-18 – National School Lunch Week.**

- **Monday, October 14 – Columbus Day, No School.**
- **Tuesday, October 15 – All Teacher Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) and Goals are due as of this date.** All teachers should enter the two SLOs into the appropriate electronic form in My Learning Plan, along with the appropriate SPI Goal, Parent Feedback Goal, and two Focus Areas for growth as part of the classroom observation procedure.
- **Tuesday, October 15 – Professional Development, No School.** The day is focused on completing SLO forms (if not already completed); grade levels, teams, and/or departments to discuss SLO data, strategies, and monitoring; or other activities related to Teacher Evaluation including team discussions of Domain 2 and 3 of the Danielson Rubrics. In addition, there will be training using the My Learning Plan PD LOG in the Superintendent's Office for those who need assistance. Coffee will be available in the Superintendent's Office all day! (You can also come just for the coffee if you are up and running with My Learning Plan!)
- **Tuesday, October 15 – Board of Education Meeting in the GMS Library, 6:00 PM.** *Note change of date due to Monday holiday.* Childcare is now available at all BOE Meetings in Room 2208.
- **Wednesday, October 16 – Griswold Principals' Appreciation Day.** October is American School Principals' Month. Since the 16th is National Boss's Day, we will take the opportunity to thank our team of Principals, Assistant Principals, and Administrators: Mark, Matt, Michele, Sarah, Joe, Rita, Sue, Erin, Glenn.
- **Wednesday, October 16 – PSAT Exam will be held at GHS for all students in Grades 10 and 11, 8:00 AM.** The cost of the test as of this year is being covered by the school district. The PSAT is the practice test exam for the SAT and the qualifying exam for the National Merit Scholarship Competition for Juniors.
- **Wednesday, October 16 – GES School Family Community Partnership in the GES Library, 3:30 PM.**
- **Wednesday, October 16 – BOE Policy Subcommittee in the Superintendent's Office, 4:00 PM.**
- **Wednesday, October 16 – GPS Building Committee in the GES Library, 6:00 PM.**
- **Thursday, October 17 – Chinese Principal Delegation from Jilin Province visit to Griswold Public Schools, 9:00 AM-2:30 PM.** Twenty principals will be visiting classes at GES, GMS, and GHS in addition to posing questions about American education to our Principals and students during a panel discussion. The group will be touring all three buildings between 9:30 and 11:30 AM. They will be treated to some musical selections from our middle school and high school Choirs and Steel Drum Band as well.
- **Friday, October 18 - Inaugural inductees to the Griswold High School Alumni Wall of Fame recognized at half time of the GHS Football game vs. Fitch H.S.** Game begins at 6:30 PM with a half time ceremony to recognize the 2013 recipients: *Elizabeth (Jedziniak) Osga – GHS Class of 1970 and Kris Johanessen – GHS Class of 1978*

*If you would like a school event/meeting listed in the Calendar section, please forward date and information to Paul Smith:
psmith@griswoldpublicschools.org.*

Notes

Griswold Board of Education Meeting Highlights (9/23/13)

- The Board was introduced to the new Student Representative, Elijah Perry, who is the President of the Griswold Student Council.
- The Board received information on the inaugural inductees to the Griswold High School Alumni Wall of Fame. Elizabeth Osga (Class of 1970) and Kris Johanessen (Class of 1978) will be honored at the half time of the Friday, October 18 home football game.
- The Board recognized and thanked Russ Salvador, Employee of the Month for September, for his efforts during CONN TREK 2013 in which 38 students, hiked over 100 miles, raising \$21,000 for the First Responders of Sandy Hook in Newton.
- The Board approved a request for the GHS Girls' Softball Team to travel to Florida during April Vacation 2014 to participate in training and games at Disney's Wide World of Sports.

- The Board accepted a gift of a standing clock and memorial benches in honor of Alicia Pierce, GHS Class of 1982.
- Principal of GES, Joe Bordeau, updated the Board on the Fall Open House events.
- The Board received an update on Teacher Evaluation that includes the following information from the state:
 - Schools will have the opportunity to administer the Smarter Balance Field Test in 2014 to prepare for the actual testing that measures the new Common Core Standards in 2015. These field tests will replace CMT and CAPT in 2014 (with the exception of CMT/CAPT Science)
 - As a result, teachers who teach a CMT grade or CAPT subject area, will be allowed to substitute a different standardized assessment for the CMT or CAPT when developing their Student Learning Objectives - SLOs. (Note: In Griswold, one SLO must be based on a standardized assessment, the other based on an assessment that measures student progress in one of the four outcomes in Griswold 2022).
 - Towns will receive guidance on the school's Student Performance Index (SPI), which is determined by the State based on CMT and CAPT results. SPI progress plays into both teacher and administrator evaluation. There is no basis on which to score SPI if CMT and CAPT are displaced by the Smarter Balance Field Test.
 - There is accountability on the part of each district based on the implementation of the new Teacher Evaluation Program. All towns will fill out a report at the end of the year, listing the number of teachers in each area of performance. Thirty districts will be audited and several will undergo a site visit during which the evaluation process and procedures will be reviewed by a state committee.
- The Board was informed that the Board of Selectmen approved the GHS Roof Project. From this point, the Board of Finance must approve the project before the Selectmen can set a referendum date. (The BOF Meeting will be Tuesday, October 1 at 7:00 PM.) The cost of the project is just under \$3,000,000. The town share is 17.86% after a 72.14% reimbursement from the State.

■ ***All SLOs and goals are to be inputted into My Learning Plan by Tuesday, October 15.***

FORM 1 – Student Growth and Development

Student Learning Objective #1 (22.5%)

SLO #1 is focused on the state standardized tests, school-wide standardized test, department-based standardized test, or district benchmark.

FORM 2 – Student Growth and Development

Student Learning Objective #2 (22.5%)

SLO #2 must be focused on non-standardized assessment (portfolio, performance, team assessment, or formative assessment) that measures one of the Student Outcomes of Griswold 2022.

FORM 3 – Goal Setting

1. Teacher Performance & Practice (40%)

Identify a focus area from DOMAIN 3 (INSTRUCTION) of the Danielson Frameworks that defines an area of practice on which you will focus during this academic year.

2. Parent Feedback (10%)

Teacher Goal and Strategies to Achieve Parent Feedback Goal

3. Whole School Student Learning (5%)

Teacher Goal and Strategies to Achieve Whole School Student Learning Goal (SPI Targets)

Green Items due from all teachers and certified staff

Blue Items due from observed teachers and certified staff

If you need technical assistance entering goals or technical assistance with the MLP PD Log, please visit the Superintendent's Office during the PD Day. Coffee available!

The issues in education from the public's point of view...

Each year *Phi Delta Kappan* publishes the results of a Gallup poll they sponsor. In its 45th year, the magazine describes the survey as the “longest-running survey of American attitudes toward education.” The survey has a margin of error of plus or minus 3.8%. Below are some of the highlights of that survey.

“Highlights of the 2013 PDK/Gallup Poll” by William Bushaw and Shane Lopez in *Phi Delta Kappan*, September 2013

“American’s distrust of standardized tests and their lack of confidence and understanding around new education standards is one of the most surprising developments we’ve found in years,” said William Bushaw, executive director of PDK International and co-director of the PDK/Gallup poll. “The 2013 poll shows deep confusion around the nation’s most significant education policies and poses serious communication challenges for education leaders.”

Among the most important findings are the following:

- Most Americans (62%) haven’t heard of the Common Core (CCSS), and those who say they are knowledgeable are misinformed on some key issues. Of the 38% who said they had heard of them, many thought, incorrectly, that the federal government was forcing states to adopt them and that the CCSS covered every academic area.
- Only 41% of those surveyed said they thought the CCSS would make American schools more competitive globally, a key goal of the initiative.
- There is significant push-back on standardized testing, with only 22% saying it helps make schools better. This compares to 28% in 2007.
- The poll finds the public increasingly cautious about using standardized testing for teacher evaluation. There has been a dramatic turnaround on the issue of using test scores to evaluate individual teachers: 58% now reject the idea, compared to 47% last year, and 63% oppose newspapers publishing individual teachers’ test results.
- On the other hand, a majority (60%) also believe teacher evaluations should be publicly available, along with those of doctors and police officers.
- The majority (88%) believe their children are safe in school and oppose the idea of giving firearms to teachers and principals. This is the highest percentage ever on the PDK/Gallup poll. The public seems to be shifting towards an embrace of building screening procedures rather than reliance on armed guards.
- Charter schools get wide support (68%) and have a generally positive image.
- The majority of Americans support home-schooling and show even greater support for allowing these students to attend public school part-time and participate in athletics.
- A growing majority (70%) is opposed to vouchers and spending public money on private schools.
- An overwhelming majority (94%) says band, drama, sports, and school newspapers are very important or somewhat important school activities.
- A strong majority (80%) says critical thinking skills are the highest curriculum priority, closely followed by communication skills (78%).
- Lack of financial support is seen as the biggest problem facing public schools (cited by 35%).
- A slim majority (55%) says the children of immigrants who are in the U.S. illegally should not have access to public education.
- 59 percent of the public believe increasing mental health services will do more to promote school safety than adding more security guards.
- 65 percent of respondents trust public school principals.
- As has been the case in previous polls, a strong majority (71%) gives an A or B to the school attended by their oldest child, but only 53% give a similar grade to their community’s schools – and only 18% give an A or B to the nation’s schools.

Access the results of the entire poll at www.pdkpoll.org

■ Websites to explore

The **Poetry Foundation website** is a great resource for teachers, students, and anyone interested in teaching tips, writing ideas, and poets' biographies. Visit: www.poetryfoundation.org/learning/

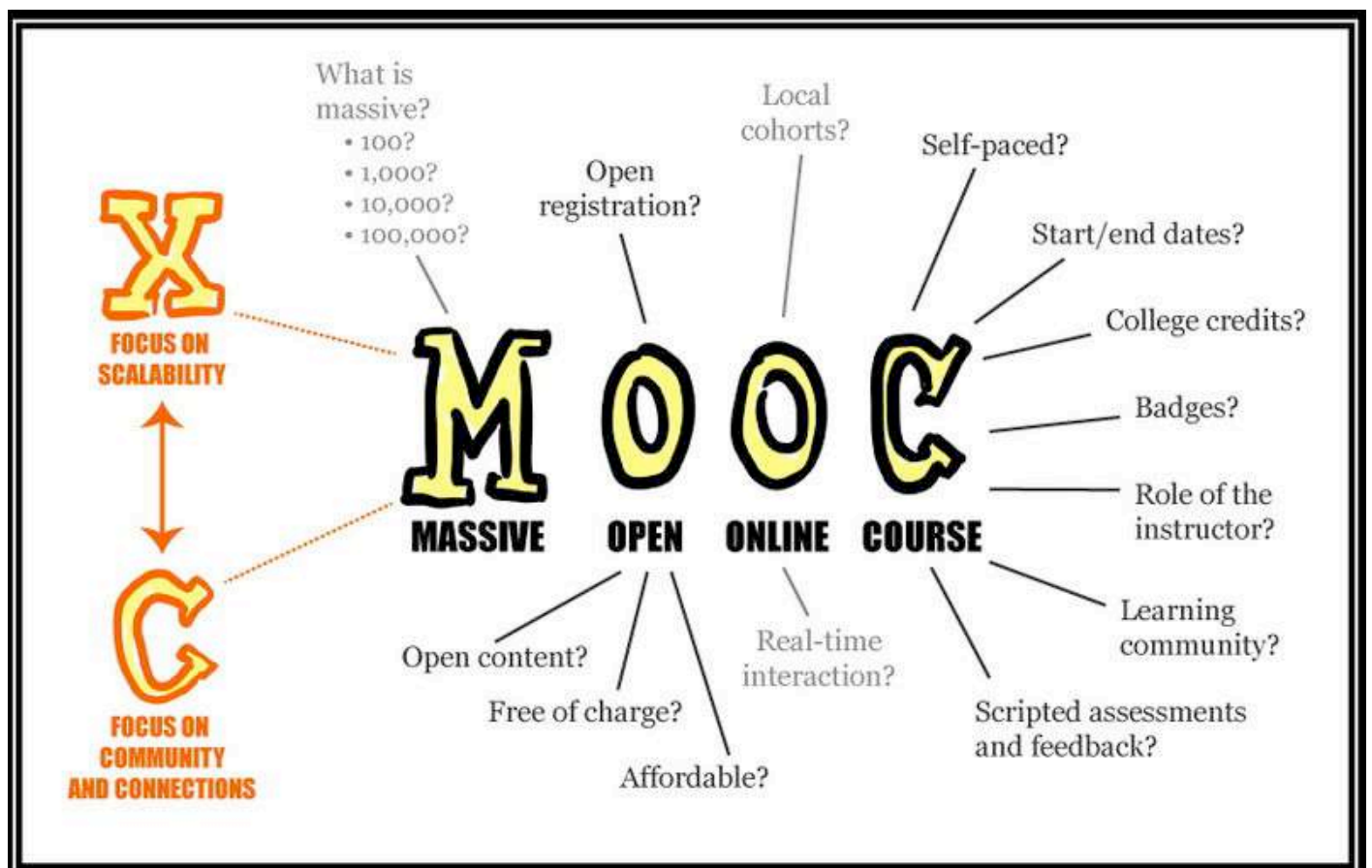
Show Me allows teachers to create lessons for students using an I Pad as an interactive whiteboard with a voice-over feature to narrate the lessons. The website has lessons as samples that can be used. Teachers can make the lessons created on this site available to anyone. Visit: www.ShowMe.com



Thoughts

Do you know what a MOOC is? You will hear this “word” more and more!

- MOOC stands for a Massive Open Online Course.
- A MOOC is an online course aimed at large-scale participation and open (free) access via the internet.
- A MOOC is similar to university courses, but do not tend to offer academic credit.
- A number of web-based platforms supported by top universities and colleges offer MOOCs in a wide range of subjects.



The MOOC is here and it may just well be the future of education. There are a number of online sites which feature open enrollment, no fees, and courses that are taught by professors of note.

Take just one minute and visit the **free courses** at:

- MIT (Open Courseware at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology), <http://ocw.mit.edu/index.htm>
- Harvard (HarvardX at edX), <https://www.edx.org/school/harvardx/allcourses>
- Coursera (the “world’s best courses” from 88 colleges worldwide), <https://www.coursera.org/>
- MOOC List (A “massive” list of open courses), <http://www.mooc-list.com/>

Colleges as places to attend may soon be a thing of the past. Imagine a time in the future when your resume is based on the number of MOOCs you have successfully completed. The first businesses to accept “MOOCs-only graduates” will shift the notion of college as a precursor to career.

A Surge in Growth for a New Kind of Online Course By ALAN FINDER in the *New York Times*

ONLINE course work has been a staple of American higher education for at least a decade. But over the last few years, a new, more ambitious variant known as a MOOC — massive open online course — has challenged traditional assumptions of what an online course can be. MOOCs have exploded in that short time, redefining who can enroll in college courses, as well as where, when and even why people take online classes.

Available globally to hundreds of thousands of people at a time, these classes depend on highly sophisticated digital technology, yet they could not be simpler to use. Signing up takes less time than creating an iTunes account. You can create a user name and password and start exploring the rapidly expanding course offerings.

The major Web sites already provide dozens of courses, as diverse as basic calculus and European intellectual history. It is both new and experimental, and as much as MOOCs have evolved since beginning in recent years, enthusiasts expect many more changes. From an early focus on technical and scientific courses, for instance, offerings now include the humanities and social sciences.

While there are some significant differences among the major MOOC Web sites, they share several main elements. Courses are available to anyone with access to the Internet. They are free, and students receive a certificate of completion at the end. With rare exceptions, you cannot earn college credit for taking one of these courses, at least for now.

“For a decade, people have been asking, ‘How does the Internet change higher education,’ ” said Edward B. Rock, a law professor at the University of Pennsylvania who is the institution’s senior adviser on open course initiatives. “This is the beginning. It opens up all sorts of possibilities.”

Navigating the world of MOOCs begins with three major Web sites.

EdX

Harvard and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology created this nonprofit joint venture in May 2012. It has already offered dozens of courses in subjects as diverse as physics, computer science, engineering, literature, ethics, law, medicine and economics.

Twenty-nine universities have signed up to participate, including the University of California, Berkeley; the University of Texas, Austin; Georgetown; Cornell; the Berklee College of Music; the University of Toronto; and the University of Kyoto.

Courses are offered for a designated period of time, with lectures and reading assignments provided in weekly segments. Videos of lectures are generally augmented with exercises, quizzes, labs and simulators. Like other platforms, edX emphasizes interactivity.

You can audit a course — meaning you don’t take exams or do writing assignments — or you can fulfill all of the requirements to earn a certificate of completion.

Each course's home page provides an estimate of how many hours a week the course will require. Workloads vary widely. A Global History of Architecture, an M.I.T. class, requires at least five hours a week. Introduction to Computer Science, Harvard's traditional introductory course, asks online students to complete eight problem sets, each of which will take 15 to 20 hours, along with two quizzes and a final project.

Coursera

Two computer science professors at Stanford began this commercial venture in April 2012. The original partners were Stanford, Princeton, the University of Pennsylvania and the University of Michigan. Seventeen months later, Coursera has partnerships with 84 universities and offers more than 400 courses.

Yale, Duke, Wisconsin and the University of Chicago are among the participants, as are the University of Edinburgh and the École Polytechnique in France.

Because courses are free, Coursera hopes to generate revenue in other ways, like linking corporations with students who have learned specific skills. Coursera does not formally offer the option of auditing a class, but people certainly can. Anyone can simply watch the videos and do some, all or none of the reading and homework; you just would not receive a certificate at the end.

Like edX, Coursera emphasizes interactivity, both online and by helping to organize in-person study groups in cities around the world. There are also online discussion groups, peer-to-peer forums and peer assessments of writing assignments in some classes.

Among the 70 or so courses that began this month are Introduction to International Criminal Law; Linear and Integer Programming; and Exploring Beethoven's Piano Sonatas. Courses run for a set length, with material provided each week. Some last four or five weeks, while many go for 12 to 15 weeks.

Udacity

This is also a commercial start-up. It was begun by several people, including another Stanford professor, in January 2012. Udacity's offerings are more limited, with a strong emphasis on science, math and computer science. There is also a sprinkling of business, psychology and design courses. About 30 courses are available.

The courses do not start or end on specific dates and they do not follow a weekly pattern of lectures and assignments. They are entirely self-paced: You start whenever you like, and you work through the material as quickly or as slowly as you please.

On the home page of an introductory course in computer science, Professor David Evans of the University of Virginia encourages students to collaborate and explains how his MOOC class is different from a traditional course.

"We intersperse our video segments with interactive questions," Dr. Evans writes. "There are many reasons for including these questions: to get you thinking, to check your understanding, for fun, etc. But really, they are there to help you learn. They are NOT there to evaluate your intelligence, so try not to let them stress you out."

There are sites that offer things similar to massive open online courses. Udemy offers a huge variety of courses, primarily in practical subjects like Excel software or using an iPhone camera. Most of these courses carry fees, and most of the teachers are not university professors. The Khan Academy Web site offers more than 4,000 short videos on a variety of academic subjects.

Al Filreis, a professor of English at the University of Pennsylvania whose MOOC on modern and contemporary American poetry attracted 21,000 participants last fall, offered some tips for choosing from the hundreds of courses available:

- Watch the professor's introductory video.
- Examine the syllabus to determine how much work will be required and the level at which the course will be taught.
- Try to determine how involved the professor will be in the course.
- Research the professor by looking at the traditional university courses he or she teaches and reading an article or essay by the professor.

■ Search the Web for course reviews. A few Yelp-like Web sites have been created to offer individuals' assessments of these courses, like [CourseTalk](#).

Much has been made about the large dropout rate in this kind of class; as many as 90 percent of those who register for a class do not complete it. John C. Mitchell, Stanford's vice provost for online learning, said surveys indicated that about 25 percent of MOOC enrollees do much of the work, without necessarily finishing the course.

Many enthusiasts insist that there is nothing wrong with trying out several courses and completing only one, or simply watching lectures until you run out of time. "Sign up for anything that appeals to you and quit when you get bored," said Cathy N. Davidson, an English professor at Duke who teaches and takes open online courses.

Michael S. Roth, the president of Wesleyan University, is teaching a course in European intellectual history on Coursera. "People have to get over the idea of signing up for a course and not finishing it," he said. "We all have to get over feeling guilty. There is no right way or wrong way to use an online class. This is a great platform for lifelong learning."

The Rise of MOOCs by John K. Waters

Colleges and universities are on the verge of a "massive" makeover thanks to the advent of MOOCs - massive open online courses. At least, that's what we keep hearing. Proponents declare MOOCs to be the future of higher education in America--perhaps not without cause. Big-name schools, including [Harvard University](#) (MA), [Stanford University](#) (CA), and [MIT](#), are investing millions in MOOC development. One of the leading MOOC providers, [Coursera](#), recently announced partnerships with 10 public universities and university systems to develop courses, even as the [Georgia Institute of Technology](#) unveiled a \$7,000 MOOC master's degree in computer science in partnership with [Udacity](#). Some states are even pushing legislation that would force public colleges and universities to accept credits earned in MOOCs.

But not everyone is embracing the advent of the large-scale online course. Critics worry that MOOCs will harm higher education because their adoption is driven primarily by financial concerns, not pedagogy. In their view, prepackaged MOOCs can't possibly deliver the same quality experience that a live instructor can provide. Furthermore, they claim, MOOCs will distance students from professors engaged in research, dilute the diverse viewpoints found in a classroom, and ultimately reduce the number of living, breathing faculty.

So which is it? Are MOOCs good for higher education or bad? Not surprisingly, the answer isn't as simple as the surrounding hyperbole would suggest. Their true impact remains to be seen, of course: In their current form, MOOCs have been around for only a few years, and MOOC fever is even younger. More important, higher education is not a monolithic entity: The US is home to more than 4,000 institutions of higher learning, ranging from Ivy League universities to community colleges, for-profits, and state schools. MOOCs are likely to impact different institutions in vastly different ways.

The Cost Equation

But much of the initial media hoopla surrounding MOOCs stemmed from the hope that they might bend the cost curve of a post-secondary education--US student debt now stands at more than \$1 trillion. While the economies of scale enabled by xMOOCs can definitely change the calculus, can blended MOOCs have the same impact?

SJSU offered its blended MOOCs to a limited enrollment in a pilot program for \$150 per three-unit course--about what the state's community colleges charge. But is this a sustainable cost structure? On-site faculty are still actively involved in the classroom work--just as they are in a traditional course--so it's unclear how this model can both lower tuition rates and keep the bean-counters happy.

The SJSU project is an experimental pilot, so it's probably too early to crunch the numbers, but Ellen Junn, provost and vice president for academic affairs at SJSU, warns against focusing on MOOCs primarily as a cost-saving measure, saying that such an approach will almost certainly impact the quality of courses.

"It looks like MOOCs could save a lot of money, but there's a tendency to overhype this," she notes. "Whenever a state as big as ours faces the kinds of budget cuts we're facing, anything that can give some relief gets a lot of attention. But I think people fail to anticipate how complex college really is. Student learning, the faculty, the

institution itself, the environment under which students flourish--it's much more complicated than people think. It's not like a factory. And that's the difficult part of higher education. It's unlike any other industry. You can't treat it in a simplistic way, like making widgets faster and cheaper."

Unfortunately, given the money crunch in education today, many schools may not have an alternative. The three courses in the SJSU pilot program, cocreated by university instructors and Udacity, required 300-400 hours of work. It's a considerable investment that many colleges will be unable to make. Among educators there's increasing concern that cash-strapped schools will simply import prepackaged courses from other sources, resulting in a growing level of academic homogeneity.

Sign up for a MOOC and improve your knowledge!

There is potential at the public school level for MOOCs of a different variety...it's only a matter of time!

Paul K. Smith



Believe those who are seeking the truth; doubt those who find it.

~ André Gide