

January 24, 2009 - For Math Teachers: Pre-Calculus Updated

Pre-Calculus has been updated. An entire new unit, *Conic Sections*, has been added. Topics include circles, ellipses, hyperbolas and parabolas, as well as systems of equations (linear and second degree, or both second degree) with algebraic solutions. Other additions include advanced questions on trigonometric equations, more questions on inverses of functions, and a new section in the *Matrices* unit on using matrices to represent transformations in the coordinate plane. New reference information includes general information on conic sections and matrix transformations.

January 10, 2009 - For English Teachers: Romeo and Juliet

A new unit has been added to the English course, called "**Literature: Romeo and Juliet.**" This is the seventh set in a series of literature short answer questions. The unit contains five sections, corresponding to the five acts of the play. Questions quote extensively from the lines of this famous Shakespearean drama and focus on plot points, literary and poetic elements, and themes.

To add these questions into an assignment, go to the Add Question page, select the unit named "Literature: Romeo and Juliet", choose a section for the desired act, and then use the **Browse and Select** option to select the questions that you would like to include in your assignment. The order of the literature questions for a particular act parallels the sequence of events in the play. Thus, the use of randomization is not recommended in assignments with literature questions.

January 10, 2009 - For Students: Displaying Incorrect Answers

Because it can be beneficial for students to see their incorrect answers, incorrect first try and retry answers are displayed when the student views a previously answered Short Answer question.

January 10, 2009 - For Administrators: Add Student to a Class

Administrators can add a student to a teacher's class or remove a student from a class.

To add a student to a class:

1. From the *Admin Home* page, select Accounts.
2. Click the **Details** icon for the student to add to a class.
3. On the *Classes* tab, under the table of classes, click the Add to a Class link.
4. Choose a class from the drop-down list of classes that is displayed in a pop-up window, then click **OK**.

To remove a student from a class, click the appropriate icon from the **Remove** column.

January 2, 2009 - For Students and Teachers: Spanish Editions of Selected Questions

Spanish editions of several hundred questions in key high school subject areas are available for students who may be preparing to take the final exam in their native language. Only the actual questions and accompanying graphics are translated into Spanish; hints, reasons and vocabulary are not translated. The courses include Earth Science, Living Environment, Math A, Integrated Algebra, Global History & Geography, and US History & Government.

A simple interface allows teachers to create assignments that include questions with Spanish editions. When adding or importing questions into an assignment, a blue link [SP](#) next to a question on the browsing page indicates that a Spanish version of the question is available; click the link to display the translated question. Additionally, on the question selection criteria (*Add Questions*) page, teachers can check the option to locate *Questions with Spanish translations*. This option is available when using *Browse & Select Individually* as well as *Add Randomly Selected Questions*.

The actual display of questions in Spanish or English is under the control of the student when working on assignments or sessions that they create themselves. If the question has a Spanish edition, a small drop-down menu indicating English or Spanish is displayed in the lower right corner of the Student *Question* page. The student can go back and forth between the English and Spanish versions of the question. Castle Learning Online "remembers" the last menu setting so that students may continue working in either language.

Tip: In most of the courses listed above, the more recently added questions are the ones available in Spanish editions. Thus, importing from the more recent Public Assignments will result in a greater variety of questions with Spanish translations.

December 21, 2008 - For Students: Viewing Scores That Count Retries

Students can view alternate scores for Short Answer self-generated and assigned sessions that give credit for answering questions correctly on a retrying.

The student *Assignments* page and the *Sessions That You Create Yourself* page each have a **Score w/Retry** column to the right of the **Score** column. Clicking the [View](#) link displays a pop-up window showing three versions of the score for the session:

1. Scoring with retries counted as no credit
2. Scoring with retries counted as half credit
3. Scoring with retries counted as full credit

December 21, 2008 - For Teachers and Administrators: Date Last Assigned for Assignments

The teacher's *Assignment* pages now have a column titled **Date Last Assigned**. This shows the most recent date in which the assignment was assigned to one or more students.

The administrator's *Assignment Summary Details* page also displays the **Date Last Assigned**. In addition, a **Reports** column has been added, allowing the admin to display a Cumulative Report for the assignment for all students in the selected teacher's classes.

Note that the dates are only for currently assigned assignments. If the assignment was last used in a previous school year or the assignment was "unassigned" from all students, then no date is displayed.

December 13, 2008 - For Teachers: Flash Card Public Assignments Courses

Flash Card assignments can be published as Public Assignments, making them available for importing into assignments by other teachers in the school district.

December 6, 2008 - For Teachers: Constructed Response Activities For All Courses

In order to allow teachers to assign Constructed Response assignments using content from other courses, the Constructed Response activity is now available in all courses.

For example, this allows a middle school English teacher to create a Constructed Response assignment using constructed response questions from the Elementary English course and have the assignment categorized as an Intermediate English assignment.

December 6, 2008 - For Administrators: District Summary Reports

The District Summary Report, found on the Administrator's Reports page, gives the administrator an overview of course usage for the entire district.

This report, available only for District Administrators, shows the number of questions answered per course in each school in the district. The data can optionally be exported to a spreadsheet program.

November 11, 2008 - For English Teachers: To Kill A Mockingbird

A new unit has been added to the English course, called "Literature: To Kill a Mockingbird". This is the sixth set in a series of literature short-answer questions. The sections in this unit correspond to the chapters dealing with *Courage* (1-11), *The Trial* (12-20), and *The Verdict* (21-31).

To add these questions into an assignment, go to the *Add Question* page, select the unit named "Literature: To Kill a Mockingbird", select a section for the desired chapter range, then use the Browse and Select option to select the questions that you would like to include in your assignment. The order of the literature questions for a particular chapter

range parallels the sequence of events in the novel. Thus, the use of randomization is not recommended in assignments with literature questions.

September 14, 2008 - For Teachers: Assignment Note

Teachers can add an *Assignment Note* to any assignment. The note is any message up to 2000 characters that the teacher would like the students to be able to view, such as special instructions, due dates, related material, etc.

All students who are assigned the assignment can view the note. Students view the notes from their various Assignments pages by clicking an icon in a column called **Teacher Note**.



The note is also automatically displayed when the student selects an assignment that has not been previously selected. After reading the note, the student can click a "Continue" button to go to the assignment, or "Cancel" to go back to the list of assignments. The note will not display automatically if the assignment has already been started, but the student can still click the note icon to view the note.

To create a note, teachers use the *Create Assignment Note* link in the options portion of the various Edit Assignment pages. If the note already exists, the link is called *Edit Assignment Note*.

To remove a note, edit it and clear its contents.

September 6, 2008 - For Teachers and Administrators: Archive Cumulative Reports

For schools that included student identification numbers with the student account data for this year and last year, Archive Cumulative Reports for these students are now available to administrators and teachers.

- **Teachers:** On the Short Answer tab of the *Class Details* page, the **Cumulative Reports** column shows a second icon  if archive data is available for the student.
- **Administrators:** On the Accounts page, clicking a Details icon  for a student displays the *Student Details* page. Select the Short Answer tab from the *Student Details* page. If there is archive data for the student, an Archive Cumulative Reports link is available, located below the table of Short Answer Sessions.

The Archive Cumulative Report allows you to select the school year for the report.

August 30, 2008 - For English Teachers: The Catcher in the Rye

A new unit has been added to the English course, called "**Literature: The Catcher in the Rye**". This is another in a series of literature short answer questions that will be

added on a continuing basis. Each section in this unit contains questions covering two chapters of this novel.

To add these questions into an assignment, go to the *Add Question* page, select the unit named "Literature: The Catcher in the Rye", select a section for the desired chapter range, then use the **Browse and Select** option to select the questions that you would like to include in your assignment. The order of the literature questions for a particular chapter range parallels the sequence of events in the novel. Thus, the use of randomization is not recommended in assignments with literature questions.

August 21, 2008 - For Math Teachers: Geometry Reorganization

Castle Learning Online announces a major reorganization and update of *Geometry*. Targeted towards high school students, *Geometry* includes a review of basic geometric terms often introduced in middle schools and builds up to a more comprehensive treatment of plane figures, including area and perimeter problems, loci, coordinate geometry, transformations and symmetry; and three-dimensional figures, including surface area and volume. A major addition to the course includes step-by-step formal and informal proof-building questions concentrating on the five congruence techniques, similar triangles and proportions, indirect proof techniques, circle proofs, and coordinate geometry proofs.

August 2, 2008 - For English Teachers: English Updates

Castle Learning Online English, targeted to high school students, now includes a new unit entitled *Introduction to Literature* with four sections:

- *Literary Forms and Techniques* reviews the structure of literary works as well as common writing techniques such as flashback, foreshadowing, irony.
- *Figurative Language* includes questions on imagery and figures of speech such as metaphor, simile, personification, oxymoron and hyperbole, as well as alliteration and onomatopoeia and other literary devices.
- *Poetry* covers terms specific to this genre.
- *Analyzing Critical Lens Quotations* is a special section of in-depth multiple-choice questions that assist students in formulating appropriate interpretations of literary quotations, often the crucial first step in critical essay-writing tasks involving literature.
- In addition, the Vocabulary Review has been expanded to include a greater selection of literary terms for use in Flash Card Sets.

August 2, 2008 - For English Teachers: Elementary English Updates

Castle Learning Online announces a major update to its course in Elementary English course. Elementary English is targeted towards grades 3, 4 and 5. Highlights of the revision include:

- The addition of 45 *new Critical Reading Sets* (passages with reading comprehension questions) more than doubles the number of available reading sets at each level and provides greater variety in topics.
- Additional questions in the *Critical Reading Skills* unit (short reading passages followed by a single multiple-choice question) gives greater coverage of the original six reading skills at all three grade levels.
- A 7th reading skill, *Literary Forms and Devices*, has been added, with questions in the *Critical Reading Skills* unit appropriate to all three grade levels.
- The addition of a new unit, *Listening Skills*, gives students practice in answering a multiple-choice question after listening to a short passage. Students may replay the passage as many times as needed. Note: This feature requires audio software capable of playing MP3 files as well as speakers or headphone. Check your browser software for compatibility. In a computer laboratory setting, the use of headphones is advisable.
- Expansion of the *Vocabulary* unit includes a new section on *Antonyms*, plus additional questions on *Synonyms* at all levels.
- Expansion of the *Spelling* unit includes a new section on *Contractions* at all levels.
- The *Vocabulary Review* now includes many literary terms that can be added to *Flash Card* sets.
- A new constructed-response activity in *Grammar Editing* allows students to practice their proofreading and editing skills. Students can edit and save the passage right on the computer. When they are finished, they see a model response along with a detailed explanation of the errors and corrections. Teachers can review student responses, make general comments, and assign a point score.

July 19, 2008 - For Teachers and Administrators: Default Teacher Password

In order to increase the security on teacher accounts, teachers who sign into an account which does not have a password need to use the school's **Default Teacher Password**. After signing in, the teacher will be prompted to select a new password. used for subsequent access.

Administrators can modify the **Default Teacher Password** from the Administrator's *Preferences* page. Administrators need to inform teachers who have accounts without passwords what their school's Default Teacher Password is set to. It is recommended that the Default Teacher Password be changed periodically.

July 19, 2008 - For Teachers: Larger Assignments

The number of questions that can be included in a Short Answer assignment has been increased to 100 questions.

July 17, 2008 - For Spanish and French Teachers: Spanish and French Nouns

In all Vocabulary related activities in Spanish and French, nouns are now displayed with the correct article and gender designation, but alphabetized by the noun itself.

July 17, 2008 - For English Teachers: The Crucible

A new unit has been added to the English course, called "**Literature: The Crucible**". This is another in a series of literature short answer questions that will be added on a continuing basis. Each section in this unit contains questions covering an Act in "The Crucible", including questions for an extended two act version of the play.

To add these questions into an assignment, go to the *Add Question* page, select the unit named "Literature: The Crucible", select a section for the desired act, then use the **Browse and Select** option to select the questions that you would like to include in your assignment. The order of the literature questions for a particular act parallels the sequence of events in the act. Thus, the use of randomization is not recommended in assignments with literature questions.

July 17, 2008 - For French and Spanish Teachers: Spanish and French Nouns

In all Vocabulary related activities in Spanish and French, nouns are now displayed with the correct article and gender designation, but alphabetized by the noun itself.