Checking Homework: Track Assignments with a Single Sign-On

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PARENT: I'm looking at this app, and it looks like your grades are low. You're missing a lot of assignments.
CHILD: No, that's not right. I turned everything in.
PARENT: But it says you're missing twelve assignments and you have zeros on all of them.
CHILD: Ugh. My teachers are the worst. I did those and I turned them in.
PARENT: Then why does it say missing? Show me.

Sound familiar? It's a battle we've waged in our house for years. My oldest, now in college, was diagnosed with ADHD when she was in elementary school. The "checking in on homework" conversations we had every semester were painful for us both. But they aren't conversations unique to our house. We've all had them. Way too often.

The logical place for a frustrated parent to check homework would be a homework portal or a parent app. By and large, schools rely on learning management systems (LMS) for homework assignments. They are about as close as most students get to anything resembling a homework portal—with one major drawback. They aren't homework portals. For students, they are communication hubs where they find announcements from their teachers assigning their homework. Sometimes there are links to assignments. Sometimes not. But it is always a process to find that announcement and then the assignment itself. It took my daughter two separate logins and nine clicks to find just one assignment.

To make things more complicated, LearnPlatform, an education technology research organization, found in their fall 2022 report that, on average, students use 143 digital tools over the course of one school year. You read that right. 143. Can you imagine the number of logins and clicks it takes to find all their assignments every day? Carl Sjogreen, the co-founder of the educational technology app SeeSaw, estimated that students spend twenty percent of their time just logging in to their assignments.

Twenty percent! Can you imagine being that inefficient at your job? It's an executive functioning nightmare for any student. But for kids who have ADHD? It's debilitating.

Some LMS platforms attempt a homework list. But they are inconsistent, extremely difficult to use, and if teachers don't fill in a field as simple as a due date, it won't appear on the homework list. If teachers prefer to use announcements to assign homework, it's a pretty clear indication the homework lists aren't working.

Parent apps are equally challenging. My high schooler's Spanish assignment is next to my fifth grader's science quiz, which is next to three of my other high schooler's assignments. It's all enough to make you lose your mind.

But, *what if* there were a tool for students that aggregated all their upcoming, past due, and recently submitted homework assignments into one centralized dashboard with one-click access to everything? *What if* this tool eliminated the need to ever again have the "missing homework assignments" conversation by showing a grade of pending until the teacher submits an official grade? And *what if* your view as a parent was that of the exact same dashboard your student sees?

Enter myOwl

My team and I have created myOwl, an edtech solution to address exactly the frustrations discussed above. myOwl is a tool that integrates smartly with apps most schools use to create a simplified and focused experience. Thus, students sign in to one dashboard to see all their homework assignments in one place.

myOwl also addresses the growing problem of student engagement. With all the devices and social media distractions out there, it is not surprising that less than half of all fifth- to twelfth-grade students feel engaged and motivated in their education, according to "25 Things to Know About Student Engagement in 2022" on eSparklearning.com. The myOwl team challenged our technology to motivate students to engage more through incentives: they earn points for turning in homework assignments.

Students can redeem their earned points for things they can use to customize their student dashboards: avatars, accessories for their avatars, badges, stickers, and more. Ultimately, we hope to build an incentive-based program where students can redeem their points for $5 gift cards to their favorite stores and restaurants. We also plan to expand myOwl's functionality by leveraging the power of AI to provide students with additional assistance.

I can only imagine how beneficial it would have been for my daughter with ADHD to have a tool that would help her enjoy her education experience, help her focus and engage with her learning, and even recommend an online tutoring company for her upcoming math tests when needed.

Learn more about myOwl and our mission to help empower students to go from the pain of homework toward the joy of learning at www.getmyowl.com.

About the Author:

Brent Newton founded myOwl with his middle school daughter, because together with their team of parents, students, and teachers, they understand homework frustrations all too well. They live it every day. myOwl is sold directly to schools and school districts to ensure as many students as possible have access to this tool.

A copy of this article can be found on the Attention Magazine website at
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