# Edsby® Tools You Can Use

I'll admit that I was not happy when we switched to Edsby a few years ago. And frankly, the initial rollout was not good – too many glitches and downed servers, for example. It has gotten a lot better as the company responded to complaints and suggestions from users. It still lacks a robust reporting function for most users who are not accustomed to using Microsoft Excel; more on using Excel to create reports in another Blog.

So I just want to tell you about four features or tools you can use to lighten your workload and keep students and parents better informed. I admit here that it will take more time to really take advantage of these features in the first place, but in the long run, they will save you time and work.

## ✓ Assessments



My goal is to load everything I can on to Edsby. What do I mean? When I create assessments, I try to load any worksheets, articles or other materials that students might need under **Files for Students**. I also try to include the pages in the textbook where the answers will be found as well as any media links that I will be using as part of the lesson under **Instructions for Students**. In this example, I included an online game about the Bill of Rights from Annenberg Classroom. Students will be able to download the documents and link to any media from the Planner by going to the <u>date the assessment is due</u>. This is a skill you might want to teach your students in the first few days of school; that way they can theoretically do assignments if they are out of school for any reason.

## ✓ Details Mode

Next, you may want to add comments to a grade you have recorded in Edsby that the student and parents can see. From the Gradebook, click on the <u>name</u> of the assessment which opens Details Mode. A warning here, If you click on the date instead of the name, you'll get the assessment screen. Here's what the Detail Mode looks like:



You can record a grade as well as inform parents and students regarding special issues or concerns. I try to include comments regarding assignments, such as why I might have dropped a grade from the student's average. In this example, I was especially pleased that this student, who had been absent, viewed the documentary from the IZZIT website, downloaded the worksheet and turned in the assignment. So I included a comment to let him and his parents know how much I appreciated his extra effort. I can also click on Discussion and a box appears to show me any changes I have made to the grade, the status or comments field. Make sure to click on Shared so that the student can see the Comment in My Work.

## ✓ Observations

**Create Private Observation**

I am concerned that her unexcused absences are impacting her ability to pass this course. Note that her grade for the third nine weeks was a D.
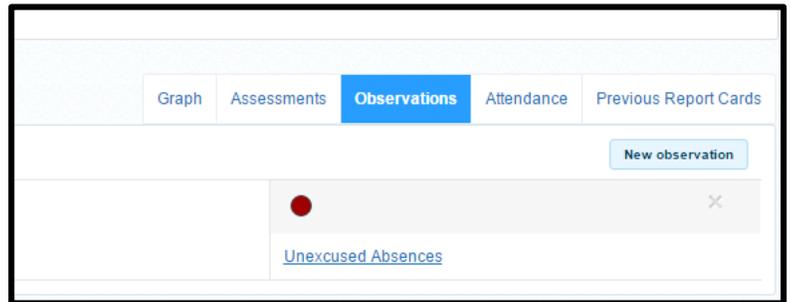
📎 Add Resources

TAGS

Unexcused Absences ✕
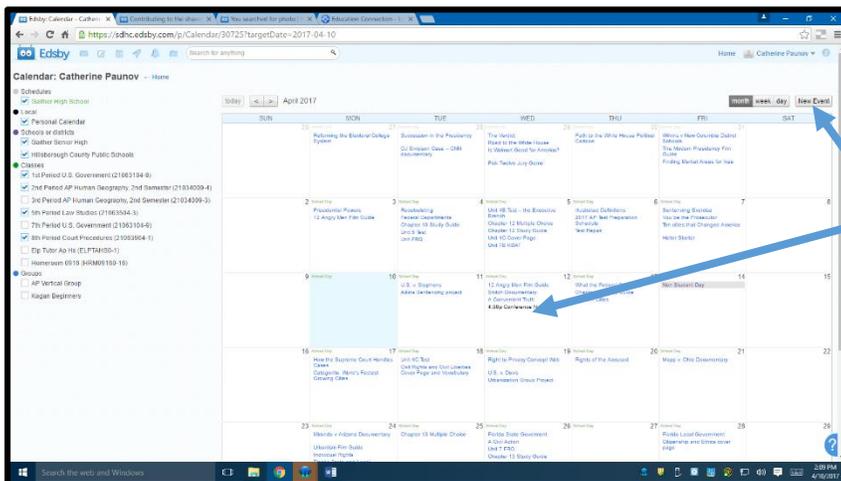
PERFORMANCE

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Cancel    Save

There are two types of Observations that are available to teachers in Edsby. The first is a private observation. These are notes that only you, as a teacher, can see, but are incredibly useful at Conference Night when talking to parents. In this example, I am concerned about one of my students and the impact on her frequent absences, so I created a private observation for my own use.  To view your observations, click on the student's name in Gradebook and select Perspective. Once you get to the Perspective screen, click on Observations on the right side of the page.  All of your observations appear when you click on the folder. Note how many other pieces of information are available here, including prior report cards. Under Assessments, you will see a list of incomplete work, upcoming work and finally, graded assignments. One suggestion I have for future Edsby updates, that it would include current attendance, too.

The second type of Observation is one that is shared with the students' other teachers. Access this type through Panorama. You can see Observations from other teachers as well as add your own. I really love this screen since it allows me to see a student's current grades in all of his or her classes and the last time either the student or a parent had checked Edsby. The former is especially useful when the student says he or she is only doing poorly in my class!

| Graph | Assessments | **Observations** | Attendance | Previous Report Cards |

New observation

🔴

Unexcused Absences

## ✓ Calendar

For those of us who teach in Middle and High School, keeping track of all the assessments going on each day can be challenging. However, the home screen allows you to see today's assignments, as well as those for tomorrow and the remainder of the week, as long as you have entered current and future assignments into Edsby. If you want to see them all, go to the Calendar function from the home page. Look for the calendar icon near the top of the screen on the right side, above the current items. The calendar, showing all assessments you have entered in the Gradebook, appears.

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Because I teach multiple sections of the same class, I have toggled the duplicates off, so I am not seeing the same assignments twice. I added the date for our Conference Night, using the Add Event button and it appears in black as part of my personal calendar.

Additionally, I can easily create custom monthly calendars for my students by selecting only a single class.

## ✓ Bonus Edsby Trick

I do want to share one trick that many teachers don't know about. If you want to record the same grade on an assignment for each student, type in the grade you want on the first line in either the Regular or Detail Modes of the Gradebook. Click on the first box in which you have entered the grade. Next, move your cursor to the small blue box on the bottom right hand corner. You'll see a crosshair. Pull it down over the lines to which you want to add that grade. When you lift your finger off the mouse, it will fill in the grade on every line you have selected – a real timesaver.

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