CYPHER for academia
Guide for teaching assistants

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Introduction

CYPHER Learning is leading the necessary disruption of learning platforms to unleash human potential with modern learning.

CYPHER exists to ignite lifelong passions through personalized, engaging, and limitless learning experiences for all. We give teachers and professors more time to teach, build human connection into everything we do, and deliver tailored learning experiences that are meaningful and measurable.

Just the way modern learners expect.

The CYPHER platform is easy-to-use, beautifully designed, and infused with AI-powered technology. Every aspect beams thoughtful innovation and engineering that puts people first. Millions of users experience their "just in time, just for me, just the way I want it" approach in 50+ languages with the CYPHER award-winning platform.

We want you to get the best results when using our site, especially when you are just starting out. That is why we created seven getting started guides for the main types of CYPHER users:

Getting started guide for Teachers (this guide) explains topics such as: creating a class, using competencies and grading assignments.

Getting started guide for Administrators explains topics such as: navigating in CYPHER, configuring features, customizing the platform and managing users.

Getting started guide for Students explains topics such as: enrolling in classes, submitting assignments and communicating with teachers.

Getting started guide for Parents explains topics such as: accessing the parent account, accessing children's information, and how to navigate the platform.

Getting started guide for Teaching Assistants explains topics such as: managing classes, grading assignments and viewing attendance.

Getting started guide for Monitors explains topics such as: creating your monitor account, enrolling into classes and creating groups.

Getting started guide for Mentors explains topics such as: creating your mentor account, enrolling into classes, creating groups, and how to navigate the platform.

This guide covers the most common steps teaching assistants go through when they start using CYPHER. Please consult the table of contents if you want to find a specific topic. If you have any additional questions or want to explore more of the platform's features, please browse the Help Center or visit our support forum.

Navigating the platform

The Home dashboard is the first page you see when you log in to your account. Here you can find information about the classes you are assisting and an overview of the catalog, groups, news, and important site information. On their dashboards, teaching assistants can also see their calendar, to-do list, announcements, and more.
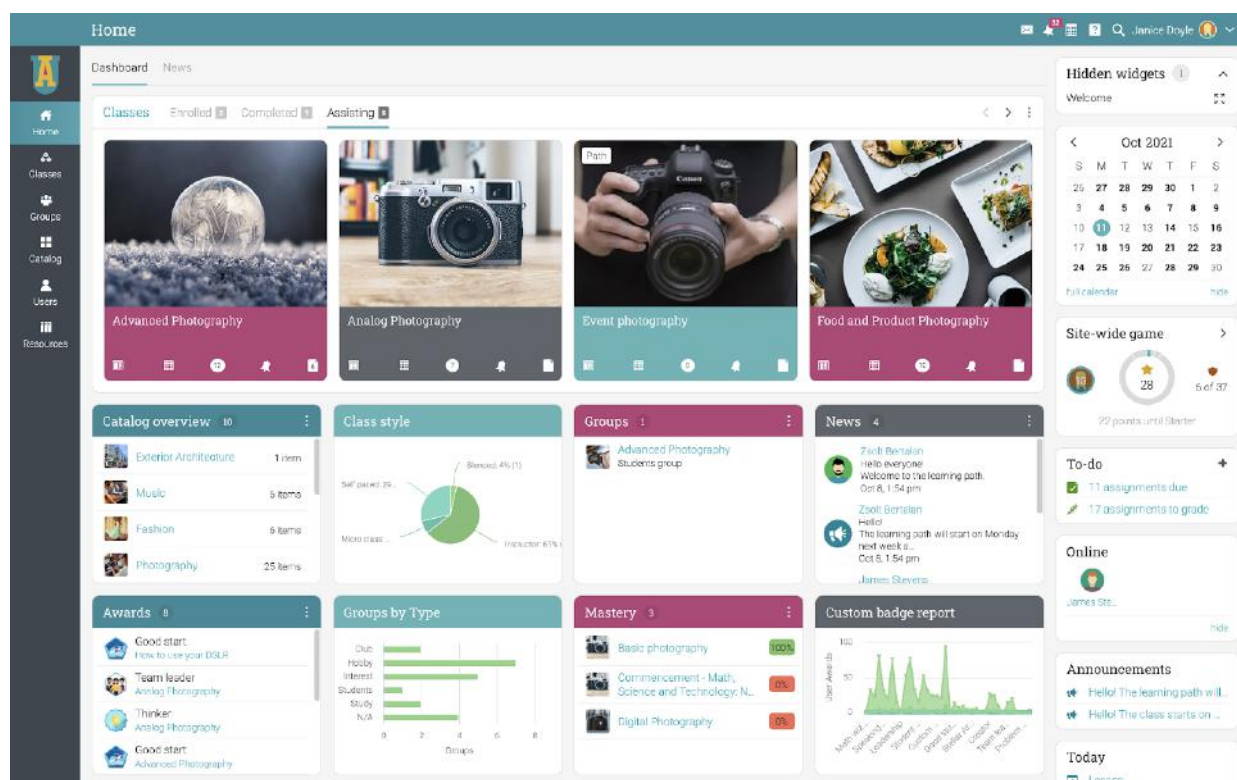
Icons and navigation

You will see various icons in the platform that are used for adding, editing, deleting, and other actions. Here is an overview of the most important icons:

Icon	Description
✛	Add content such as courses, rules, or portal pages.
▬	Remove items from your platform.
✎	Edit a page or an item.
⚙	Configure different areas of the platform.
🗑	Delete items.
✉	Access your messages through the message's icon in the top right bar.
🔔	Notifications allow you to keep up with different changes in the system.
🗑	The trash icon opens a popup with all your deleted content.
🛒	Your shopping cart contains your ordered items.
?	This icon provides access to the CYPHER Help Center.
🔍	Use the search icon to find specific content on your site.

Left bar

The left bar displays tabs that allow you to quickly navigate to the main areas of the site, such as Home, Classes, Groups, Catalog, Users, and Resources.
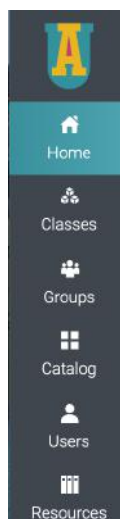
The left bar allows you access to these tabs no matter where you are in the site. If you hover over a tab, a pop-up window will appear with the most important options for that area.
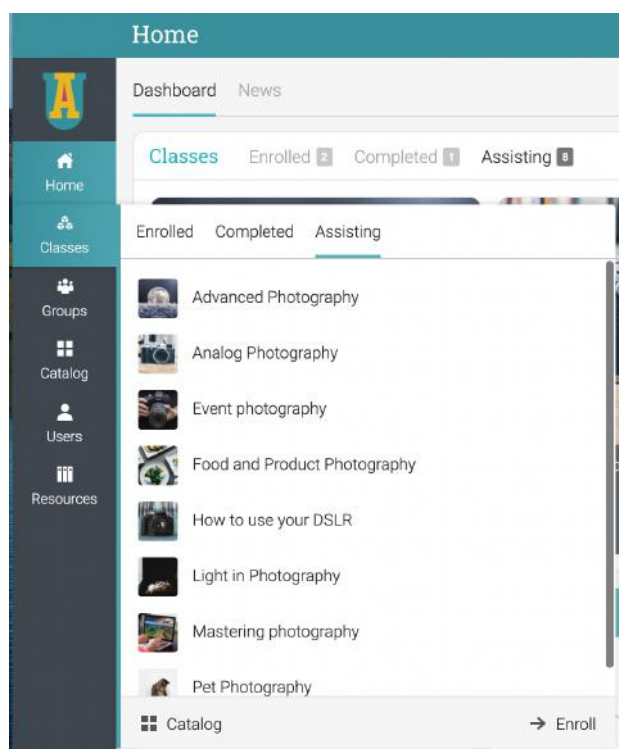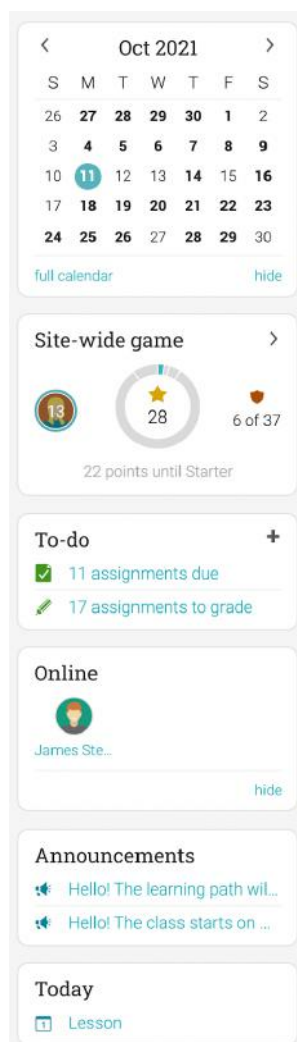
Top right bar

The top right bar displays icons which you can click to access your messages, notifications, calendar, help center, search and profile.

Right bar

In the right bar you can find your to-do list, announcements, upcoming events and a list of any minimized windows. To see more details, just click on an item.

News feed

The Home page news feed aggregates news items from your classes, groups, friends, school, and your site administrator. By default, a news feed only shows the latest news and you can scroll down the page for more items.
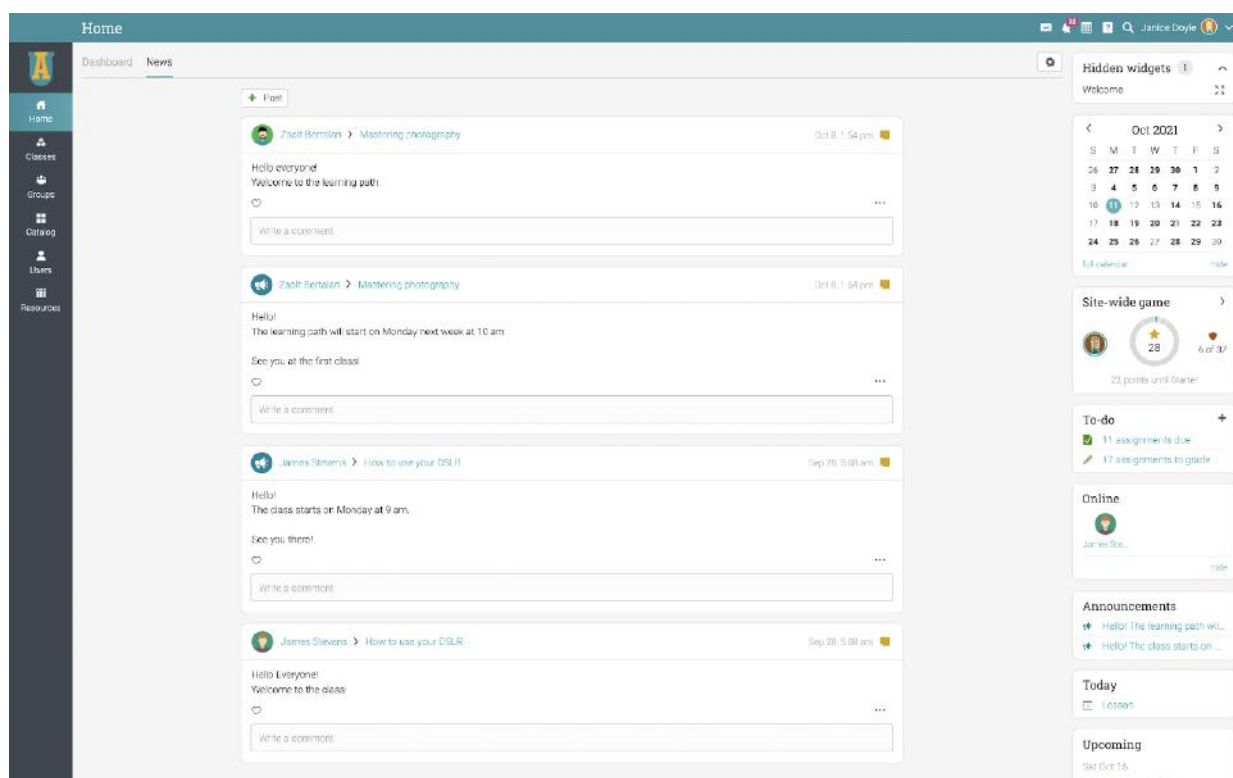
Help Center

We provide extensive support at every step of our collaboration. To access the Help Center, click the icon at the top right bar.

A pop-up box will open with different options. Use the searchable online help to browse different help topics. If you are on a certain page and need guidance, a help for the current page option will also appear. Here you can also find access to our Getting started guides and Student help desk.
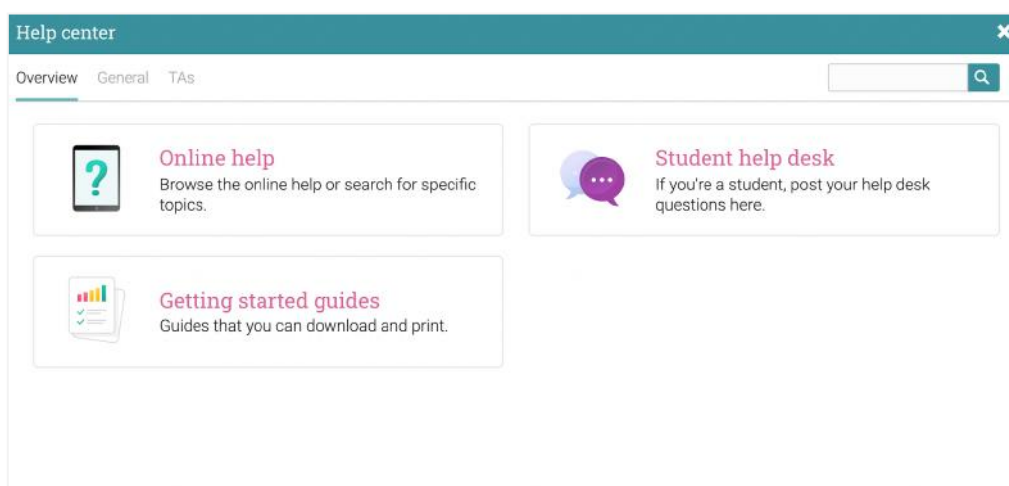
You can find the topics that are most relevant to you in the searchable online help. Most of them have detailed instructions with screenshots. The Help Center is a pop-up so you can browse through the topics without leaving your current page.
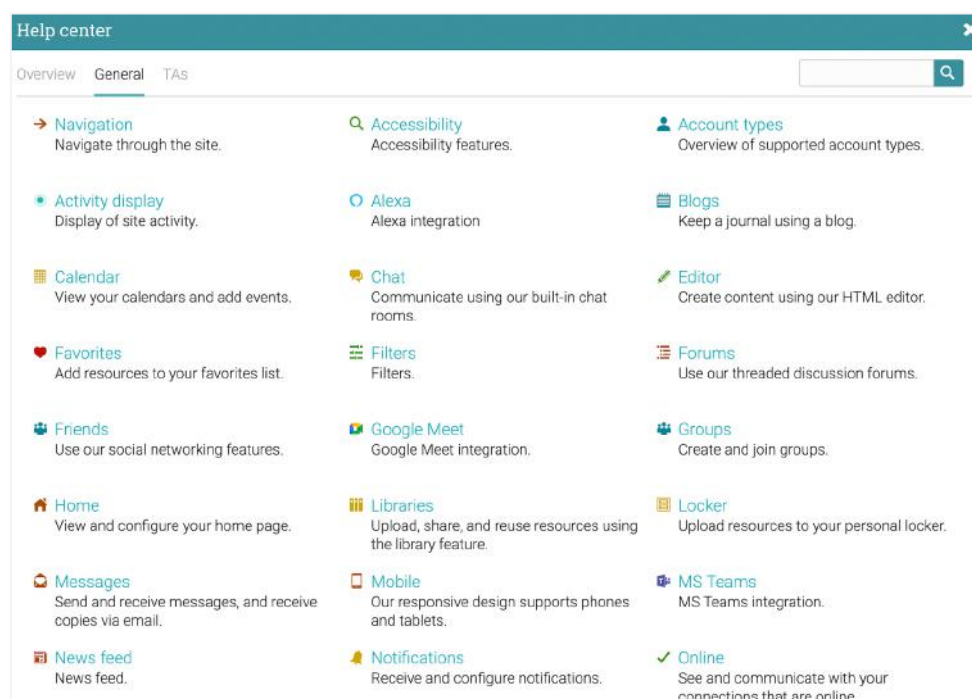
Profile

Your profile page shows your basic information, account details, photos, and more. The information that is visible depends on your account type and the portal's security settings.

To start setting up your profile, go to the top right bar and click on the profile button. Then, click on the Edit button.
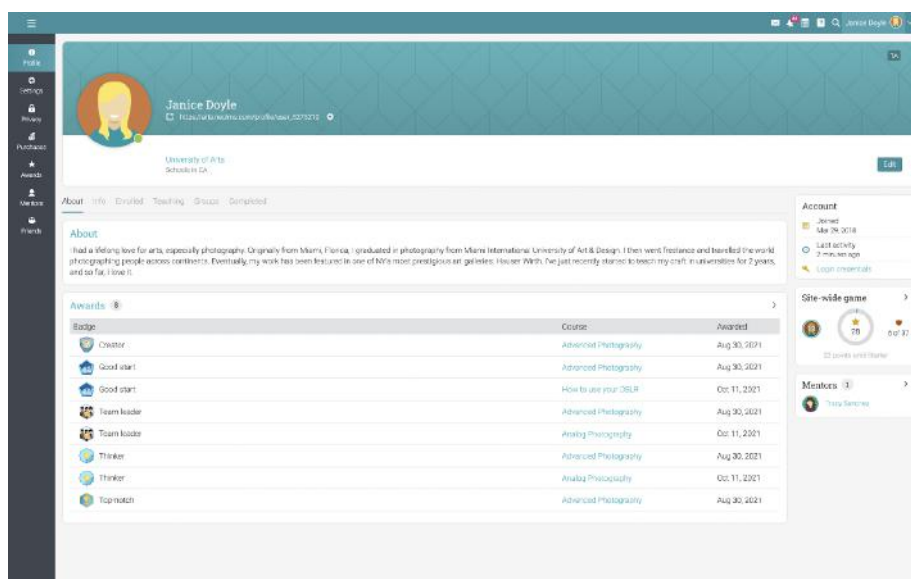
Go to the Settings tab in the left bar to choose different options related to your profile, such displaying your online status for students or allowing users to request to chat with you.
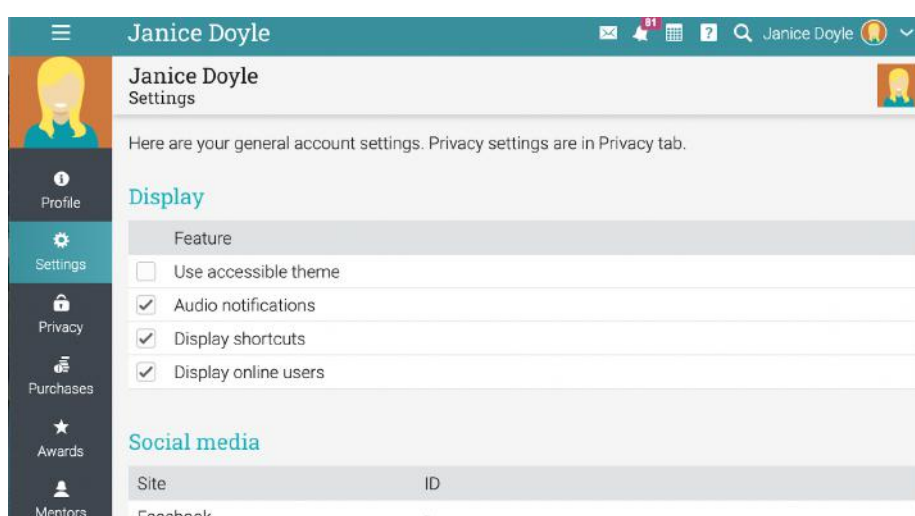
Example of a class

A teaching assistant can't add classes, but can manage them. We will show you how to navigate in a class, explore the main tabs, view lessons and assignments, and more.

The default landing page of a class is its Lessons area. Here, you can see many aspects of your class, including the lessons, a left bar with tabs that give you direct access to its most important areas. The right side provides access to the activity display, to-do list, announcements and even games leaderboards, if gamification is enabled.
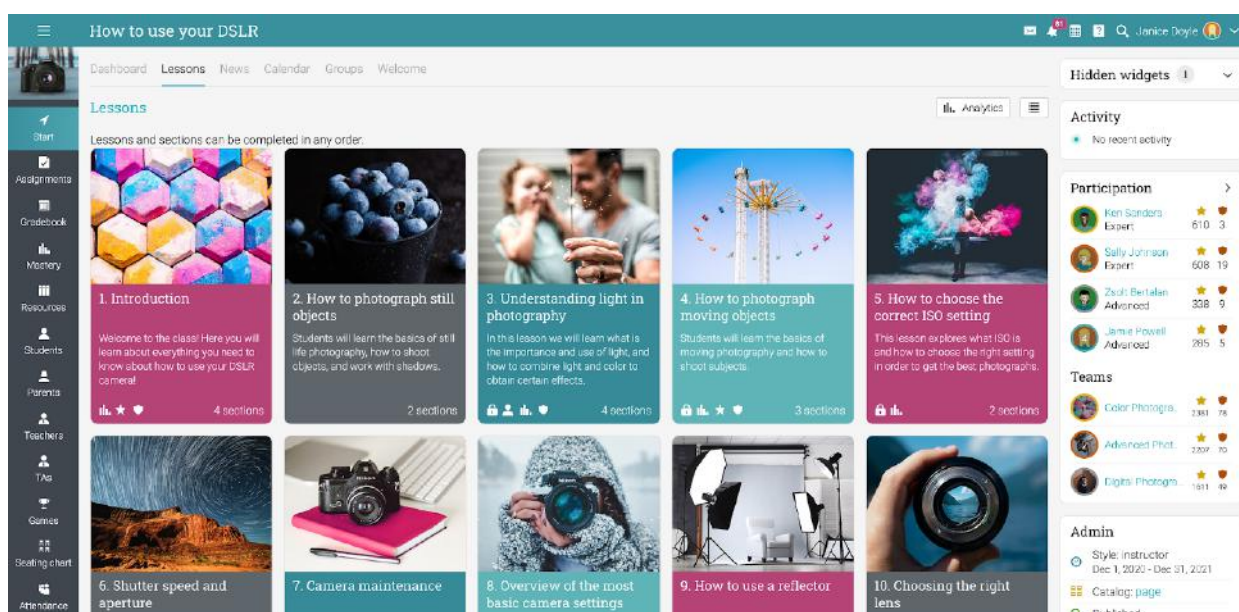
Next, we will go over each section.

Main left navigation

When you are in a class, the main left bar is minimized. You can navigate in any area of the site by simply hovering over the icon from the top left.
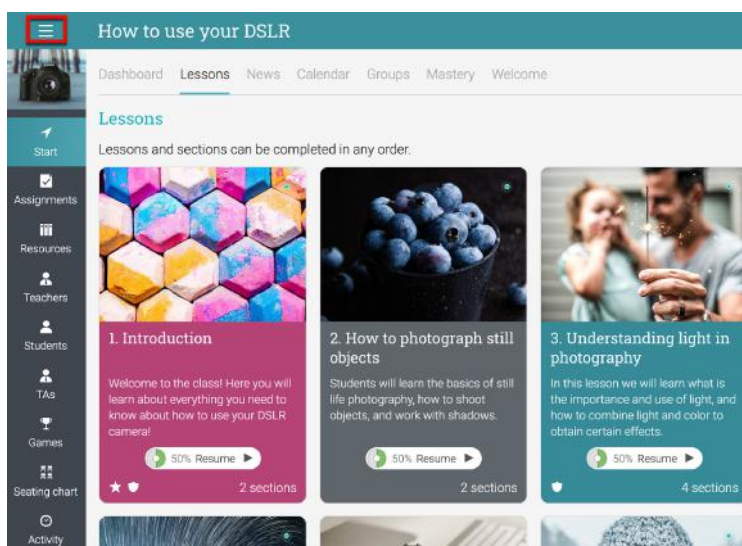
Left bar

The class left bar allows you to navigate in different areas of a class such as: start, assignments, calendar, the gradebook, and more.

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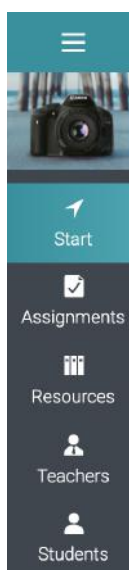
Here is more information about the left bar tabs:

- **Start** - from here, you can access the Dashboard, Lessons, News, Calendar, and more;
- **Assignments** - shows the class assignments;
- **Gradebook** - displays all the grades;
- **Media** - shows Kaltura resources;
- **Mastery** - track class competencies;
- **Resources** - the area where you can store resources that are independent of any lesson;
- **Students** - lists all the students that are in the class;
- **Teachers** - lists all the teachers that are in the class;
- **Teaching** assistants - lists all the teaching assistants that are in the class;
- **Parents** - lists all the parents that can see the class;
- **Games** - if the class has a game this is the area where you can see an overview;
- **Automation** - see a list of rules based on automation that teachers have set for your class;
- **Attendance** - track student attendance;
- **Seating chart** - allows teachers to organize how students are seated in class;
- **Forums** - forums for discussions between class members;
- **Chat** - users can exchange text messages in real time;
- **Wiki** - a collection of pages that more than one person can edit;
- **Blogs** - students and teachers can share their online journals;
- **Purchases**- if you have e-commerce enabled, this tab offers a list of all the purchases of a class;
- **Syllabus** - the syllabus area allows you to create an overview page of the class;
- **Reviews** - allows you to see students' ratings and reviews of classes they are enrolled in.

News feed

To access the class news feed, go to Start then click the News tab. The news feed shows class announcements, posts from teachers and students, new assignments, lessons, events, and more.
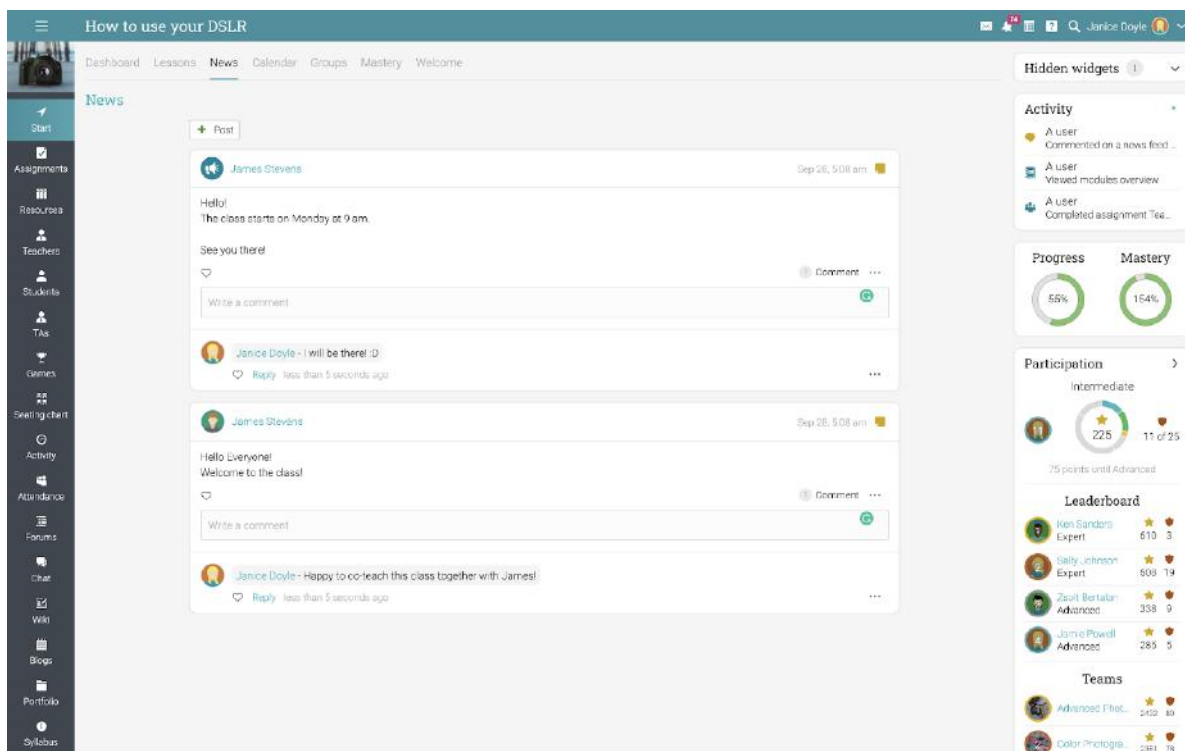
You can edit and delete any news item, including posts and comments by students.

Right bar

In the right bar, you can find the Admin control panel that allows you to quickly find the class access code. Here is also the activity display, to-do list, announcements, and a game leaderboard – if games were enabled for the class. To view more details, click on an item.

Lessons

If you go to Start and click on the lessons tab, you will see all the lessons in the class.
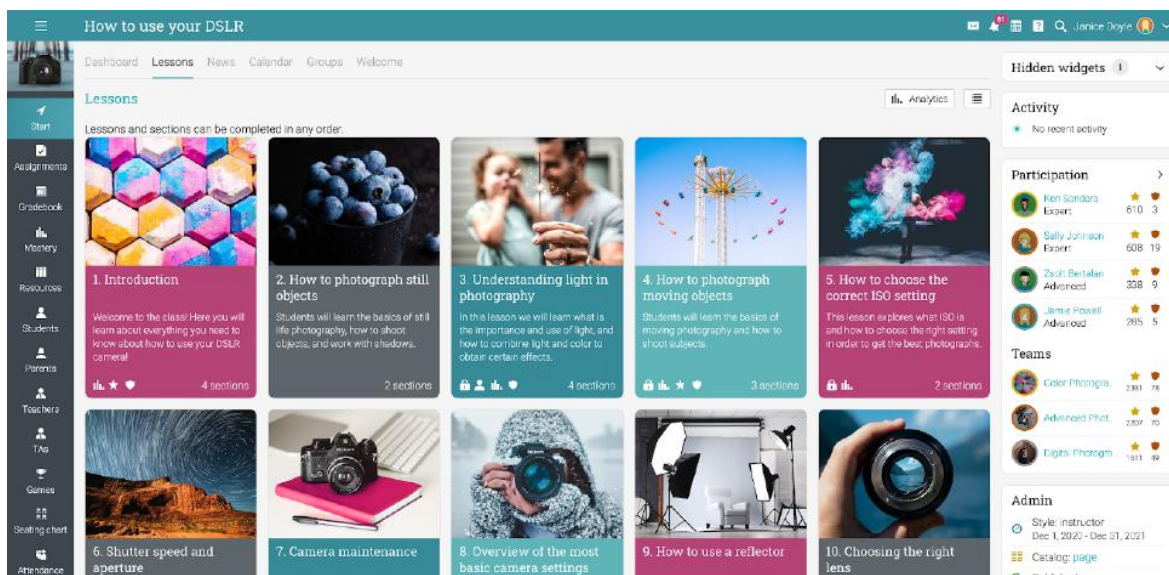
Depending on your preferences, you can also switch to the List view option from the top right. This view shows all the sections for all lessons:
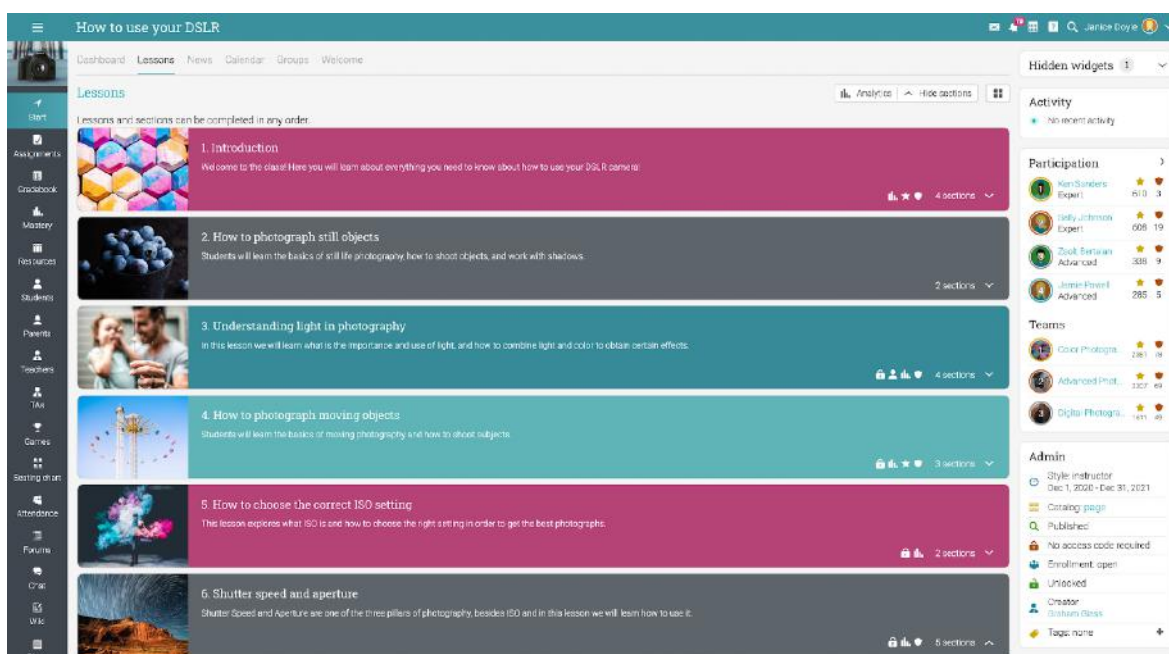
A lesson usually consists of content sections and assignments. You can see the sections of lessons by going to the Sections tab.
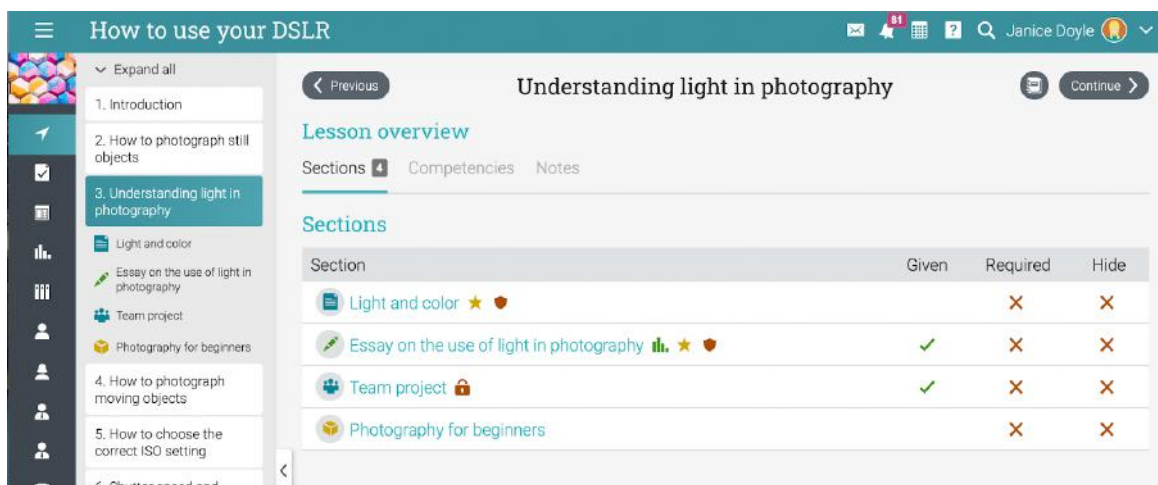
Content pages

A content page is created by using our built-in HTML editor and can contain any kind of media, including audio, video, Office documents and Google Docs. Here is how a content page might looks:
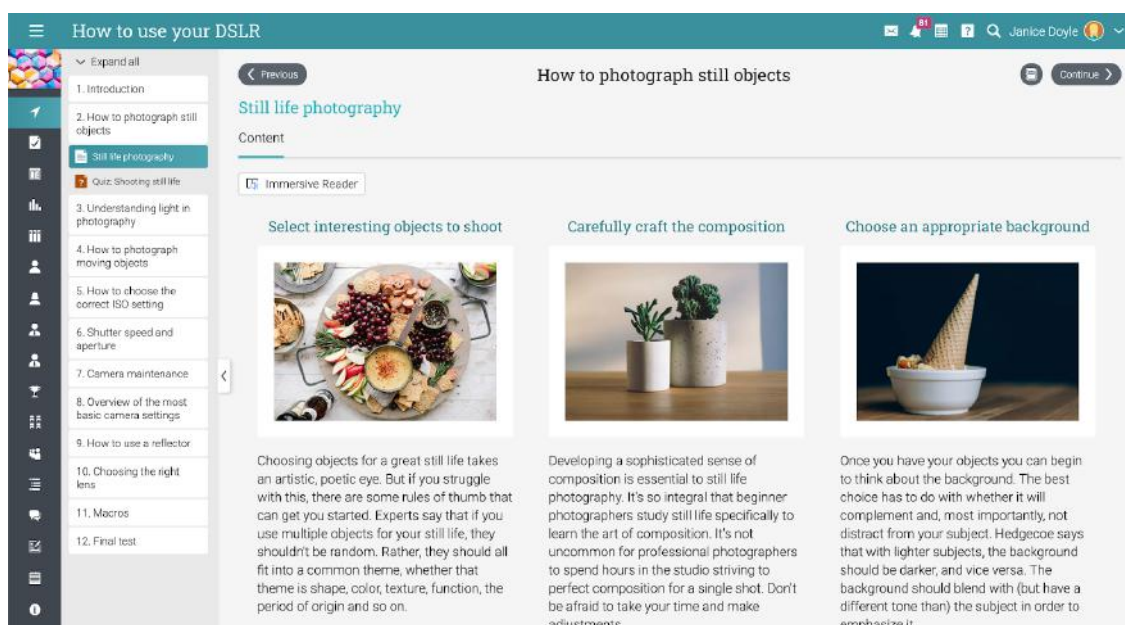
Assignments

To see a list of the assignments for a class, go to the Assignments tab. An assignment can be connected to a lesson or a standalone task.

There are 16 different types of assignments:

- **Quiz** - a set of questions that students can answer online;
- **Essay** - students can submit their response using the HTML editor, and include an unlimited number of attachments;
- **Offline** - a traditional assignment such as a paper-based test or reading a book. There is no online submission for this kind of assignment, and the teacher is expected to enter the grades for each student based on the results of the offline work;
- **Survey** - choose between multiple choice and freeform questions;
- **Discussion** - students earn points by participating in a single thread of discussion that is started by the teacher;
- **Debate** - students add arguments for or against a proposition that is supplied by the teacher;
- **Team** - allows groups of students to work on joint submissions. The teacher organizes the students into teams, each of which get their own private group;
- **Dropbox** - students upload one or more files as their submission;
- **SCORM** - captures the results of a SCORM item;
- **Attendance** - awards points based on a student's attendance record;
- **Turnitin** - add assignments that can have an originality check through our Turnitin integration;
- **Custom LTI assignments** - integrates 3rd party LTI assignments;
- **Google Assignments** - if the integration is configured, you can add Google Assignments;
- **H5P Assignments** - if the H5P content standard is enabled you can add H5P assignments.

To see the details for an assignment, click on its name. Here is how an assignment in a lesson looks:
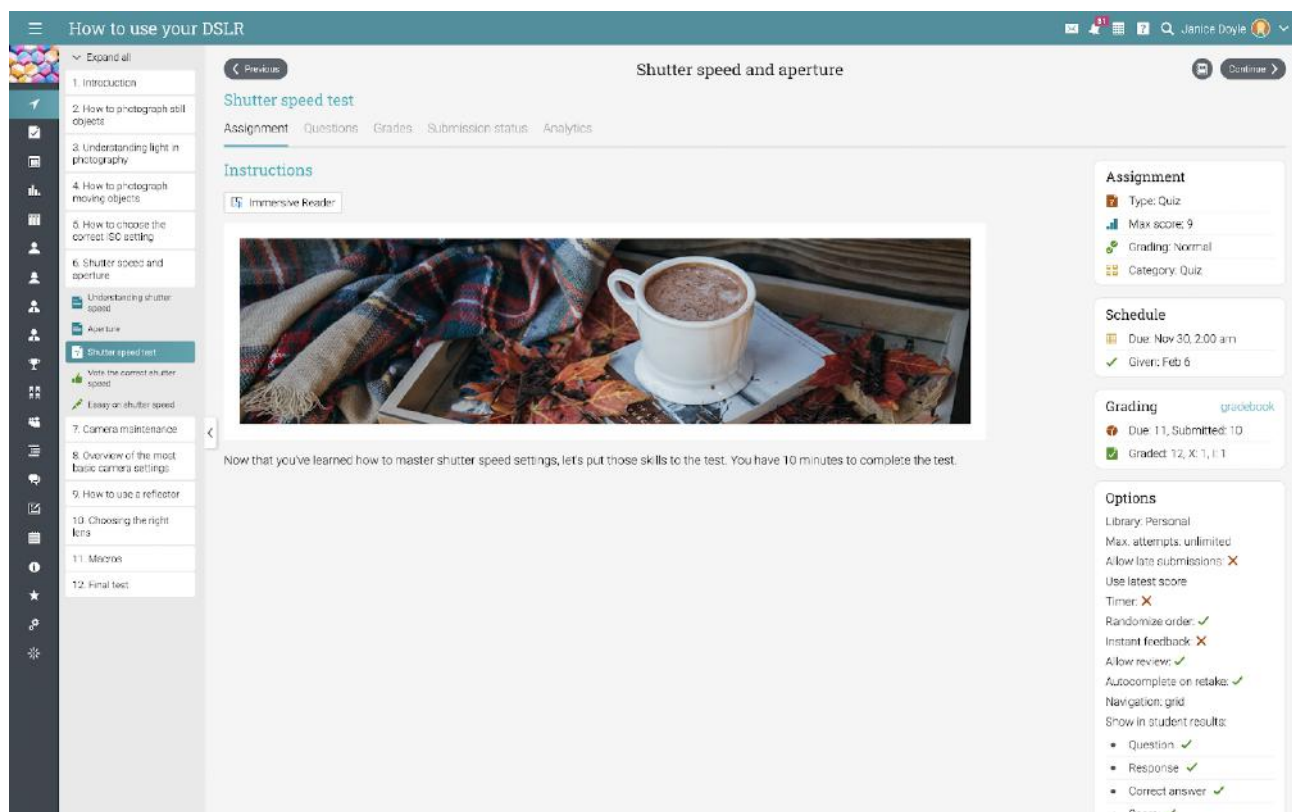
Depending on the type of assignment, you can find some or all of the following tabs:

- **Assignment** - shows the most important information about the assignment, such as its grading status, submissions and instructions;
- **Questions** - displays the questions of an assignment if it's a quiz or survey, and the number of points that are allocated to each of them;
- **Grades** - shows a list of student grades for the assignment, submissions for each student;
- **Submission status** - indicates whether the assignment has been submitted or not;
- **Analytics** - displays the grade distribution amongst students;

The next sections of the guide will show you how to grade assignments, mastery levels, and more.

Grading assignments

There are three ways to grade an assignment:

- **Automatically** - quiz assignments are automatically graded if they do not contain freeform questions; survey assignments and attendance assignments are always automatically graded;
- **From the assignment page** - online assignments that are not graded automatically are best viewed and graded from the assignment page;
- **From the gradebook** - offline assignments are not submitted online, so the most common way to enter their grades is via the gradebook.

Note that when you visit your teacher assistant dashboard or a class landing page, assignments that need grading will appear in the to-do list. You can click on an item in the list to see more details and to go to the grading page.

Grading from the assignment page

If you go to an assignment page and there are submissions that need to be graded, they will be indicated under Grading.

Or you can visit the To grade tab.

To grade a submission, click on the Edit icon. A new window will show you the student's submission.
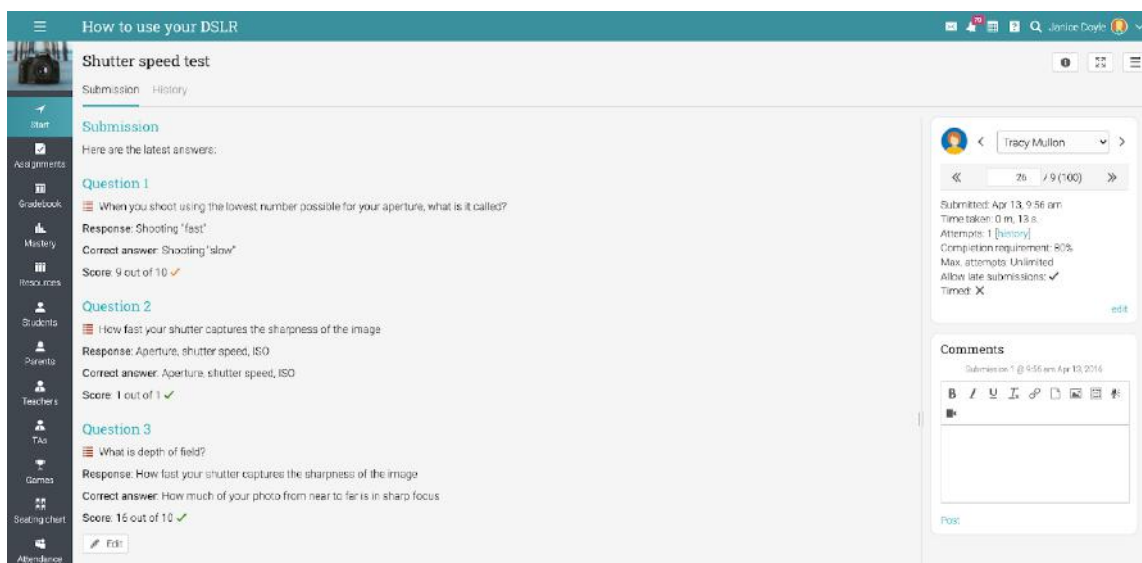
- On the right side, you can see assignment information such as the date of submission and number of attempts. Click on edit to override the default maximum number of attempts. Here you can also find the threaded comment section should you wish to leave a comment for your student. Threaded comments allow teachers and students to maintain a threaded dialog for every submission;
- The History tab shows you a complete history of the submission;
- The Competencies tab allows you to see the competencies that the assignment is associated with;
- Use the arrows to navigate from one student's submission to another.

Grading from the gradebook

Another way of grading assignments is from the gradebook, which is particularly useful when you have offline assignments such as a traditional paper-based test. To see the gradebook, either click Gradebook from the class left bar or from the assignment page.
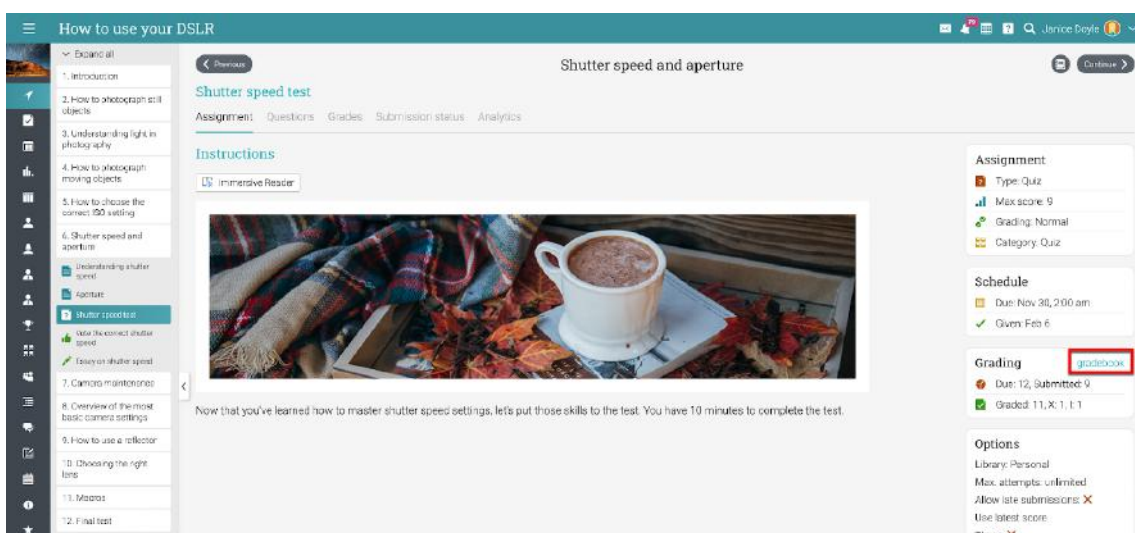
Depending on how many students and assignments there are, scroll bars that let you scroll through the grades list will appear. Each assignment is listed at the top of the gradebook, with an icon to indicate its type, a link to the assignment and the number of points associated with the assignment.

To edit a gradebook cell, click on it and then enter the number of points, a percentage (a number followed by %), a letter grade, a blank (to clear the grade), and select from exceptions such as Excused, Missing, Absent, or Incomplete.

If you double click on a cell, a pop-up window will appear with an extra option for leaving a comment.

To configure the settings for the gradebook display, click the Configure icon in the top right. You can then select options such as what combination of points, percent and grade to be displayed in each cell.

The gradebook has a full-screen mode and configurable display options, including ordering of students and assignments. It also has pop-up analytics for the whole class, for individual assignments or for individual students.
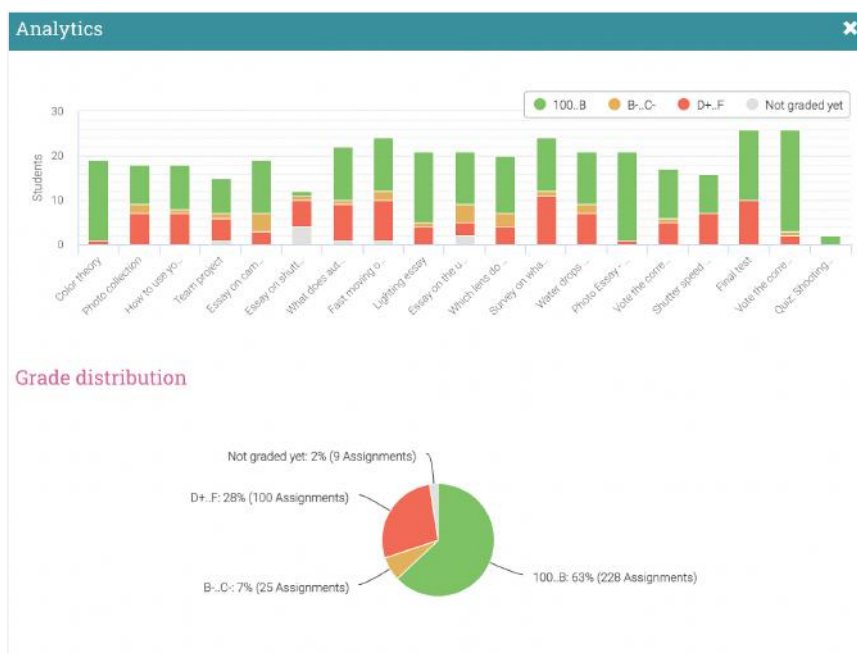
To export the gradebook, click the Export icon in the top right. Then select if you want to export an XLS or CSV file. If you choose a CSV file, select the fields to export, then press 'Export'. This creates a comma-separated-value (CSV) file that you can import into other systems.

Mastery and competencies

In the Mastery grid you can see the students' progress through each competency and identify the ones that are doing well or the ones that are struggling.

Using gamification

Gamification is based on our automation feature and allows you to have a class-wide overview of the game details, including the available levels, level actions, and badges awarded. You can even view the class leaderboard on the right side panel.

Taking attendance

You can track student attendance for a class session, including arrival on time, arrives late, leaves early or is absent. You can also excuse a student and include a note.

To record attendance for a session, click Add, enter the time of the class session and the details for each student:

To see a summary of students' attendance, click the Summary tab.

To export the list, use the Export button:

Communicating with users

You can communicate with your students and other users through our private messaging system. To see your inbox, click on the message icon in the top right bar. A drop-down menu will appear that lists your most recent messages.
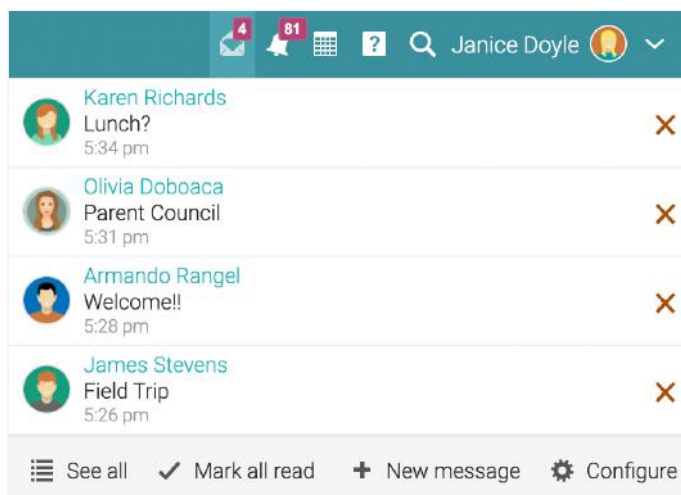
To read a message, click on it. To reply to a message, click Reply, enter your response and click Send. To delete a message, click Delete.
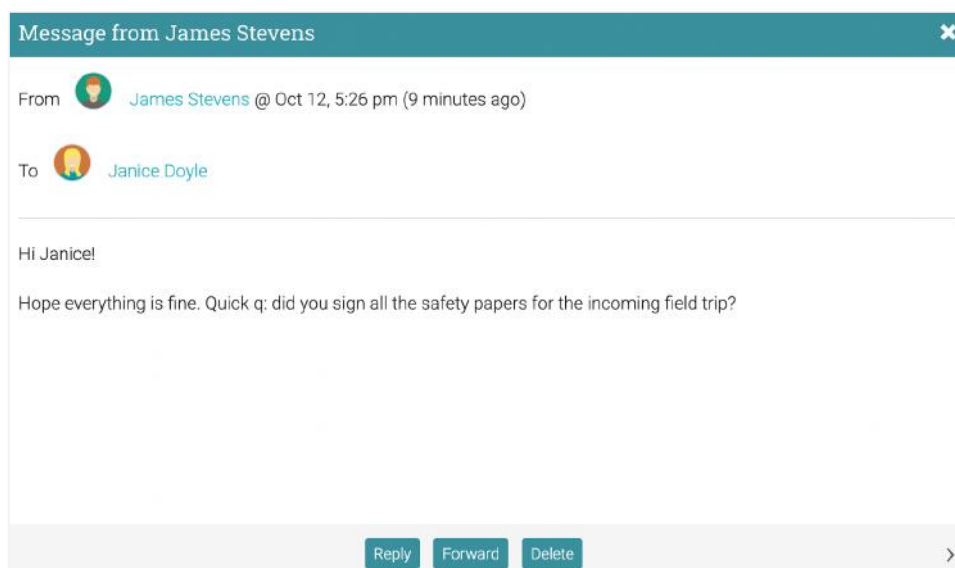
To message students, teachers, parents, or other teaching assistants, go to the appropriate tab, select the users, and click the Message button. Then enter your message and click Send.
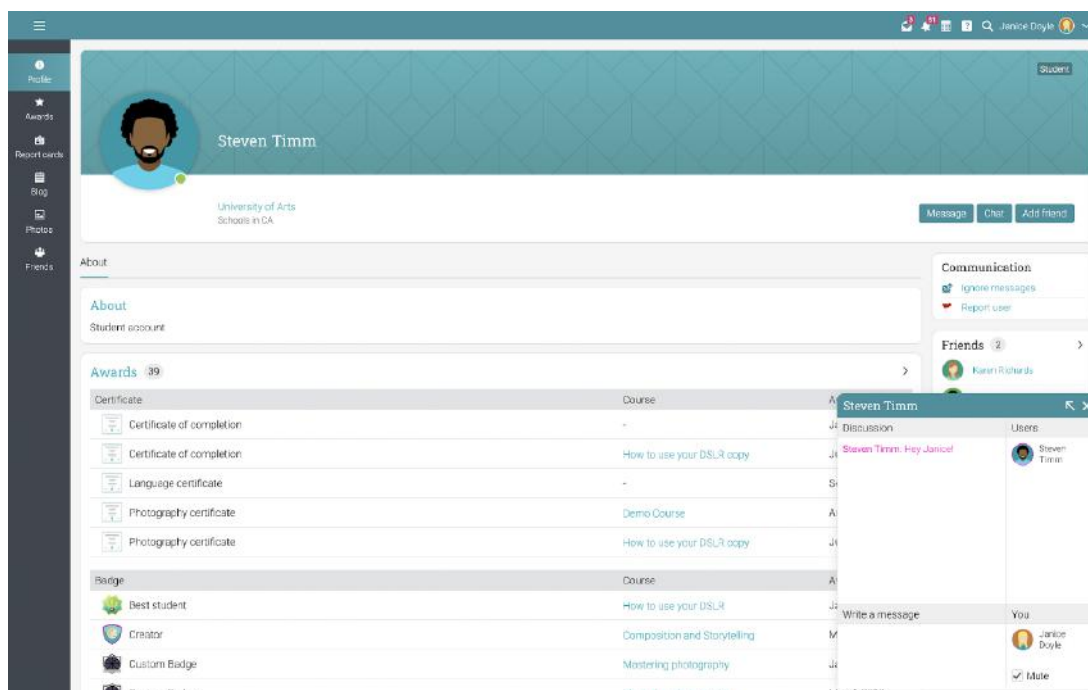

To send a message to multiple students at once, go to the Students tab of class, then select them from the list, then click Message.

Similarly, if your site administrator has enabled this option, you can also chat with online users.

You can also add users as friends:
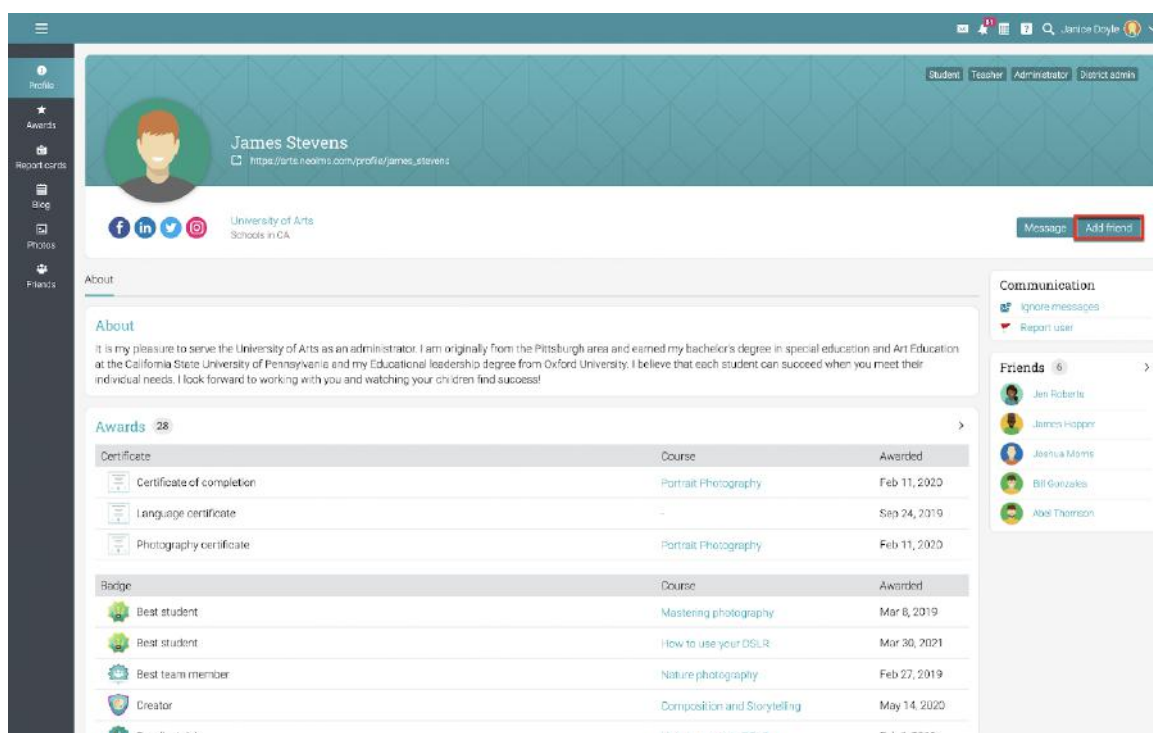
Notifications
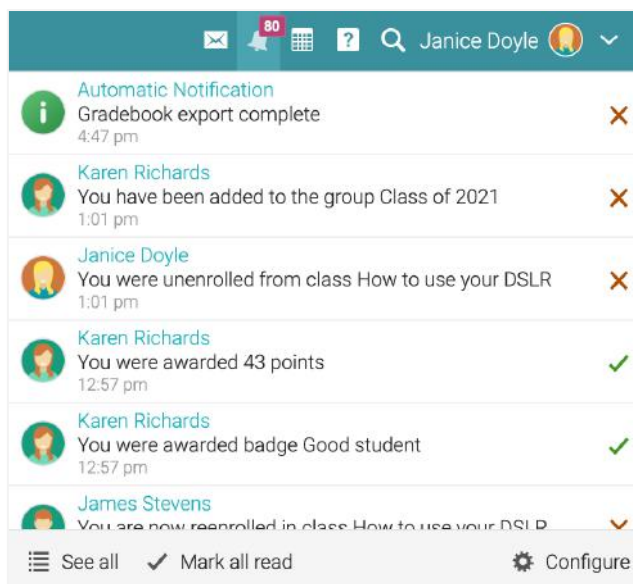
To see all your notifications, click the notifications icon in the top right bar. A drop-down menu will appear that lists your most recent notifications. Notifications include posts from forums you are subscribed to, enrollments, new submissions that need grading, and more.

To select which notifications are automatically emailed to you, click the Configure option. If you are subscribed to a forum, you can reply to a posting directly from the notifications box or click "See thread" to see the entire thread on the forum.
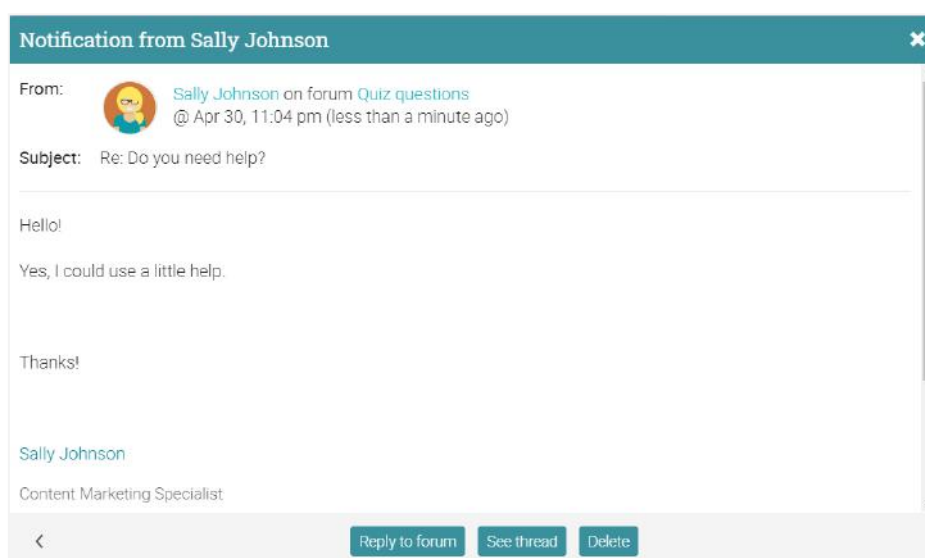
Summary

The Getting Started Guide for Teaching Assistants provided the basic information that teaching assistants need when they first start using CYPHER.

Some of the topics we covered were: navigating in CYPHER, using the Help Center, getting an overview of classes, lessons, and assignments, communicating with students and taking attendance.

If you have any additional questions, please browse the Help.

www.cypherlearning.com