

Grand Erie District School Board: 2014 - 2015

Project Title	Effective Demonstration Classrooms & BYOD
Description	<p>The focus of the Grand Erie 21st Century Innovation Research Initiative is on Demonstration Classrooms as a form of teacher professional development to support change in teacher practice. Specifically, our Demonstration Classroom Pilots highlight the use of personal devices in the classroom to support student learning.</p> <p>We have chosen the above focus for our Innovation Research Initiative because our findings from Round 3 indicated that teachers needed to see what learning with technology looks like in 21st century classrooms. This led us to consider researching how to establish effective Demonstration Classrooms to support change in teacher practice that ultimately leads to deeper student learning.</p>
Context	<p><i>Number of students: 870</i></p> <p><i>Number of teachers: 14</i></p> <p><i>Number of schools: 13</i></p> <p><i>Grades/Program: A representative sample of elementary and secondary teachers and their students from across Grand Erie</i></p>
Impact on Students	<p>The Demonstration Classroom pilot resulted in promising outcomes for students that require further study to understand fully. Our main research activity, the Student Work Study Teachers working alongside students in order to understand their learning, was cancelled due to ETFO job action. We are left with some promising findings but none that illuminate the impact on student learning.</p> <p>Secondary students were comfortable having teachers observe them and were amenable to having observing teachers in their classroom up to 4 times a semester. Key to their comfort is being briefed by their teacher in advance so that they know what to expect, and understanding that the teachers are there to learn and not to assess the students. Observations support what we have found in previous years: that students are interested in supporting teachers with the use of educational technology. We are encouraged by the implications for teacher-student partnerships and also with our decision to move forward with activities to grow and support them.</p> <p>Observing teachers reported that their students "loved" the new applications they introduced. The teachers reported a high degree of engagement, even to the extent of students not wanting to stop the activity.</p> <p>From the Ed Tech team notes, we recognize problems with WiFi that we still need to overcome. This causes some frustration among students. The main issue to overcome, however, is inconsistent teacher attitudes toward smart phones. Secondary students use mainly smart phones as their mobile device and want to use them in class. Throughout the board, many teachers do not allow them in the classroom. With BYOD, the board is promoting the use of personal devices as learning tools and Ed Tech is actively supporting teachers to leverage students' technology for learning. Students expressed frustration over the lack of a consistent messaging on smart phones in class.</p>

<p>Impact on Instruction</p>	<p>This professional development model was developed in direct response to our findings from last year's evaluation of the Ed Tech Initiative. Teachers asked for professional development that was peer-led, classroom-based, focused, and relevant. Feedback to the secondary PD was overwhelmingly positive. Teachers left the PD session feeling like they learned new things they could implement that would improve their practice.</p> <p>Teacher buy-in and approval for the professional development model is a promising success. We learned that 6 out of 7 teachers had implemented in their classrooms what they learned in the demo. The seventh teacher stated that s/he hadn't had time yet but did intend to at some point. We are encouraged by the high degree of uptake of learned material.</p> <p>Teachers experienced very positive feedback from their students regarding the new technology and most shared what they learned with their colleagues in their home schools. Some teachers asked for how-to guides, resources, content, and instructions to support their use of the application and student devices going forward. It appears that they feel there is a gap in support to the extent that if they had the resources to refer to, they would be "good to go" and could also more effectively share what they learned with their colleagues.</p>
<p>Impact on System</p>	<p>This pilot provided the information and results we needed in order to take the model system-wide. It is a decentralized model which means that the look and feel will vary across the board due to diverse locations, student/teacher culture, and priorities.</p> <p>Key to the success of the model are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time. Building time in the PD day for teachers to discuss curriculum and deep learning pedagogy related to the strategic use of the technology is key to making the learning for teachers valued for its impact on the effectiveness of their practice. Building time in the PD day for teachers to collaborate with colleagues strengthens professional relationships and makes the learning more relevant. Finally, building time in the day for teachers to learn the technology, practice, and set it up for their class enables the successful implementation in their own classroom. • Keeping it simple. Teachers readily implemented an easy and effective application that they saw demonstrated. The results were very positive. Students reacted favourably and encouraged their teachers to do more. We know from the educational research literature that experiencing successes in the classroom is an effective influence on teacher risk-taking in changing their practice. Key to the success of the Demonstration Classroom model is introducing simple tools that are effective, easy to set up and deploy.

NOTE: Information in the summary is taken directly from the data contained in the final project report.