

Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board: 2014 - 2015

Project Title	Transforming Learning Everywhere - Phase One
Description	<p>H HWDSB's vision for 21st Century Learning, Transforming Learning Everywhere (TLE), challenges us to create a culture of engaged learners (staff and students) by focusing on instructional practices being used in our classrooms, accelerated by digital tools. Our goal is to improve the essential skills of problem solving, critical literacy, higher order thinking, in addition to foundational knowledge and skills that are required in the 21st century. Central to our vision is the instruction (or pedagogy) that occurs in our schools. Every day educators make critical decisions about how to design, deliver lessons and assess student learning. Educators use both evidence-based approaches and new innovative practices, all while ensuring we meet the key Ontario curriculum expectations.</p> <p>Transforming Learning Everywhere is also about accelerating instruction with technology/digital tools. Our educators are engaged in training and are provided with access to resources to support the development of engaging, rich learning tasks. What will result is instructional practice that will increase student engagement and improved learning outcomes (in foundational skills as well as problem solving, critical literacy and higher order thinking) in both the physical and digital world.</p> <p>There are four projects in Phase One:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All grades 4-8 classes at seven elementary schools in the same geographical region are implementing inquiry based learning with a focus on critical literacy, problem solving, and higher order thinking supported through 1:1 tablet technology for all students and teachers. • All teachers and students at a secondary school were provided with tablet technology to allow for innovative delivery model. Staff and students had access to digital tools and resources through Desire2Learn (i.e., the Hub). • Following an interdisciplinary approach, staff have been working collaboratively to increase the efficacious use of assistive technology with a 1:1 ratio at a secondary school. All teachers and students were provided with tablet technology. • Sixteen schools in one geographical area participated in "New Pedagogies for Deep Learning", a program that involves schools from all over the world. The program involved implementing change by providing professional development and job-embedded support to create new learning partnerships.
Context	<p><i>Number of students:</i> 3500</p> <p><i>Number of teachers:</i> 240</p> <p><i>Number of schools:</i> 25</p> <p><i>Grades/Program:</i> Grades 4-12</p>

Impact on Students	<p>We have learned that our classrooms can be transformed with appropriate supports and when expectations are provided to both staff and students. It can be challenging to accept, by both staff and students, that it is no longer just one person (i.e., the teacher) that holds all the expertise and funnels information to students. Just as we recognize that our students are all at different points on the continuum of learning, so are our staff.</p>
Impact on Instruction	<p>Continuously gathering feedback from staff through surveys, departmental meetings, and focus groups, allowed for staff learning needs to be addressed. Teachers worked in grade, division, department heads, and cross subject teams. Through the use of a self-reflection tool, teachers were provided with an opportunity to reflect on their abilities and recognize the support that they might need. Encouraging staff to take leadership roles in supporting peers, teachers became mentors for other staff within their building.</p> <p>One of the most exciting things observed was the sharing of ideas and solutions. It was clear that many of the challenges reported by teachers were common to all of the schools, but each school had solved these challenges in a variety of ways. Sharing the “successes” from different schools helped all schools think about how they might approach their challenges in a different manner.</p> <p>We have learned that when trusting relationships exist, staff are open to sharing their challenges as well as their successes. For example, when teachers participated in a focus group to discuss implementation of TLE, they were forthcoming with each other regarding challenges they have experienced trying out new instructional practices. In other cases, teachers were very interested in showcasing their learning journey.</p>
Impact on System	<p>We learned the importance of supporting staff prior to the deployment of devices to their students, including introducing them to the resources that are available and how to create blended learning environments that use an inquiry-based approach.</p> <p>The experience of the IIT team during the deployments and subsequent support of iPads in the schools has revealed some key learnings. For example, we learned that the deployment of a large number of iPads within the first two months of school start-up required a lot of staff support, collaboration, and problem solving to ensure each staff and student device was connected to each of their HWDSB credentials (i.e., login and password). We also learned that the level of wireless connectivity, security and internet bandwidth that was provided at these 9 schools sites was sufficient and that little to no downtime was experienced.</p>

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