

Northeastern Catholic District School Board: 2014 - 2015

Project Title	TOPS: Transforming our Practices for Success
Description	Our project is focusing on how the use of technology, specifically the collaborative tools offered by Google Apps for Education, can increase cooperative, constructivist learning environments and enhanced student achievement and engagement. We are examining whether students' learning about a topic is transformed, using the tech tools provided in the classroom and by collaborating with peers/the teacher (working cooperatively) to further develop thinking skills.
Context	<p><i>Number of students: 35</i></p> <p><i>Number of teachers: 2</i></p> <p><i>Number of schools: 2</i></p> <p><i>Grades/Program: grades 5-6</i></p>
Impact on Students	<p>We decided to look at active and collaborative learning, as well as the communication between students and students, and students and teachers, while using a pre-determined and accessible online suite of Google collaborative tools. The students were given the choice of tool they used throughout the process. In our post-survey results, the majority of students used the chat tool (30 out of 32 students at 93.8% of respondents).</p> <p>In our pre-survey, students were asked the question, "Do you enjoy working in groups?" 22 out of 32 respondents, or 66.7%, responded with Yes, 10 students, or 30.3%, responded with Somewhat, and only 1 student responded with No. In our post-survey, students were asked the question "Did using the Google tools make it easier for you to collaborate with your team?" 24 out of 32 respondents, or 75%, responded with Yes, 7 students, or 21.9%, responded with Somewhat, and only 1 student responded with No. Additionally, in our post-survey, students were asked the question "During this research project, would you say that working in Research Teams and using Google Tools helped you learn the material better?" 28 out of 32 respondents, or 87.5%, responded with Yes, 4 students, or 12.5%, responded with Somewhat, and none of the students responded with No.</p> <p>These results are particularly encouraging. They indicate evidence of student engagement in terms of using the Google tools to collaborate with each other on a research team, for the purpose of producing a research report. 87.5% of the students perceived the use of Google tools helped them to learn the material better.</p> <p>It is our belief that the students who participated in this research project gained significant insight into a new way of collaborating in group work situations, and a new way to research various topics. The survey results, as well as anecdotal notes taken during the activity, show an impact on student learning, and certainly on student engagement. The results hold promise for future collaborative learning opportunities in the classroom, and also indicate that further research is required across multiple grades and subject areas.</p>

<p>Impact on Instruction</p>	<p>The two teachers who participated in this project are enthusiastic about the potential for technology to transform instructional practices in the classroom, and had been using Google Apps for Education in their classrooms prior to our time together.</p> <p>Both teachers have expressed that they are committed to using Google tools as an online platform for collaborative inquiry projects next school year. The results of this project made an impact on their practices for changing the way they have administered group work in the past. They will provide leadership to others and play a key role in further developing this online platform for collaborative inquiry in virtually any subject area.</p> <p>We have leveraged and utilized technology thoughtfully, with students in mind, and have found that there is enough of an impact to carry forward. Evidence from our research shows that students are certainly ready to use technology effectively and efficiently to collaborate with their peers and their teachers.</p>
<p>Impact on System</p>	<p>NCDSB's Ed Tech Champions will provide leadership in the next phase of this particular research project. When we continue, we will do so with a greater number of classrooms. ... the Ed Tech Champions will be able to provide our educators with the support they will need to use these Web 2.0 tools to further facilitate group projects in every classroom.</p> <p>We will broaden implementation of a standard platform (Google Apps for Education) for student and staff collaboration, communication, and creativity. We will use standardized hardware to ensure that students can share their thinking within and beyond the walls of the classroom.</p>

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