

Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board: 2014 - 2015

Project Title	Learning In The Cloud
Description	<p>Our innovation project is examining student engagement and self-regulation when they use GAFE as a learning tool. We are also examining the change in teacher practice – instruction and assessment – when teachers have regular access to GAFE and have technology in the classroom all day, every day to support instruction and learning.</p> <p>Although this is what defined what started our project it became evident, from past experience and new evidence, that support needed to be provided that would improve student self-regulation when using technology as a collaboration tool (defining and modeling effective Digital Stewardship).</p>
Context	<p><i>Number of students: 360</i></p> <p><i>Number of teachers: 14</i></p> <p><i>Number of schools: 7</i></p> <p><i>Grades/Program: Junior /Intermediate classrooms (Literacy), Intermediate / Senior English Courses</i></p>
Impact on Students	<p>Opportunities for peer-to-peer review of written and project work were enabled by technology. Students used the “Comment” tool in Google Docs to provided descriptive and constructive feedback. Students were also encouraged to use the “chat” feature when synchronously collaborating with peers on a project or assignment outside of class time.</p> <p>One of our participating teachers polled students with regards to the use of Google Technology to help improve the learning:</p> <p><i>“Overall, it appears that the Chromebooks have had a positive impact on the students and most are using their Google account more frequently. Personally, I have benefitted tremendously from having the Chromebooks and have learned a vast amount in the short time I have had to get acquainted with the Chromebooks and Google Apps for Education. Thank you for the opportunity to partake in this initiative!”</i></p>
Impact on Instruction	<p>Using the collaborative Google tools allowed teachers to co-construct tasks and success criteria with their students (and peers). As a result there was a definite increase and focus on formative assessment. Teachers found that students were completing and submitting work which allowed them to provide a better picture of a student’s abilities. Teachers also found they were more confident with using communication and observation as an assessment tool.</p> <p>On how teaching practice has changed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>We are being challenged to create deep thinking projects; ensure that students are thinking critically, collaborating and using the technology to create something that they wouldn’t be able to make/share without the technology.</i>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>We are becoming more comfortable with the idea that we are the facilitators of learning, not the 'knowledge holders'.</i> • <i>It's much more about learning and much less about teaching.</i> <p>Although the project focus was on using Google Apps for Education, many teachers ventured off and discovered other online tools to help improve learning. Teachers began using "Poll Everywhere" to help gauge the learning of her students. Other used "Padlet", Google Scholar, Google Research and CreativeCommons.org help stretch their limits when incorporating technology in the classroom.</p> <p>Learning partnerships were developed using the Google Classroom portal. Although teachers were separated by time and space, they were able to share experiences, resources and support.</p>
Impact on System	<p>The success of the "Learning in the Cloud" project, now in Phase 4, has helped shaped Simcoe Muskoka Catholic's new "Engage and Transform" technology plan. Our Education Leadership Team has endorsed Google Apps for Education (GAFE) as our primary classroom productivity tool. Gmail will become our corporate communication tool by September 2015. All teachers will be assigned a laptop and engage in GAFE training which will focus on the tools ability to promote "Collaborative Contributors". The board is also considering the purchase of "Read&Write" for Google which will provide all students and teachers the assistive technology that is good for all, but necessary for some.</p> <p>Our project has also helped change the way hardware is imaged and delivered to the schools. Chromebook orders, once processed, are sent directly to the vendor who images and prepares the device and then ships directly to the schools where they can be immediately used once unpacked.</p> <p>Our ICT support staff has also committed to the Ontario GAFE consortium which will provide administrative training on the Google Dashboard, as well as a variety of technical supports.</p>

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