Superior North Catholic District School Board: 2014 - 2015

Project Title	**Collaboration and Communication: Creating a Common Understanding of GAFE**
Description	The focus on SNCDSB's research is on whether Google Apps for Education (GAFE) will change the way that students and teachers collaborate and communicate with one another. Specifically, we are looking to see whether classroom use of the Google tools will give teachers more opportunities for innovative instruction and deeper assessment. In turn, we are also looking to see whether GAFE has provided our students with leadership opportunities within their classes, schools, and communities. The technology (the "cloud" services provided by GAFE) has a significant role in this research; these tools provide the portal through which our students and teachers are able to collaborate and communicate with one another.
Context	*Number of students*: 41 *Number of teachers*: 3 from focus classrooms, 40 for knowledge mobilization, 9 Volunteers *Number of schools*: 3 focus sites, 8 for knowledge mobilization *Grades/Program*: Grades 3-8
Impact on Students	With respect to learning partnerships, we had our students as the lead learners of the GAFE tools in our school board. Students who attended the Student Google Summit were empowered to teach their classmates and other students/teachers in their schools how to use these tools. A number of our students also helped teach parents and community members how to use GAFE during after-school learning sessions. These students became the champion "teachers" of GAFE. Some of our students also had the opportunity to teach learners outside of their schools how to use Google Tools. Three students at our first focus school taught the Board Office staff how to use Google Drive, Slides, Forms, and Docs. Students from the second focus school facilitated a learning session for the staff and board members of their local Adult Learning Centre. Finally, a student from the third focus school presented at a Google Summit in Kitchener alongside her classroom teacher. This student taught the teachers in her breakout session how to use their Google Drive Whereas allowing students to be the lead learners of GAFE has provided them with leadership opportunities that support student well-being, actual use of the Google Apps themselves has also had an impact on student learning and achievement. For example, when using Google Drawing, a student was able to create a professional-looking poster that communicated her knowledge of the topic. Finally, communication between students and teachers has improved by the use of the GAFE tools. 85% of students in the focus classes have collaborated in a Google Doc with other students or their teacher. One student commented: "I liked working with my group on Docs because everyone could edit and communicate."

Impact on Instruction	Similar to the impact on student learning, use of the GAFE tools has also had a positive impact on teacher practice. Teachers in 8/9 schools participated in a Google Learning Day. One teacher from each school facilitated a half-day session for educators across the system. The facilitators were asked to provide any observations they have noticed in change in teacher practice since the session. Below is one example.
	"A number of teachers have used Google apps in the classroom since the training. One Grade 7 teacher developed a test on Google forms, while a Grade 1/2 teacher added extensions from the Chrome Web Store to the class Promethean Board. Students and staff are all using Google Drive more and having success. Teachers share observational notes, activities, and calendars with each other."
	There have been other impacts on teacher practice that fall outside of our planned research. For example, all Special Education Resource teachers have recently had training on a new IEP generator. The Special Assignment teacher from SNCDSB who will be supporting the Special Education Resource Teachers with implementing this new resource, created a Google Hangout for questions and answers.
Impact on System	In order to spread the innovation work, we realized that we would need a physical presence in each school. This year, we established Digital Learning Volunteers (DLVs): classroom teachers in each school who helped create awareness and build capacity with respect to learning via digital tools. With the Innovation funding, we were able to release these teachers for a half day once each month. During this time, the DLVs met over Adobe Connect and Google Hangouts with the Technology Enabled Learning and Teaching Contact.
	By working with Digital Learning Volunteers throughout the year, not only are we creating a system-wide group of leaders in terms of technology-enabled learning, but we are also providing an in-school go-to person for each of our schools. [H]aving the in-school support was a major factor in promoting system change. 100 % of the Digital Learning Volunteers found the monthly meetings valuable, and 100% of the volunteers think that this professional learning network should continue next year.
	In addition, the Google Learning Days that occurred in 8/9 [schools] created awareness across the whole system with respect to GAFE. Educators, including teachers, principals and educational assistants participated in these Google Learning Days. At the beginning of the innovation, 29% of the participants had an understanding of how GAFE can help students and teachers collaborate with one another. After the Google Learning Day, 90% of the participants have an understanding of how GAFE can help students and teachers collaborate with one another.

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