Waterloo Region District School Board: 2014 - 2015

Project Title	**The Change Process: Scaling and Refining a Digital Learning Strategy to Support Achievement of the BIPSA**
Description	The focus of the project this year has been to support the Board Improvement Plan for Student Achievement (BIPSA) through the refinement and implementation of a Digital Learning Strategy. The Digital Learning Strategy is a system initiative that provides an opportunity to better understand the change process and the conditions for improved learning and instruction through the utilization of technology and student/staff collaborative inquiry. It is focused, through the use of technology, on analyzing the change process, developing a learning organization that can respond to change, and identifying the factors and conditions to support scalability and sustainability.
	This project/strategy aligns with the BIPSA that explicitly identifies the "Vision of Student" that includes the contemporary higher order skills and habits of mind (i.e., 21st century skills) such as collaboration, creative thinking, communication skills, critical thinking, becoming a positive character, and becoming a contributing citizen. In addition, the strategy implements the specific target areas, identified in the BIPSA, of collaboration and mathematics along with a "Vision of Educator" as collaborative, promoting student voice and choice, differentiating instruction, and being a reflective practitioner.
	The Technology Learning Fund (TLF) was used to acquire technology to accelerate the 21st Century Innovation Research Project, as well as, support the BIPSA by focusing collaboration and mathematics. It was also used to purchase technology to scale the project to other schools, subject areas, and grades (grade 11 English and Geography). The outcome of this scaling was an increase in the level of collaboration that developed; collaboration and the ability to provide teacher-teacher learning partnerships (e.g., learning cycles) is seen as key to scaling the Digital Learning Strategy.
	Technology was critical in "disrupting" the teachers' instructional practices, providing the impetus to be innovative, and supporting cross-school teacher and student collaboration. Technology is central to the work in the project since there are expectations requiring students to participate in both synchronous and asynchronous communication, establish a digital footprint, and participate in collaboration with classes in other schools. Because of the cross-school work a lot of discussion occurred regarding effective assessment practices.
Context	*Number of students*: 2835
	Number of teachers: 114
	Number of schools: 21
	Grades/Program: Grade 10 English, Careers and Civics, Mathematics, Geography
Impact on Students	During interviews with Futures Forum Project students, the students spoke favorably about collaboration and having more voice and choice. They indicated that collaboration allowed them to take charge of learning because the teacher

	became a facilitator in these situations and students were more active in their learning. They enjoyed communicating with students within their own class and with students in other schools because, as some suggested, it seemed to provide them with a real audience and purpose. The focus on collaboration for all of our projects would suggest that using collaboration as an instructional strategy caused more engagement for the reasons suggested by the interviews – authentic audiences and purposes, teacher's acting as facilitators, and technology being used as a tool to communicate and collaborate.
	Another focus of the project was to encourage more student voice and choice in the instructional and assessment practices of the participating teachers. The students felt more ownership and therefore more responsibility towards their work when they had a choice of what they did or voice in how they demonstrated learning. Indications are that engagement increases when students have choice and for teachers that offered more voice and choice it represented a shift from being the class lecturer to being a learning facilitator.
Impact on Instruction	Common across all of our projects involved in the research was the impetus that the teachers go back to the curriculum to build their instructional and assessment plans; the overall expectations were more carefully reviewed and clustered. With a focus on more student collaboration and offering students more opportunities for choice, teachers collaborated to revisit and revise how their courses were taught. The projects caused teachers to plan more collaboratively. The technology served as a disruption to their normal way of teaching and so when they began to revisit past practice in light of new technology, the opportunity was presented to insert collaboration and choice into their practice.
	We also found that board wide initiatives with monthly professional learning sessions helped to develop system wide teacher collaboration whereas without these projects teachers would work in their schools and not share. The support created system wide conversations and sharing of best practice not normally seen.
Impact on System	The BIPSA targeted collaboration this year and the projects all focused on collaboration as a central tenant of engaging students and causing change in instruction and assessment. Besides increasing student engagement through the use of collaboration, the teachers involved in the research are also becoming school and system leaders allowing us to develop trainers that can speak to using collaboration as a teaching strategy in staff meetings and department offices.
	As a result of the research, the board will be moving to provide 1-1 mobile devices to students starting in grade 9 at three of the sixteen secondary schools.

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