Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board: 2015 - 2016

Project Title	Transforming Learning Everywhere - Phase Two
Description	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. This vision is driven by the Ontario Ministry of Education's "Achieving Excellence" vision, the next phase in Ontario's Education Strategy. 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. They consider the learners in their classroom—their needs, strengths, interests – to determine what strategies will help them succeed. Educators use both evidence-based approaches and new innovative practices, all while ensuring we meet the key Ontario curriculum expectations. This is the art and science of good teaching. This is pedagogy. Transforming Learning Everywhere is also about accelerating instruction with technology/digital tools. Technology introduces some necessary changes to transform our learning environments. 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.
Context	*Number of students:* 11,420 *Number of teachers:* 896 *Number of schools:* 103 *Grades/Program:* FDK-12
Impact on Students	<u>Student engagement and learning:</u> Our students are able to learn and demonstrate effective thinking strategies in areas of personal interest, and they are taking more ownership for their own learning. Video creation apps are allowing students to document their own learning processes as they complete a variety of tasks, allowing educators to provide better assessment of the process of learning rather than merely assessing the final product. Through the digital window of the classroom, parents and community partners can see opportunities to offer support; through digital sharing, the system can identify champions, and leverage their expertise in

	system professional development. Our students' ability to use technology to communicate basic needs and as a social exchange has increased within and outside of the classroom. Most students who completed a student survey about TLE (n=700) indicated they support and use digital tools in their classrooms. Students use iPads, digital projectors and smartboards the most 3 or more days a week in their classrooms. [S]tudents described their classroom environment as including learning partnerships (e.g., I work together with other students in my class to support my learning) and where digital is leveraged (e.g., I use technology to find local or global information for my school work) but not as one where students' engage in self- and peer-assessment or have a shared desire to have learning take place anytime/anywhere with anyone. <u>Student learning and achievement:</u> With parent permission, we have begun to track students' foundational skills based on their report card marks and EQAO scores. Rich learning tasks from schools participating in New Pedagogies for Deep Learning (NPDL) highlighted areas of strength including (1) learning partnerships where both students and staff have a common understanding of what success looks like, and (2) learning environment where student voice serves as a strong driver and includes physical and virtual learning environments. Areas of improvement include assessment, learning how to best leverage digital tools and establishing equity in the relationships between students, educators and families. HWDSB is using an online tool to assess students' 21st Century skills. It provides an overall score as well as scores individual 21st Century competencies. In 2014-2015, students who wrote the elementary assessment (Grades 4-5) had an overall score of 252, which is considered a basic proficiency level. This is compared to the global rating of 295 which is also considered a basic proficiency level. Students who wrote the middle school assessment (Grades 6-12) had an overall score of 244, which is considered a basic proficiency level. This is compared to the global rating of 288 which is also considered a basic proficiency level. These scores will be used as baseline data and the same (as well as additional students) will be taking the same assessment in 2015-2016 and 2016-2017.
Impact on Instruction	<u>Changes in educators' practices:</u> Educators are becoming more responsive to student voice and material is more relevant to student interests and curiosities. They are exploring tools that better fits their teaching style, their technological readiness, and the learning needs of their students. Close to half of educators that provided feedback indicated supporting and using digital tools in the classrooms while the other half held a neutral opinion

	towards their use. Laptops/desktops, digital projectors and iPads were the tools educators reported using the most, 3 or more days a week in their classrooms. When describing their classroom environment, educators defined them as including learning partnerships (e.g., students' interests, needs and strengths drive what they learn) but not as one where students' engage in self- and peer-assessment or have a shared desire to have learning take place anytime/anywhere with anyone. Educators described changes in their practice as including changes to their role, use of online tools to transform the classroom environment, and using technology to scaffold the learning process and provide feedback. Challenges experienced include devices serving as a distraction. <u>Capacity Building:</u> Educators are learning in a variety of ways, including self-learning, which has provided tangible strategies that are used effectively in classrooms. Networking and collaboration are starting within and between schools, but educators need more time to meet, plan and reflect with their colleagues. In our elementary schools, instructional coaches are the first point of support for educators and strong co-learning relationships have developed.
Impact on System	Our theory of action for Transforming Learning Everywhere (TLE; HWDSB's 21st Century Learning Vision) is that the use of evidence-based pedagogy, accelerated by digital tools will ultimately lead to increases in student achievement. By providing teachers with appropriate support and resources, their engagement will increase followed by increases in student engagement. These increases in engagement will ultimately lead to increases in student achievement. Since year one of implementation of TLE in 2014-2015, it has had an impact on system plans, capacity building as well as leadership development. It took some time before the vision of TLE was developed and shared with stakeholders. Some staff understood TLE as a technology project while others saw it as a project that focused on pedagogy. Participants cited the importance of understanding TLE as an inquiry based learning initiative and the need for explicit, consistent, repeated messages about TLE was strongly endorsed. All stakeholders who provided feedback did not start with the same willingness to change their practices. Some were eager to adopt change, some followed along when others were participating and some remained reluctant throughout the whole process. Key informants shared that access to knowledge and information and resources are essential for the successful implementation of TLE. Capacity building sessions that focus on pedagogical practices that include use of technology to support those practices are needed. While parents/guardians are pleasantly surprised about changes they have seen in their child(ren), they still have concerns about changes to classroom environments and use of digital tools to support learning both in the home and school.