

## Superior North Catholic District School Board: 2015-2016

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| Project Title      | Building Relationships through Collaboration and Communication   |
| Description        | <p><u>Purpose:</u> Behind effective collaboration and communication is strong relationships. Our ultimate goal is to use technologies to increase relationships between and among our schools, students, teachers, principals, administrators, and communities.</p> <p><u>Focus:</u> Improving Collaboration and Communication through:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Google Apps for Education</li> <li>2. Social Media (specifically Twitter)</li> <li>3. Problem-Based Learning (Genius Hour and 20 Time)</li> </ol> <p>Each school has a Digital Learning Volunteer (DLV). The DLV is a teacher who has an interest in technology-enabled learning. They meet virtually once every month for 0.5 of a day with the Technology Enabled Learning and Teaching Contact to learn about the focus of the project. Their role is to then provide ‘at the elbow’ support for teachers, principals, and students in their respective schools.</p> <p><u>Outcomes:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Teachers, Principals, and Administrators will be connecting and collaborating using Twitter. The collaboration will result in highlighting ways to help students develop 21st Century Competencies.</li> <li>2. Our Grade 5-8 students will be using theirs to support problem-based learning.</li> <li>3. Students and educators will work together using GAFE.</li> <li>4. The Digital Learning Volunteers will become leaders within the Board. They will form a network that will share ideas and help spread and support deep learning through technology.</li> </ol> |
| Context            | <p><i>Number of students:</i></p> <p><i>Number of teachers:</i> 9</p> <p><i>Number of schools:</i></p> <p><i>Grades/Program:</i></p>   |
| Impact on Students | <p><u>Google Apps for Education (GAFE)</u></p> <p>Digital Learning Volunteers (DLVs) have observed GAFE having a positive impact on student engagement. DLVs have observed GAFE having a positive impact on student learning. Teachers noticed an increase in independent work. For example, students who struggle with decoding are able to have texts read aloud to them by using the Google Read and Write extension. Students who have difficulty with writing, are able to use the speech to text features.</p> <p>The DLVs have also noted that access to GAFE enables students to receive timely</p>  |

feedback from their teachers and peers. Students in a grade 5/6 class used the comment feature in Google Docs to provide peer feedback. The DLV observed that the students were “excited” to be able to provide next steps based on their co-created success criteria. Another benefit of GAFE is that the collaborative nature of the tools allows students to better share their learning with one another. For example, students have used Google Docs to generate group notes for studying. In addition to increasing collaboration within our classrooms, GAFE have also allowed our students to communicate with people outside our classrooms. For instance, a Grade 7/8 class arranged a Google Hangout with our local Member of Parliament. The students were able to ask her questions about what it was like to be an MP.

In the Fall, we held our second Google Apps for Education Student Summit. Some of our students have become so proficient in using the Google tools, that they facilitated breakout sessions where they taught their peers and other teachers how to navigate the apps. Other DLVs mentioned that the summit also led to some great in-school collaboration between classes. For example, one school has established a student “Tech Team.” This group of students goes into younger classes and helps the students and teachers learn new technologies.

*Social Media:* DLVs have observed Twitter having a positive impact on student engagement. The use of social media has helped move learning from teacher-based to audience-based. Students are more engaged because their learning involves an authentic audience. For example, on Family Literacy Day, students from one school were encouraged to tweet out their favourite books. Not only did others (including teachers from other school districts, our Director, and parents) begin tweeting out their favourite books, but the authors of the children’s books began to comment and like the students’ tweets.

A few teachers have created classroom twitter accounts, where they share what is happening in their classroom with followers. The students are more engaged in their learning because they now see it as something that is shared with others; it is no longer isolated to the classroom. “Their excitement for learning is fueled by the fact that they can not only share it with their peers and family, but with others all over the world.”

*Problem-Based Learning:* Digital Learning Volunteers have observed that problem-based learning has a positive impact on both student engagement and student learning. One teacher commented that, “we saw student engagement skyrocket!” Students began asking to work on their genius hour projects when they had free time and others would choose to bring their Chromebooks home in the evening so that they could continue working. One student decided to initiate a community project to get their local swimming pool re-opened.

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|                                     | <p><i>Leadership:</i> During our Google Apps for Education Student Summit students spent the day learning about how they can use the various Google Apps. Some of our students have become so proficient in using the Google tools, that they facilitated breakout sessions where they taught their peers and other teachers how to navigate the apps. Not only does this give our students the opportunity to be leaders in their schools, it also sends a clear message that even educators are learners! The summit also lead to some great in-school collaboration between classes. For example, one school has established a student “Tech Team.” This group of students goes into younger classes and helps the students and teachers learn new technologies.</p>  |
| <p><b>Impact on Instruction</b></p> | <p>At the beginning of the school year, the DLVs completed a baseline survey. The data guided the focus for the DLV Meetings; it gave a snapshot of what tools and resources the DLVs needed to learn about in order to support technology enabled learning and teaching in their schools. There was clear and significant increase in the use of GAFE, Twitter, and Genius Hour by the DLVs. DLVs need to have a solid understanding of these tools to promote them, model their use, and support others in order for project scaling up.</p> <p>Overall, our DLVs created a network of collaboration. When they weren’t collaborating during our meetings, we used a Google App called Google Hangouts to continue the communication. DLVs asked questions and shared resources with one another. 100% of the DLVs felt that the meetings had a positive impact on their understanding of instruction and assessment in their roles.</p> <p>Having in-school support for GAFE has helped our system move forward with these tools. DLVs have noted that they were able to help move the staff in their schools from simply having an awareness of GAFE, to actually using the tools in their daily practice.</p> <p>There has also been an increase in social media use across the system. At the beginning of the school year, three people were using our board hashtag in Tweets. We now have multiple educators (teachers and principals) from every school sharing their learning online.</p> |
| <p><b>Impact on System</b></p>      | <p>This year’s innovation project has had a significant impact on system plans. In order to continue our goal of using GAFE to foster collaboration and communication skills among staff and students, SNCDSB has already committed to a one-day, custom Google Summit for all employees of the board.</p> <p>SNCDSB has also begun to look at how the physical layout of our schools impacts collaboration and communication. We will begin by looking at transforming our libraries from traditional library spaces into student-centered learning commons.</p> <p>With respect to organizational processes, there have been many changes that are a result of the innovation project. For example, as a system we now use Google</p>  |

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|  | <p>Hangouts to video chat with individuals who cannot physically be in meetings. Groups of educators have also been using Google Hangouts to communicate with one another.</p> <p>As far as leadership development is concerned, 100% of the DLVs believe we should continue to have Digital Learning Volunteers next year. Not only are the DLVs become leaders within our system, but their knowledge and expertise is providing them with leadership opportunities outside of the system as well.</p> |
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