

Thames Valley District School Board: 2015-2016

Project Title	The Library Learning Commons
Description	<p>Our project centers on the transition of the Library space in schools to the Library Learning Commons model. Central to this transition, we have broken the project into four different topics. The physical layout of the Library Learning Commons discusses pedagogy and the use of technology in the SOLE model (Self-Organized Learning Environment). This involves a shift from the use of desktop computers to the use of more mobile technology (Chromebooks and iPads). The Makerspace session highlights the technology options that can be used for circuitry, coding and programming. The third topic, Creative Spaces, utilizes technology for digital storytelling, conductive art, green screen apps and music creation. Finally, the virtual spaces in the Library Learning Commons utilize technology to extend the learning beyond the walls of the school through opportunities such as Digital Field Trips.</p> <p>Outcomes include the identification and implementation of the areas that define a Library Learning Commons, along with a shift in pedagogy that is driving the learning in that location (i.e. collaborative inquiry-based learning).</p>
Context	<p><i>Number of students:</i></p> <p><i>Number of teachers:</i> 459</p> <p><i>Number of schools:</i> 153</p> <p><i>Grades/Program:</i> FDK-12</p>
Impact on Students	<p><i>Assessing achievement via engagement</i></p> <p>Within our project, we elected to utilize engagement as a measure of achievement due to the complexities of inferring causation and isolating academic achievement both within such a short timeframe and with so many other confounding variables. We asked students how the LLC was enhancing their learning in specific subject areas or in general. Two main themes emerged. First, that students were making the observation that they were now able to demonstrate their understanding in a variety of ways given the technology that was available to them. Second, that they could, and were, making links between these new learnings and skills needed to accomplish curricular tasks such as math and sciences.</p> <p><i>Increased 21st C skills - Collaboration, Creativity & Global Citizenship</i></p> <p>We observed that the incorporation of emerging technologies (such as MakeyMakeys, Ozobots, Spheros, littleBits, robotics, etc.) fostered student creativity, and supported numerous learning partnerships through both guided and open-ended collaborative inquiry activities. Students described how the new physical layout of the space has increased the opportunities for them to</p>

	<p>collaborate with peers.</p> <p>Students also spoke about the way that the activities within the LLC had enhanced their sense of community and improved their awareness of the world around them. For example, high school students have been exposed to community partners and researchers who have given talks on topics ranging from financial literacy to criminology at their LLC.</p> <p><i>Increased autonomy and problem solving through experiential learning</i></p> <p>One of our notable findings from the project was the idea that teachers were hesitant to introduce a technology into their classrooms that they had little or no experience with. To allay these concerns, we highlighted the idea that students could be given access to these technologies to explore and learn in a self-guided way. Due to the fact that this technology was available in the library learning commons, many teachers noted that groups of students in different grades who would otherwise have no reason to interact found common ground and began to work together with a sense of purpose.</p> <p>Many high school students also talked about the strong partnership they had developed with the Teacher-Librarians who have the key role of connecting them to resources beyond their school thus helping them to prepare for postsecondary learning and life beyond the walls of their school.</p> <p>Students also spoke about the way that the activities within the LLC had enhanced their sense of community and improved their awareness of the world around them.</p>
<p>Impact on Instruction</p>	<p>One of the pedagogical elements that was carried through from previous projects was the use of the inquiry model with students. In the current version of the project, we again modeled a Collaborative Inquiry centered around what learning looks like in the Library Learning Commons such that school teams could participate in the active learning that inquiry provides. We also modeled the use of different online tools which help to facilitate collaborative inquiry. While we have not collected specific data on the number of teachers in the systems who are using the inquiry model in their classrooms, we have talked to a number of schools during and after the project who have embraced the idea at a school level.</p> <p>Since the creation of our board’s GAFE domain in September 2014, we have seen a steady and rapid growth in the number of users to the point that in the last week of May we had 31,471 different active GAFE accounts. Given that our board has approximately ~73,000 students and ~10,000 employees, this accounts for 38% of the combined total being active cloud users. The exponential growth that we have seen in the past four months has demonstrated that cloud-based computing is very much gathering momentum in our board.</p> <p>Teachers provided a wide variety of partnership examples that they had</p>

	<p>experienced with their students. The anecdotal conversations in the professional development sessions indicated that teachers were becoming more comfortable with the idea that they could be co-learners with their students when beginning with creative and maker technology.</p> <p>Our key reason for making the Teacher-Librarian the central member of each school’s Library Learning Commons team was the idea that because of their teaching placement and their often flexible schedule, they have the opportunity to work with each student and staff member in the school in a way that no other teacher does. It was outlined that the Teacher-Librarian would be in attendance at every session, which was done for the purpose of ensuring that they were exposed to all of the technology being discussed and had a cohesive understanding of the Library Learning Commons model.</p> <p>Within this project, there was a deliberate attempt to help teachers understand how the technology that was being introduced through the project could be integrated into the curriculum in meaningful and authentic ways. Our analysis of an exit survey from the PD session centering on Makerspaces highlights that teachers were indeed making curriculum connections between the technology that was showcased and the different subject areas.</p>
<p>Impact on System</p>	<p>Thames Valley District School Board staff engaged in professional learning to understand how the pedagogical and physical elements of the Library Learning Commons enhance the programming and learning within our schools.</p> <p>Increased use of mobile and cloud-based technologies is a key priority under TVDSB’s Information and Communications Technology Strategic Plan for 2015 – 2018. This project has supported this initiative by increasing the availability of mobile devices within schools as well as supporting the pedagogical integration of these devices into teaching and learning. Over 660 more Chromebooks and 180 iPads were purchased through this project which increased student access to mobile learning devices. In addition, schools had the autonomy to select maker and creative technology to purchase that supported their current learning needs.</p> <p>The current version of this project is very much a scaled model of what we have worked on in previous years. Past projects have centred on cloud based computing and the Collaborative Inquiry Model, and in this most recent version we have extended both of these ideas within the physical space of the Library Learning Commons as this is a space that is accessible to all members of the learning community. This decision was made for reasons of capacity building. Student achievement is first a product of capacity building and engagement for teachers. Making this a priority helps to support student engagement and well-being, which in turn leads to improved student achievement.</p> <p>In our work this year, we have been able to address the first two pieces on</p>

	teacher capacity and engagement as well as creating more opportunities for student engagement. In the next phase of this project, it will be possible to purposefully evaluate student achievement by looking at how the activities within the LLC lead to improved student grades as well as demonstrating growth in their learning skills and work habits.
--	--