

Thunder Bay Catholic District School Board: 2015-2016

Project Title	Learning with Technology
Description	<p>The purpose of this project to leverage technology for teaching and learning in support of the TBCDSB Collective Commitments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High Expectations & Academic Optimism for All (believing that all students can achieve high standards, given the right conditions) • Closing the Gap (meeting the needs of vulnerable students with proven best practises and student/parent involvement) • Relevant and Complex Learning Designing (lessons that are based on real-world situations, to foster multiple problem-solving strategies and many possible solutions) • Balanced Programming (creating lessons that focus on guided practice and the development of student independence) • Personalization (providing instruction and assessment that are tailored to students’ particular learning and motivational needs) • The Feedback Cycle (including learning goals, success criteria, descriptive feedback, self and peer assessment and goal setting in academic programming) <p>Project Inquiry Question: How are 21st Century skills and innovative instructional practices enabled through access to a cloud based learning environment?</p>
Context	<p><i>Number of students: 45</i> <i>Number of teachers: 45</i> <i>Number of schools: 8</i> <i>Grades/Program: Gr.3-12</i></p>
Impact on Students	<p>Teachers commented that the primary impacts on students’ learning with the integration of GAFE have been intellectual and emotional. It appears that the integration of pedagogy (inquiry-based, project-based, team-based) that supports 21st Century skill development with the selection of GAFE tool appropriate to the learning activity is the key to impacting student learning. Intentional design of learning activities and assignments supported by the affordances of GAFE (sharing, collaboration) serve as a supportive learning environment.</p> <p>Teachers noticed that students are more engaged – with the learning content and resources, with other students, and with their teachers.</p> <p>Teachers (90%) reported that using GAFE had a positive impact on their communication with students, 83% reported a positive impact on collaboration, and 82% reported a positive impact on engagement with students.</p> <p>Teachers reported that using Google Classroom allowed communication with</p>

	<p>students and parents, as well as any-time access to materials. This mitigated any issues of falling behind that arose in the event of student absences.</p>
<p>Impact on Instruction</p>	<p>Teachers reported that the most frequently used tools were Google Classroom and Gmail. Given that these serve an important function in classroom management, the primary purpose reported for using these tools was to communicate (Google Classroom 86%; Gmail 88%) and share information (Google Classroom 73%). Google Classroom was the also most frequently used to provide feedback to students and to grade assignments and tests (50%).</p> <p>Teachers reported that the use of GAFE, particularly that access is 24x7 and transparent, has shifted the responsibility for learning from teacher-centered to a more balanced partnership between teacher and student.</p> <p>It is interesting to note that while collaboration was not a predominant choice in connection to a particular GAFE tool, it is a clearly dominant theme when they share the impact of their pedagogical approaches supported by the GAFE tools. Teachers (90%) reported that using GAFE had a positive impact on their ongoing professional development and 86% reported a positive impact on their ability to respond to individual student needs.</p> <p>54% of teachers reported working with another colleague as one of their top two preferences ... may have implications for system-level professional development strategies that foster more teacher-teacher partnerships.</p> <p>We are providing teachers with more opportunities to engage in deep learning focused on technology-enabled learning and teaching by supporting collaborative inquiry as a vehicle for professional learning.</p> <p>We are taking a multi-pronged approach to professional learning that includes: on-site, embedded support for teachers provided by technology resource teachers and teacher-librarians; sustained learning opportunities through collaborative inquiry; school-based professional learning opportunities led by principals; support for self-directed learning (for example, releasing teachers to complete online modules and certify as GAFE Educators); opportunities to learn from expert teachers (classroom visits, workshops, GAFE Summit).</p> <p>Thirty teachers and administrators from across the system were afforded the opportunity to certify as Google Educators. These ‘early adopters’ are catalysts for implementation in their schools. They have incorporated GAFE tools and resources into their practice and their passion for GAFE is inspiring colleagues. Many are sharing their knowledge and expertise (staffroom conversations, classroom visits, informational items during staff meetings).</p>
<p>Impact on System</p>	<p>In the preamble to the TBCDSB BIPSA literacy goal, we note that literacy involves the capacity access, manage and evaluate information, to think imaginatively and analytically and communicate thoughts and ideas effectively. GAFE tools provide</p>

support for these activities. Our students are using GAFE tools to:

- Articulate their learning
- Recognize how to improve their work
- Engage in inquiry-based learning
- Think critically, make deep connections
- Reason and communicate effectively

The TBCDSB BIPSA also highlights the importance of 21st Century knowledge, skills and competencies and the implementation plan for this this project was designed to support this priority.

We recognize that principal learning is key to the success of our innovation project. We are provided opportunities for principals to develop technical fluency with system tools by offering a series of professional learning sessions focused on GAFE tools and resources and we are supporting principals in developing leadership capacity for technology-enabled learning and teaching, including the capacity to monitor technology-enabled learning and teaching by focusing on this area during principal learning sessions.

The IT department has been instrumental supporting the implementation of GAFE within TBCDSB. Significant network upgrades ensure reliability and connectivity within our schools. Our IT department has also committed to the Ontario GAFE consortium; we are collaborating with IT departments from other boards who are implementing GAFE, we are also sharing best practices in respect to technical administration and engaging in collaborative problem-solving around technical issues.