

21st Century Learning  
Thunder Bay Catholic District School Board

Music: Instrumental

Peter Cameron /Teacher: How else can our small act, thanks Liz, I learned something from you.

Peter Cameron: I come to school every day as a learner.

Narrator: Peter Cameron is an experienced teacher.

Peter Cameron: At fifteen years I basically figured I was doing it all right, and was quite successful in my teaching practices. Of course we changed, and we evolved in our teaching practices, but with the implementation of the technology within my classroom, it completely transformed my teaching.

Narrator: The transformation happened when he realized technology combined with his strong pedagogical knowledge, could take his students to the next level.

Peter Cameron: They have the technologies available to them, but it's our job as teachers to teach our students how to use the tools that they have at their fingertips. So now our kids are taking the content that we, as 20th century learners, we were content consumers. Whereas now, students have access to information content at their fingertips. So, they're now creating with the content that they have available to them, and actually changing the content.

Narrator: Right next door in Leanne's class, students are doing just that.

Leanne Barch /Teacher: They were engaged in a project that was self-directed about painted lady butterflies. It's a project that they just needed to pick out topics that they wanted to find out, and they chose as to how they wanted to illustrate that. So they were given the options of keynote, smart, notebook, iMovie, through clay, through visual arts, through language arts, and they chose whatever style they wanted to do that. But we have a diversity of learners, and learners learn through the way they want to learn. So through choice, and through voice, they select how they want to pick out the best way to display their product.

Narrator: And Cheryl is also involved in 21st century teaching and learning at the school.

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Cheryl Cameron /Teacher: Before, I always felt I needed to know all the answers, but I know now that I don't have to know all the answers even with the kindergarten kids. So it's nice to be able to have that at your fingertips or to explore together and to really learn with the children more than being the teacher.

Narrator: And it's that exploration of practice and learning that's part of the Thunder Bay Catholic District School Board's vision. The board is part of an innovation project. Teachers were initially looking at technology as a tool, and now school leaders are investigating their roles supporting 21st century teaching and learning.

Joan Powell /Director of Education: I think it has to be multi-level because we're talking about massive change in our orientation towards teaching and learning. And it's much more about learning now than ever, and much less about teaching.

Don Grant /Principal: It seems only logical that I need to understand what we're trying to learn. And in this dramatic shift in teaching and learning, in this very moment we're in right now, I need to understand what has to take place. So I as well, model to them that I don't have all the answers. That I certainly am on a journey, and I'm certainly trying to take in as much information as possible to assist with the well-being of all of our students, and of our staff.

Students: Are you going to change the world?

Narrator: Peter and the other teachers teach each other.

Peter Cameron: We do, which is a model of 21st century learning as well.

Leanne Barch: We do a lot of collaborative teaching, a lot of ideas, a lot of sharing, a lot of technology devices that are shared between the two of us.

Don Grant: The key part of teachers learning from each other is to be able to be independent, but at the same time, to let down the guard, and to say "I don't get this." and "I really struggle with this," and "Wow, that's really new. I don't understand that at all. How does it work for you?" So a combination of working collaboratively, and at the same time, that open stance to learning.

Narrator: All of Cheryl, Leanne, and Peter's teaching practices are rooted in sound pedagogy.

Don Grant: The Assessment for Learning Project, understanding our learning goals, our success criteria, descriptive feedback,

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having those components in place, not including any devices or technologies, that's crucial. I think all of those teachers have a good grasp of focused teaching, a refined teaching, and now they're starting to integrate that technology effectively so they're not wasting any time. And they're using the technology to their advantage to become more efficient, more effective teachers using sound pedagogy.

Leanne Barch: We want to maximize their learning. We want to maximize our teaching.

Narrator: The foundation is set. But this shift in education means there are some unknowns.

Joan Powell: We're developing the expectations as we go. We have a vision of where we want our children to be, and where we want ourselves to be as learners. It's evolving as we go. So it's really interesting new learning, and if you are not the kind of person who gets excited about the prospect of really new learning that's not really extremely well defined, I think it can be a pretty daunting prospect for you. Having said that, I think we've got a critical mass of people in this board who embrace the whole idea of something new, and different and exciting, and we'll move forward with it, and the others will come as they're ready to come.

Narrator: Those who have moved forward say they're seeing results.

Cheryl Cameron: In the beginning we were a little bit worried about small hands touching the technology, but iPods, iPads, the Smart Boards, the Smart Table, it's been unbelievable what the kids have even been able to even teach us and what they know coming from home or different backgrounds, and they can share with us. But the ones that aren't familiar with it find it very easy to learn to manipulate, and it just adds another dimension to our learning and to the experience during the day.

Leanne Barch: It allowed us to have more student work brought to the immediate front. As opposed to waiting and displaying it on poster boards, we can do everything immediately through the doc cameras, through snapshots of their work, and it's immediate peer descriptive feedback. We can see it. They can see it. They can talk about it, so technology is huge.

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Peter Cameron: Students are, with the implementation and integration of technology, are creating. And when students are creators of content, they make it more individualized, and they're more engaged. They're creating content far beyond what I would expect my students to do.

Student Project Soundtrack: Charity starts with a little act.

Peter Cameron: My students used to write narrative stories. Three and four years ago, best case scenario, they would type them up, publish them, print them, read them maybe to a peer or a parent, and it would go into a folder never to be read again. My students now, take their narrative story, and because they're writing, they know they're writing for a specific purpose in mind, which is something that they're engaged by, instead they're producing a video.

Student Video Soundtrack: Then I walked towards the tall, intimidating forest, as the crickets start softly and quietly chirping, scared past their little wills.

Student Video Soundtrack: And even though the trees the owls are amongst are banging and smashing against each other, the owls are still hooting in a low, repetitive, and calm way.

Peter Cameron: So it's incredibly engaging, and I then become just kind of the learner as well or the guide on the side.

Music: Instrumental

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