District School Board of Niagara
CODE Innovation Fund Report 2015-2016

Participants:

Wes Hahn, Superintendent of Education (Elementary)
Helen McGregor, Superintendent of Curriculum & Student Achievement (9-12)
Jim Morgan, Superintendent of Human Resources
Rosemary Jellinck, Student Achievement Leader IT for Learning

Itinerary:

May 18 and 19, 2016:
Participants travelled to Texas and visited the following schools:
- *Belton New Tech High* - Belton, Texas
- *Richard J. Lee Elementary* - Coppell, Texas
- *Coppell New Tech High School* - Coppell, Texas

The itinerary also included leadership meetings with Belton Independent School District Senior Leadership and Coppell Independent District leadership and educators.

Key Learning:

- Inquiry learning was the foundation to programming in each of the school visits. Challenge based learning or CBL was utilized to engage students in "real life" problem solving. Technology, in many situations, was the tool for sharing, communicating, creating and designing multi-layered collaborative projects. Students were able to clearly articulate their learning structures such as "big ideas," "driving questions," "knows, need to knows," and group work norms.

- Student voice was prominent in each of the schools visited with the teachers acting as facilitators and guides encouraging students to take risks, engage in rich discussions and work collaboratively as a team. There was a high level of trust and responsibility given to students to not only monitor and complete tasks, but also to produce high quality work. Students, in many cases, demonstrated their learning through class presentations, choosing a variety of different media and technology sources when presenting to their peers. Training for staff and students on how to use the technology supported the learning.

- “Real life” or challenge based learning projects engaged students in collaborative work, however, direct and small group instruction was still evident with teachers maximizing teachable moments to ensure key concepts were understood and applied to learning in and out of the classroom.

- Flexibility throughout the learning environments was key with staff and students sharing the learning spaces. Students were able to move about the school and choose learning spaces that best met their needs. Learning spaces were either open concept or separated by glass walls, which created a transparent atmosphere. During the visit it was clear that the use of space and student organization was intentional in order to create a sense of family and to utilize resources and technology throughout the building.

  Application:

  - The experience highlighted for our team the importance of ensuring students are engaged in real life or CBL tasks. The process of solving challenging problems through collaboration, creativity and effective communication, provides students with skills that are relevant in today’s world and into the future.

  - Technology is the tool that engages and allows students to access information, but how the teacher designs the learning environment or task becomes critically important. We feel our direction of supporting teacher learning and providing them with their own technology encourages teachers to support the learning students require in order to be prepared for the future.

  - The DSBN team reflected on the 1:1 technology and the use of space in each school and how it was used to create collaborative learning environments. It caused us to reflect on how we engage students in learning and what resources are required to ensure thinking and problem solving drive the design of effective classroom practice.