

## Durham Catholic District School Board

Apple Innovation Tour – Texas

May 2016

### Participants:

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Tracy Barill, Superintendent of Education  
Janine Bowyer, Superintendent of Education  
Rosemary Leclair, Superintendent of Education  
John Mullins, Superintendent of Education  
Gerry O'Reilly, Superintendent of Education  
Ronald Rodriguez, Chief Information Officer

### Overview:

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The Apple Ontario Innovation Tour was a two-day tour of Apple Distinguished Schools near Austin, Texas and Dallas, Texas. The tour provided participants with the opportunity to visit two “New Tech” high schools, a new elementary school and talk with and learn from a variety of Apple Distinguished Educators.

### Learning Highlights

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#### Apple Distinguished Schools

This tour provided participants with the opportunity to see Apple Distinguished Schools in action. The Apple Distinguished School designation is reserved for programs that meet criteria for innovation:

- Leadership
- Learning and teaching practices
- Ongoing professional learning
- Evidence of Success
- Flexible learning environments



#### Apple Distinguished Educators

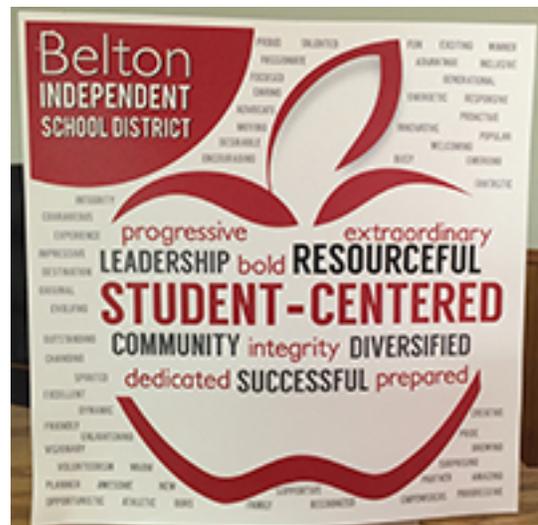
This tour provided participants the opportunity to speak with many innovative teachers and administrators, many of whom were Apple Distinguished Educators. “Apple Distinguished Educators are part of a global community of education leaders recognized for doing amazing things with Apple technology in and out of the classroom. They explore new ideas, seek new paths and embrace new opportunities. That includes working with each other — and with Apple — to bring the freshest, most innovative ideas to students everywhere.”

## Belton New-Tech High @Waskow

This small school of approximately 450 students was a part of the Belton Independent School District and was a satellite school to the much larger Belton High School. The focus of this school was project/problem based learning with 1:1 technology. Students were actively engaged in collaboratively and individually solving problems based on the curriculum expectations. Some of the problems were posed to them by their teachers, while other problems were of their own design. Some of the key features of this school:



- Flexible learning environment – the students had passes that they earned that allowed them to choose their own learning space. The classrooms and hallways were open and mimicked the look and feel of an office more than a school.
- The technology they used was secondary to the problem based learning. It facilitated and supported their learning, but was not front and centre.
- The students were very articulate and clearly understood the mission, vision and values of their school.
- Although there was some direct instruction, teachers were not front and centre in the classrooms; they were instead facilitators of the learning.
- Project or problem based learning challenges are initiated over a period of 4 – 6 weeks, both in grade level and at times vertical multi-grade teams, based on 'driving questions'.
- Each 'project/problem' is assessed according to specific learner outcomes (60% - content knowledge, 10% - professional ethics, innovation, written communication and oral presentation).
- The genesis of this school was to create an open enrolment model to engage learners in a school district where 42% of students were deemed 'disadvantaged', a model that would promote high engagement and high achievement through a satellite campus program.



## **Richard E. Lee Elementary School.**

This Kindergarten to grade 5 school was just two years old and was significant for its environmental design. It is a net-zero school that uses less energy than it produced. All details of its design considered its environmental impact. Some of the key features of this school included:

- Division of all of the students into a house system that allowed cross grade inquiries to occur.
- The flexible learning spaces allowed students to choose the setting that best suited their learning style or their task. Large group, small group and individual work was occurring throughout the school.
- The challenges or inquiries were based on an overarching theme for all members of the school. For example, while we were there the theme was Affect and Effect.
- All students had access to technology – with iPads being the tool used by all students.
- Students were very articulate about the mission, vision and values of the school.
- The educators in the building were given a significant amount of planning time to ensure that all grades and houses were meeting the curriculum expectations.



## **New Tech High@Coppell.**

This small school of approximately 450 students was very similar to New Tech High@Waskow, however it was much more established than the newer New Tech High @Waskow. We had the opportunity to talk to students, teachers and technical team from this school and we had the opportunity to meet with Apple Distinguished Educators from schools that were not part of the New Tech brand.

Some of our key learnings included:

- The use of iTunes U allows teachers and students yet another forum to engage in flexible learning opportunities based on technology and a variety of learning styles.
- Students self-select to attend this school and their desire to be a part of this program leads to its success.



- Problem based learning was a focus at other schools in the region not just at the New Tech highs. Principals from other schools in the district also set expectations for teachers to begin experimenting with problem-based learning, then progressed to expecting teachers to have at least one cross-curricular problem per month and then it built from there.



Apple educators from these schools told us that there was not the same consistency of approach as there was in the New Tech Highs.

- Multiple Professional learning opportunities provided teachers with the time to work together to create challenging and meaningful problems for their students. The teachers credited this time with their ability to proceed as effectively as an entire school.

