

DIRECTOR INNOVATION FUNDING – SUMMARY OF CONFERENCES ATTENDED BY SENIOR ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF**1. Apple Innovation Tour, Texas – March 2016**

Three superintendents with the Simcoe County District School Board participated in the Apple Innovation Tour March 1-3, 2016.

The Tour began in Austin, Texas where Apple showcased the first of the Apple Distinguished Schools, Belton New Tech High@Waskow in the Belton Independent School District. This specialized secondary school has only been open a short time. It is paired with the local secondary school and students can choose to take courses at both campuses. Of interest to our group was the open learning space concept and the project based learning that was taking place with each student being provided with their own Apple device. Teachers were facilitators of the learning and the students were completely engaged in their inquiries.

The Tour continued to Dallas, Texas where we visited Richard E. Lee Elementary School. This was a truly unique elementary school in terms of its flexible design and robust information technology infrastructure. The learning spaces allow for collaboration with mobile furnishings and the vertical alignment of students configured in a “house system”. The school is entirely self-sustaining environmentally. Again, the students were engaged in their learning individually and in small groups with the teachers facilitating the “challenges” they were solving.

Next, the Tour stopped at New Tech High@Coppell. Like New Tech High@Waskow, this unique school facilitates learning through problem challenges and the use of 1:1 devices.

The final stop on the tour was Coppell High School in Dallas. Another Apple Distinguished School, this facility houses over 3000 students and 250 staff members. More traditional in structure, Coppell High is anything but traditional in program delivery. Educators are facilitators and designers and in each learning space, the students explained their learning in blended and virtual modalities.

The Apple Innovation Tour provided our team of supervisory officers with a view of what 21st century learning could and should be. Flexibility in design and space, the use of devices to facilitate and enhance learning and a refreshing reimaged role of the teacher were take-aways for us. At the same time, we were proud to know that the direction we are going as an Ontario school board is consistent with the approach used at the Apple Distinguished Schools in Texas.

2. ASCD Conference – “Why Digital Leadership Matters”, Atlanta – March 30 – April 1, 2016

One superintendent with the Simcoe County District School Board attended this conference.

What was learned? While I had an opportunity to attend a wide range of conference offerings, I want to focus my reflection on the learnings I had in the area of Innovation and Technology and in particular my reflections following a session led by Stephen W. Anderson which focused on “**Why Digital Leadership Matters**”. As a Superintendent and member of the senior team, I need to model my capacity in the use of technology appropriate to my role. In Senior Team discussions, as a collective, we need to be mindful of:

- Providing targeted opportunities for admin to keep them up to date with technology that assists them in being instructional leaders.
- Encouraging Ps/VPs to be willing to learn from our students and staff.
- Creating learning opportunities for admin where the learning targets how tech tools are relevant to the role of administrators and have a corresponding productivity payoff.

Of additional note, leaders who are model users of technology (“tech savvy”) are able to seamlessly serve as coach and support for others.

System application: In order to know what makes effective classroom instruction/tech enabled learning environments, our leaders must have capacity to use technology effectively and need to know what solid use of technology looks like in the learning process at the classroom level.

Some Key Classroom Look Fors Include:

- Student centred or teacher centred? Who is using the tech tool?
- If you took the tech away, would the learning be different?
- How much variety and choice is there? (Various apps, tools)
- How much opportunity for students to collaborate with tech? With other students?
- Are there opportunities to create something new? (Creating, evaluating, analyzing are key skills)

Additional Learning: In a separate session that focused on **Digital Citizenship**, my reflections included the clear underlying theme that as educators, we need to work with our students to help them become positive digital citizens. There needs to be an intentional plan to fostering digital literacy with students, parents and staff. Solid digital citizens are *safe, responsible and respectful* in their online interactions. We need to communicate the importance of these messages repeatedly at the school level and centrally.

System Application: It could be argued that the ultimate focus related to innovation and learning needs to be upon teaching the importance of creating a digital portfolio and even more so a positive digital footprint. The reality is that everything we do online leaves a digital footprint. The following reflective questions are of utmost importance:

- Are the places you go and the things you say online aligned with your character and what you do in your everyday life?
- Are your footprints where you want them to be?

3. Learning and The Brain Conference: The Science of imagination: Cultivating Curiosity and Creativity in our Schools, Florida, April 7 – 9, 2016

Three superintendents with the Simcoe County District School Board attended this conference.

Highlights:

- Dr. Ken Kosik - “Curiosity is fundamental to our nature. We have a longing to express ourselves – a need to be creative.”
- Scott Barry Kaufman – “Daydreaming is making meaning of your experiences.” “Give students meaningful opportunities to make informed choices about curricular content through project based learning.” “I. Q. = Imagination Quotient”
- Dr. Helene Hadani – “The brain is more active during improvisation than memorization.”
- Dr. Todd Kashdan – “Curiosity is the glue that keeps us together.”
- Anglea Maiers – “Take responsibility for your passion.”
- Sir Ken Robinson - “Children are naturally creative and education stifles them. Diversity is the hallmark of humanity – we have a narrow conception of ability.”

Current and Future Application in SCDSB:

- The Science of Learning through Play: supports the play-based initiative in SCDSB in our primary classrooms and the outdoor classrooms created through FDK program support
- The Learning Science – The Arts and Creativity: STEAM activities are now imbedded in all SCDSB schools; Maker Faire at Nottawasaga Pines Secondary School was open to all SCDSB staff, students and parents and welcomed over 400 visitors to create, play and learn
- Creating the Child-Centered School - Spaces, Technology and Pedagogy: SCDSB students are leading as our schools transform learning spaces, providing more inviting places to learn and grow; purchasing staff are seeking new vendors to provide work stations options that are better suited to student learning needs
- Using Technology to Engage Creativity, Motivation and Higher Order Thinking – SCDSB continues to support teachers and students as we explore new ways to share and assess learning using technology as a tool; integrating technology with purpose – GAFE, Explain Everything, Google Docs, etc.
- Essential Teaching Practices – SCDSB continues to focus those teaching practices that encourage students to pursue their passions in the classroom – student voice and choice
- Diversity and differentiation - Every child needs to be in a room with high expectations – program development will focus on individual student learning interests and goals