CODE: Director Innovation Funding

Introduction

At YCDSB, the Director's Code Innovation funding for 2015-16 has provided the opportunity for exposure to new ideas, networking with other Provinces and School Boards, and rich internal dialogue for the Director, Coordinating Superintendent, Chief Information Officer and Superintendent of Curriculum at conference venues. This group attended the Apple Education Leadership Institute in Toronto and The Toronto Education Technology Summit with a goal to further expand technology enabled learning throughout our system. We had targeted 'spread' within our 21st Century Learning work in 2015-16 and the 21C teams in each school have grown from 4 members in 2013-14, to 6 members in 2014-15 and 10 educators per school in 2015-16. Moving forward into 2016-17, the 21st Century learning in each school will include all of the educators to facilitate further spread of innovative teaching and learning throughout our system with no teacher or student left behind.

The presentations and our follow up dialogue ignited innovative thinking within our group. The variety of presentations and workshop formats brought big ideas, sample implementations and best practices to life. This included key note speeches from experts in the field of educational technology and innovation intertwined with case studies of the work of individual teachers in their classrooms. It also provided for cross board sharing that builds confidence in senior leadership that all boards are working toward the same goals, that they are reachable and that our own board is further along the road of inspiring creativity and innovation in students that was previously thought.

Highlights and Effectiveness

Attending these conferences has provided a rich learning opportunity, filled with new ideas, for YCDSB. An immediate impact has been the YCDSB commitment to provide the Critical Thinking Consortium resource bank to all teachers. There is also better understanding of the technology trends in education, such as Coding, Virtual Reality, Adaptive Learning, Robotics and the Internet of Things. These are technologies that districts will need to prepare teachers and technology professionals to use and support. The partnership between Curriculum and Information Technology teams has never been more important and will be critical to the success of technology innovation planning and implementation as it relates to 21st Century Learning. Our vision for an inclusive culture of students, school staff and community, engaged in innovative teaching and learning practices within our schools, has been enriched by these experiences.

Strategic Application (Value for Students, Staff and Parents)

As a result of attending these conferences, our technology innovation vision for 2016/2017 will be threefold,
focused on the student, the teacher and the school community.

Student Focus

One of our technology and innovation goals for 2016-17 will foster awareness in students of the opportunities for entrepreneurial activity through critical thinking, creativity and innovation. Our school libraries will strive to become spaces that ignite student ideas and support them to move learning concepts from idea to practice. These spaces will include opportunities for experience with virtual reality, makerspaces, robotics and coding.

Teacher Focus

We have known for a few years that there are pockets of excellence in a growing number of individual schools.
There has been a focus on spread from the beginning of the 21C initiative and as mentioned, the current 2015-16 school teams have 10 members per school. For 2016-17, every teacher in the system will be included in a workshop on progressive, technology supported learning. To actualize this goal, a conference style professional activity day will be offered for all secondary school teachers on November 25, 2016. For elementary teachers, workshops, facilitated by teachers from the field will be scheduled throughout the school year. Workshop topics will be offered in response to teacher feedback regarding needs and interests.

Community Focus

The Continuing Education Department will investigate opportunities for after school programs for students of all ages in areas such as technology and innovation. These programs are intended to help students and their parents appreciate their interests and plan pathways for student creativity and growth. These after school activities could provide opportunities for students to experience coding or robotics that open doors to future educational endeavours. One example is this summer's 4 day YCDSB Google Summer Camp which will be an opportunity for parents and students to learn assistive technology tools and learning strategies together.

In conclusion, these three goals will help us meet our vision of a 21st Century Learning Community in which each stakeholder is an integral part of an inclusive culture and our motto is 'All In'. The Director's Innovation Funding helped us to augment our 2015/2016 21st Century Learning initiatives, and was the impetus to grow our plan for the 2016/2017 school year to _reach every teacher_ and provide technology enabled learning opportunities for _all students_.