

Transforming Student Instruction and Learning Practices in Ontario

The Technology and Learning Fund

*Preparing students for success in a complex, digital world is shifting educational objectives and practices in Ontario. The **Technology and Learning Fund** is supporting the province's publicly-funded schools as they continue to improve student achievement and integrate technology into learning and teacher instruction. Teachers, principals and system leaders alike are vigorously mobilizing Ontario's vision for 21st century learning and teaching – and in the process, are helping to build Ontario's reputation as a world leader in education.*

TO: ONTARIO DIRECTORS OF EDUCATION

FROM: Frank Kelly

DATE: May 4, 2015

RE: Mobilizing Ontario's Vision for Technology and Learning

Today I would like to provide you with a progress update on the Technology and Learning Fund, as well as important information regarding the online reporting application that boards will be using to detail the impact of their 2014-15 technology projects. This includes a Plan of Action for the 2015-16 school year.

Since 2011, the Ministry of Education and the Council of Ontario Directors of Education (CODE) have, through the ministry's Technology and Learning Fund (TLF), worked together and invested in supporting Ontario schools as they change teaching practice and build engagement for technology-enabled learning and increased achievement for students throughout the province.

Beginning in 2014-15, and building on the innovation results to-date, the new TLF is providing funds over three years for the acquisition of digital tools and resources (e.g., tablets, cameras, software, 3D printers and scanners) and for supporting the provision of related professional learning opportunities for educators and school or board leaders.

I am pleased to report that all boards in Ontario continue to report progress and success in scaling up and systematizing technology-enabled learning while increasing student engagement, creativity, learning and development of 21st Century skills and competencies enabled by technology.

Update on the Technology and Learning Fund

The new Technology and Learning Fund continues to change the landscape of technology-enabled learning in Ontario's schools, with boards in various stages of providing enhancements and growth in the area of technology-enabled student learning and teacher instruction.

The TLF initiative, which started with 46 district school boards in Round 1 (21st Century Innovation Research) and involving approximately 600 schools and 39,000 students, has grown annually to now include over 1400 schools and 160,000 students directly involved in Round 3 – with all 72 district school boards, four school authorities and one provincial school completing technology-enabled projects.

This year, boards are reporting continued success in using technology to engage students, foster new and creative learning experiences, and provide a classroom environment that is deeply rooted in the development of important 21st Century skills and competencies, such as critical thinking, communication and collaboration.

Beginning this month, a focus on strategic action research projects will be undertaken as part of the TLF. These key projects, in areas warranting targeted and/or deeper study for the benefit of system learning for all school boards (e.g., game-based learning, robotics, mathematics) will be a vehicle for determining the impact of specific initiatives related to technology-enabled learning and teaching.

These projects will help identify solutions and those important practices and strategies that lead to ongoing refinement and implementation. Having a “community of practice” working together on relevant action research initiatives will increase opportunities for students and teachers and inform future plans and directions.

(Note: Curriculum Services Canada completed a research review of the 21st Century Innovation Research Initiatives during the 2013-14 school year. “*A Passport to a Changing Landscape*,” CSC’s report on the transformation taking place throughout the province, is available in English and French on the CODE website at www.ontariodirectors.ca)

Reporting on 2014-15 and Planning for 2015-16

To facilitate the process for planning and reporting on the Technology and Learning Fund over three years, the Ministry will be launching a TLF online reporting tool on May 11, 2015.

This resource, still in its pilot phase, will continue to be developed and enhanced in the coming year. Your feedback on the reporting tool, which is intended to use technology to support board planning and reporting in an efficient and effective way is welcome.

Details regarding the online reporting tool are attached to this Memorandum. Boards will receive logins to access the tool, based on the board TLF contact information provided previously (director, superintendent, TLF project lead). Please note that demonstration webinars for staff designated by each board are scheduled on May 12, 2015 at 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. Additional details regarding the webinars is in the attached Memorandum.

Two reports are to be completed: the financial report distributed by CODE on March 23, 2015, and Sections C, D, and E of the online reporting tool (for the 2015-16 Plan of Action). Both are due June 15, 2015.

The Ministry of Education and CODE are committed to continuing their support for district school boards as they prepare students with 21st Century competencies and strive to build dynamic systems for technology-enabled learning and teaching.

Planning for 2015-16

The Technology and Learning Fund provides unprecedented support for the students of Ontario. This initiative is preparing students to face the rapid technological change and innovation that is – and will continue to be – part of life in the 21st Century.

In light of the strong, ongoing commitment to technology-enabled learning, *I can confirm that funding will be available to all boards* to further technology-enabled learning for students and to support changes to teacher instruction during the 2015-16 school year.

Please refer to the Ministry of Education's March 26, 2015 B8 memo: *2015-16 School Year Education Programs – Other (EPO) Funding* and its Appendix A for program and board-specific information on allocations in support of

technology-enabled learning in the following inter-related areas: Technology and Learning Fund (\$36.5M); Technology Enabled Learning and Teaching Contact (\$6.4M); and Technology Enabled Learning and Teaching Contact in French-language School Boards (\$1.3M). CODE will communicate further information about the requirements with respect to the TLF 2015-16 allocations (including Letters of Agreement) in summer 2015 following a review of boards' financial reports (2014-15) and online Plan of Action (2015-16).

For planning purposes, boards may anticipate that the breakdown of funding in 2015-16 will be similar to that of 2014-15: up to 80% for acquisition of digital tools and resources, 20% for professional development, plus continued support for evidence-based decision making through an inter-related Innovation Research component. Boards may plan for activities including professional development and research to be undertaken from September 2015 to June 2016. 2015-16 allocations must be expended by February 2016.

Given this exceptional commitment to 21st Century skills and competencies, innovation, leadership, capacity building and professional learning for the integration of content, pedagogy and technology for learning and teaching in the 21st century, it is essential that all boards complete the online reporting tool and file their financial report on **June 15, 2015**.

Support by CODE Regional Leads

Throughout the duration of the Technology and Learning Fund project, CODE regional leads will be available to support and work with boards as they implement and report on their evidence-based TLF investments and inter-related 21st Century Innovation Research projects, both aimed at successfully mobilizing technology and learning on a system-wide basis. Boards are encouraged to connect with their regional lead should they have questions or suggestions, or require more information.

Future Communications

Sharing the significant successes and findings from the Technology and Learning Fund projects is an important part of this initiative. It enables us to recognize those activities and strategies that are effectively supporting, encouraging and enhancing the technology-enabled learning taking place throughout the province. Our first communication, available in late May 2015, will highlight such work by the boards.

Among the resources boards have turned to in their quest for sustainability and scaling-up practice is the work of **Dr. Chris Dede** from Harvard University. Dr. Dede has repeatedly expressed his admiration of the scope, scale and extent of this multi-year government commitment and funding, and especially of the level of engagement, leadership and uptake by school districts, principals and teachers.

As in previous years, Dr. Dede will be working with senior educational leaders at the October 2015 Symposium. CODE and the Ministry of Education, as part of their commitment to changing the picture of technology in Ontario schools, will continue to make Dr. Dede's research available to the province's educational leaders.

(The fourth annual 21st Century Teaching and Learning Roundtable for system leadership teams [October 2015 Symposium] will be held in Toronto on October 27, 2015 – please save this date!)

In summary, *the impact of these technology-enabled projects clearly suggests that teachers and students are engaged.* Changes in pedagogy are driving local decision-making, and parents are recognizing the importance and usefulness of technology in their children's daily lives. All boards are showing signs of systematizing and scaling up innovation, and most include a focus on digital citizenship as part of their innovation work.

On behalf of CODE and the Ministry of Education, I am pleased to recognize the outstanding work currently taking place in schools and boards throughout Ontario, and extend my appreciation for your continued support of this valuable initiative for Ontario's students.

Regards,



Frank Kelly
Executive Director
Council of Ontario Directors of Education