



Avon Maitland District School Board

Technology, Pedagogy, Mindset, and now – Learning Environments

Our 1:1 iPad initiative in the Avon-Maitland District School Board has been responsible for the fastest and most significant change in mindset that I have had in 17 years of teaching. As an NGL Technology Coach (Next Generation Learning) I have gone through a transformation as my role has organically evolved in the past two years. Initially, what we did as coaches was largely about the device, and seemed very app-centric. That's understandable, as there was a lot of training and professional development to be done. But as we systematically put 5000 iPads into the hands of our grade 7–10 students, our focus became the professional development that would result in a transformation of pedagogy.



In 24 short months we have moved from the device, toward the PD and pedagogies associated with transformed practices, and a massive shift in system mindset. Paired with a focus on new literacies, this shifts the roles of teachers and learners and leverages the power of the device (among other things).

The final piece in this transformative puzzle is that of the **learning environment**. If we are no longer delivering content in traditional forms on a regular basis, why must our classroom reflect traditional designs? My students



no longer need to spend the majority of their time facing the ‘front’ of the room, looking at me. I know longer act as the sole provider of content, but more a facilitator, or guide, in an effort to tap into the creativity of my students. They now work in a much more collaborative environment (both physically and digitally) and are learning to communicate and problem solve in new and exciting ways. Their learning environment should be reflective of that transformation. Hence, our agile learning environment.

This collection of flexible and agile work spaces instantly changed the feel of our room. There is no seating plan. There are no assigned partners or seats. In truth, in some cases there are no seats – as students choose to stand in Stand2Learn desks, or at adjustable and mobile ‘Ergotron’ standing desks. There is even a couch.

The addition of transparent, wall-mounted “idea panels” for brainstorming, and the ever-popular window bar (which takes advantage of our 5 metre window that overlooks thousands of acres of fields and forests) add an openness and airiness to the room that is refreshing and relaxing.

The students have been asked to be very mindful when it comes to justifying the workspaces they choose for certain tasks. Already, they are aware that the sofa, bean bags, and ottoman are better for collaborative tasks that involve conversation. They suggest that the window bar offers a more private area where students choose to minimize distractions. They’ve even said the view from the window bar allows them to focus and visualize while reading and writing!



These, of course, are early observations and are qualitative at best. The ultimate goal is that our agile learning environment has a positive impact on student outcome.

When paired with an innovators mindset, a transformative approach to teaching and learning, and 1:1 mobile devices, I'm certain that our new agile learning environment will create results that reach far beyond engagement and motivation.