



Learning Together for the Future

In its 2013 Definition of 21st Century Literacies, the National Council of Teachers of English notes that “As society and technology change, so does literacy. Because technology has increased the intensity and complexity of literate environments, the 21st Century demands that a literate person possess a wide range of abilities and competencies, many literacies.”

As ever, to be successful throughout their lives, all of our students need to develop the skills to become effective learners, thinkers, innovators, collaborators and contributors. However, to be successful in the 21st century, students will need to master new complexities: interconnectivity, multiplicity, flexibility, adaptation.

Now more than ever, students live interdependent lives in a connected world that exposes them to benefits and risks. Educators and parents play a central role in guiding students as they develop a lifelong online presence – their digital footprint—in this new world. Technology-enhanced learning -- the integration of technological tools and online spaces in classrooms—keeps the focus on learning new skills and ideas, and supports learning for all students. By participating throughout their schooling in learning activities such as blogging and media creation, students are supported in their development as ethical and informed digital citizens.

In addition to being critical and creative thinkers, 21st-century students need to be able to collaborate well with others, both face to face and virtually. Technology-enhanced learning gives all students opportunities to prepare themselves for a socially connected and ever changing online world. To meet the needs of all learners and promote creativity and collaboration, Surrey educators are able make use of a variety of engaging online resources. One example is Surreyschools.ca, our locally developed digital collaboration system, which connects students, parents, educators, and support staff members and provides safe access to educational programming and learning resources anytime, anywhere.

Embedding the Priority Practices of Inquiry learning, Assessment, and Differentiation

Inquiry Learning

B.C.'s curriculum has a renewed emphasis on depth learning that requires students to approach course work with an inquiry focus. Inquiry learning inspires students to adopt the mindset of scientists, writers, designers, inventors, and artists; and asks learners, supported by the guidance of educators, to formulate and investigate questions about authentic problems to build new understanding, meaning and knowledge. Technology-enhanced learning expands and enriches the research process, allowing students to cast larger nets to answer their questions as they use Skype to video chat with local and/or international experts, visit virtual tours of historical sites and access district information databases. Students are able to share their new learning with a wide virtual audience, showcasing their creativity, independence, and problem-solving skills; and amplifying their sense of achievement and pride in learning..

Assessment

Assessment is the process of collecting evidence about what a student knows, understands, and is able to do. Educators evaluate ongoing student learning to gauge understanding and progress and to create feedback for improvement (formative assessment). Technology-enhanced learning supports this kind of assessment in many ways. Students are able to regularly evaluate their own learning and that of their peers by storing their work in digital portfolios: accessible personal archives that show how their learning has grown and changed over time. Educators can use a variety of technology tools to give real time continuous feedback to students as they learn. Additionally, technology-enhanced learning provides students with a range of flexible venues to share their learning in a variety of ways; the wide choice of available online presentation tools gives all students the chance to personalize how they will present their learning. In short, technology-enhanced learning gives students and educators the tools to more consistently assess learning, promoting ongoing achievement and engagement in the learning process.

Differentiation

Technology-enhanced learning offers important supports for our ongoing efforts at meeting the learning needs of each Surrey student, and can remove or offset many barriers students face throughout the learning process. Crucially, ready access to technological tools and resources allows educators to differentiate instruction by selecting a variety of appropriate resources for learning tasks. In many cases, student exploration of information resources can be facilitated by device accessibility features, including text to speech, font size and online dictionaries. Technology-enhanced learning fosters the self-paced learning process in many ways, allowing educators to strengthen and extend the learning experience for all students by creating tutorials, hosting them on webpages or video streams, and encouraging students to revisit these when needed to deepen or clarify their learning. Finally, and as noted above, another key way in which technology-enhanced learning “levels the learning playing field” for all learners is that it gives them more access to expressive tools. These tools allow students to work from their strengths as learners by providing new choices about how to present their learning.

Learning for Life

Our school district recognizes the overarching importance of creating innovative learning environments that provide tools for students that are relevant to their daily lives. To that end, all Surrey students are able to access safe, online technologies that empower learning and better prepare them to thrive in an increasingly digital world. As students complete authentic learning tasks, create knowledge, and share it with a variety of audiences, their sense of purpose and engagement in their learning increases. As learning opportunities and technologies evolve, we are committed to developing and adapting practice to meet the needs of all our learners -- students, educators, and support staff members – preparing them for success, both now and in the future.