



# Technology Can LITE the Path Forward

by RICK COLLINS

*Tech@Work is a regular column written by members of the Technology Education Special Interest Council (TESIC) focusing on the integration of technology for 21st Century Learning. The column highlights ongoing initiatives from across the province.*

The 'Learning In Technological Environments' (LITE) project involves the integration of a broad range of technologies in the classroom while providing students the opportunity to develop 21st century learning skills. During the last three years, district supports have included a partially allocated teaching unit, an itinerant teacher coordinator, funding to acquire additional technology, and substitute time for teacher participation in professional learning (PL) events. Schools involved in this project have designated a lead teacher to promote technology use in their school and have committed to the continual integration of technology directly in the classroom environment. The ultimate goal is to enhance student learning and engagement through technology integration and to provide continued PL for teachers.

The LITE project was initially started in the former Cormack Trail School Board in 2001 and remained intact when the Western School District was created in 2004. In 2009, the Western School District received a HP Innovations in Education Grant to implement the project at French Shore Academy (former Roncalli High School – Port Saunders) and at Stephenville Middle School (Stephenville). Once the HP project ended, the Western School District continued to support the LITE project. As a result, the project was gradually expanded beyond the two schools listed above to include G.C. Rowe Junior High (Corner Brook), Labrador Straits Academy (L'Anse au Loup), Presentation Junior High, (Corner Brook), and St. James Regional High (Port Aux Basques).

## HighLITEs of Success

All schools involved in the LITE project have had similar successes. However, my focus and the specific examples used will be from G.C. Rowe and Presentation Junior High School, as I am currently the Lead LITE teacher for both schools. The focus for this section will be the level of technology integration by staff, professional development and student engagement/motivation.

## Technologies Being Used

Many technologies have been used by students and teachers in LITE schools. Hardware includes wireless internet, laptops, tablets, personal computers and other student owned electronic mobile devices. These technologies are being used regularly for various purposes. Software use has included Smart Response, Socrative, Google Apps for Education (Gmail, Google Docs, Blogger, Google Sites, YouTube, etc.), Sophia.org, Audacity, Moodle, Twitter, Facebook, Quizlet, Puzzlemaker, Popplet, Today's Meet, Repix and various apps on mobile devices. The fact that these are being used is a success in itself. With the help of the Lead LITE Teacher, teachers are augmenting this feat by learning how to effectively use these to complement the curriculum.

## Professional Learning Opportunities

Teachers are using varying technologies at different levels of interest and/or ability. In many cases, teachers do not know about the educational possibilities before professional development opportunities have been provided. It is therefore important to provide opportunities for appropriate PL and this is what the LITE project has continued to do for the schools involved. First, there is traditional PL where teachers, during a district wide or school closeout, would attend sessions regarding a technology or set of technologies that they would like to use. The LITE project is training leaders to create and lead these sessions. Personally, I have provided professional learning on the Flipped Classroom, the LITE project, Google Apps for Education, and numerous other web tools. These topics have been highlighted at the Canadian Association of School Administrator's (CASA) conference in summer of 2012, the Leadership at Work (LAW) conference in 2012, and there have been ongoing professional learning sessions at staff meetings throughout several schools in the area. Secondly, the LITE project (through a partially allocated teach-

ing unit) provides the means for more ‘just in time’ PL experiences for staff at all LITE Schools. This is accomplished on a day to day basis and involves the LITE teacher assisting other teachers in creating, evaluating, teaching and/or reflecting upon lesson plans that integrate various types of hardware and/or software into the teaching and learning environment. Similar to students in the school, teachers are also learning on a day-to-day basis.

**Student Engagement and Motivation**

Survey data has also been obtained through the LITE project to indicate that technology integration has the potential to increase student motivation and engagement. Here are some results that were shown in G.C. Rowe and Presentation Junior High Schools combined (~650 students, October 2013):

**Table 1: Student Response to Technology use at two LITE schools**

Statement	% Agree or Strongly Agree
I prefer to use technology to do writing project instead of using pen and paper, and technology makes schoolwork more fun/interesting	Over 90
Technology helps improve quality of schoolwork	Over 80
Technology helps me understand better what I learn in school	Over 80

As a leading edge school in technology integration in the area, we are also involved in action research. One such research project involved the Flipped Classroom strategy for Grade 7 Math and Science classes. With district support through Christine Elliott (Student Support Services - Itinerant - Enrichment with the Western Regional Office in Corner Brook), Shelly Hicks (Math Department Head at G.C. Rowe Junior High in Corner Brook) and I found several positive results as outlined in the table:

**Table 2: Student Engagement in our Flipped Classroom Action**

Statement (after Flipped Classroom experience)	% Agree or Strongly Agree - Math	% Agree or Strongly Agree - Science
Class was more engaging and interactive	82	90
I participated more in class	77	85
Videos made subject easier to understand	77	79

**Conclusion – A Direction Forward**

The LITE project has had several successes. Many teachers are using technology in their teaching and learning environment, and it has been illustrated that students want to see technology in their classrooms. Through initiatives such as the Flipped Classroom and Bring Your Own Device days, I have no doubt that many staff and students are becoming more motivated and engaged in the teaching and learning process. I sincerely hope that this level of increased focus on technology integration through projects such as LITE continues into the future.

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