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Application Paper: Edmodo

Application Paper on Edmodo

In this paper, I will be sharing what I learned about Edmodo. My analysis will include a discussion on its use and benefits in a specific private school classroom. An analysis of the benefits that to be derived from full implementation of Edmodo in schools within the Archdiocese of Washington's and recommendations on full integration could be accomplished.

Introduction

There is a proliferation of technology and a growing body of research that suggests when smartly implemented technology has positive outcomes for students. During the 2015-16 School Year, St. Peter's School launched school-wide use of Edmodo. Doing so was consistent with its mission and regarded as necessary to ensuring that "every student is receiving the education that is appropriate for their age and needs (St. Peter's School. (n.d.). Retrieved November 8, 2015, from <http://stpetersschoolwaldorf.org/>).

Full implementation followed a one-year pilot with its 5th Grader Class. As the guardian of an eighth grade student at St. Peter's, who has used Edmodo for four months now, my discussion on its existing application and use will be from that perspective; however, my analysis will address how Edmodo might be used on a broader scale across all schools within Archdiocese of Washington.

Analysis

On the heels of a successful pilot and integration of Edmodo at St. Peter's School, I believe that a case can be made concerning implementation across all schools within the Archdiocese of Washington. This paper will provide identify the strengths/weaknesses of Edmodo, barriers; as well as a strategic plan for implementing Edmodo system-wide which include a timeline, cost projection and justification.

Edmodo Strengths

Edmodo is a free social learning platform that is similar to Facebook. Student Accounts are totally private and viewable only by other Group Members. A unique 6-digit code is required before a student can create an account or access a group. It is COPPA¹ and

¹ The primary goal of COPPA is to place parents in control over what information is collected from their young children online. The Rule was designed to protect children under age 13 while accounting for the dynamic nature of the Internet (Complying with COPPA: Frequently Asked Questions, 2015).

FERPA² compliant, which means that parental permission is required for its use by students under the age of 13 and user information is not sold or rented to third parties. The following is a detailed overview of the strengths/weaknesses by stakeholder group (i.e., students, teachers and parents).

Teachers

Edmodo promotes effective communication and transparency. Teachers can keep up with discussions and assignments from anywhere; which provides increased opportunities to engage with students who may not typically participate in the traditional classroom. Edmodo can even be linked to smartphones, so that teachers receive notifications. This allows for private and timely feedback to students who may be struggling with homework or other assignments. Features like group announcements, discussions and chat foster teacher-student and student-student exchanges. Polls and automatic grading of quizzes will reduce grading time, paperwork and give students prompt feedback on their progress. The Edmodo Library feature is helpful because it permits storage of frequently used materials and resources, thus reducing paperwork.

² The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99) is a Federal law that protects the privacy of student education records. The law applies to all schools that receive funds under an applicable program of the U.S. Department of Education (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

And when Edmodo is used by multiple teachers, students have the ability to access all of their classes from a single site.

Teachers at the primary school level may have difficulty due to parents disinterest in given their children access to the internet. The inability to establish subfolders contributes to lengthy threads. Tag limitations pose an issue and require scrolling through news feeds (which is time-consuming and cumbersome). The WYSIWYG (acronym for "What You See Is What You Get") editor, which enables onscreen editing of equations or subscript, is difficult to use. The "fill-in-blank" feature in online quizzes, requires entry of exact wording versus narratives, which counteracts the efficiency gains normally associated with its automatic grading.feature.

Students

Edmodo is extremely easy to use and navigate. Materials are all in one place, which makes navigation easier for students. Lost homework and the need for a separate planner are eliminated. Students who miss school are able to access assignments, complete them using Backpack (which is similar to Google Drive) and submit them via "Turn In." Alternatively, assignments can be printed and a hard copy submitted by hand. The Progress Indicator allows students to monitor their own

advancement, which encourages learner autonomy and responsible learning (Moore & Kearsley, 2012, p. 115).

The only disadvantage encountered from the student standpoint is that Edmodo's profile options are very limited and do not allow students to express their creativity and/or interests.

Parents

Edmodo offers a safe and secure environment. Parents are provided with a unique 6-digit passcode which allows them to see only their student's profile.

Unfortunately, Edmodo does not allow parents to view student work without actively participating in actual classroom discussions. It also does not allow parents to engage in two-way communication with the student or teacher.

Strategy

It is imperative that leaders are able to articulate the benefits of systematic integration of Edmodo. Sufficient time and resources must be allocated to ensure that there are adequate levels of understanding concerning the relationship between formal and informal learning; the implications of technology on learner achievement and effective student assessment; and strategies for successful implementation. To achieve the desired level of participation, interactivity and social rapport, teachers will

need to be engaged in the process from the outset. Their input will be valuable in the development of a list of essential conditions to ensure optimal outcomes (Voogt, Knezek, Cox, Knezek, & ten Brummelhuis, 2013).

Barriers

Systematic use of Edmodo by the ADW amounts to an Organizational Change. To minimize push back, leadership must be prepared to explain the benefits to be derived from its use, specifically:

1. How ADW, schools, teachers, students, and parents, will separately and collectively will benefit;
2. The role Edmodo will play in achieving ADW's Mission and Goals;
3. Specifics relating to the type and number of students who will be served, which should include strategies to ensure that students who may not have access to the Internet outside of school don't feel left out (e.g., loaner tablet PCs, allotted time during the regular school schedule to allow them access Edmodo);
4. The impact on existing curricula;
5. The impact on human resources (e.g., Will more or less staff be required? Will additional hours be needed for training – outside of the regular school schedule?);

6. Ways in which Edmodo will enhance student support and methods of evaluation of its effectiveness; and
7. The role Edmodo can play developing an innovative system of instruction and the benefits to be derived therefrom. (Moore & Kearsley, 2012, p. 283).

There are also policy issues that will have to be addressed. This will require revising policies and procedures that are inappropriate or may hinder the online learning process (Moore & Kearsley, 2012, p. 194).

Timeline and Budget

Date	Activity	Responsible Party
December 2015	Establishment of Edmodo Work Group (ADW Finance and Technology Representatives; Principals, Technology and Training Staff, and Student, Teacher and Parents Representatives (from each school within the ADW).	ADW Administrators and School Principals.

Date	Activity	Responsible Party
January 2016	Edmodo Work Group Meetings Commence Discussion topics include: (1) Assessment of existing technology; (2) Budget; (3) Edmodo Hands-on Pilot; and (4) Systematic Roll-out	Same as above.
March 2016	Edmodo Pilot begins	Respective School Training, Technology and Social Studies Teachers
May 2016	Edmodo Pilot concludes; Lessons Learned are examined and required tweaks are made; preparation for system-wide implementation commences.	Edmodo Work Group
June 2016	Announcement made concerning system-wide implementation of Edmodo beginning 2016-17 School Year.	ADW via School Principals within the ADW.

Edmodo is a stand-alone application that can be best accessed via desktop,

laptop, tablets, and most smartphones. The greatest expense associated with implementation of Edmodo use system-wide will result from acquiring additional technology, antivirus software and securing sufficient bandwidth to support increased internet usage. The estimated cost for these is itemized below and could be incorporated into annual tuition costs which would offset any strain on the overall ADW budget.

Expense	Number	Cost	Cost Distribution (per Student – 300,000) ³
Tablet PCs	75,000	\$262,500.00	\$87.50
Wifi ⁴	45	\$ 24,000.00	\$.08
Antiviral Software	40	\$ 2,000.00	\$.07
Total Cost Per ADW Student			\$87.65

³ Figure is based on data obtained from the 2014-15 Archdiocese of Washington's Annual Data Book which reported student enrollment of +/- 300,000 in its 40 Primary/Middle and High Schools (Archdiocese of Washington, 2015)

⁴ All ADW Schools have internet accessibility; this cost is associated with upgrades only.

Justification

Research has shown that when used effectively ICT enhances traditional teaching, responsible learning and student engagement. In this regard, Edmodo is a valuable tool and will lead to the establishment of a more robust learning environment. It will also be a unifying instrument for teachers and schools within the Archdiocese of Washington. In addition to promoting the development of 21st Century Skills for students, teachers will benefit improvements in teaching quality and a stronger sense of team, as a result of asynchronous communication on best practices and shared lesson plans.

The learning curve for students is not expected to be steep since most students are already familiar with social media. Students will benefit from the personalized learning experience because the intimidation factor is removed. Accessibility concerns for student in high poverty areas can be addressed by ensuring that time is allotted during the regular school day to allow use of computers, tables, etc.

Access to analytical data is an awesome benefit which will enable the ADW of respective schools to gauge the effectiveness of its use of Edmodo, which can be used to inform future teacher strategies and planning.

Conclusion

Moore and Kearsley consider the limitations of print and other media as a reflection of educators' inability to use them properly (2012, p. 75). System-wide implementation of Edmodo at all schools will enhance teaching and learning for all. Staff will have a central place to collaborate and share resources (e.g., websites, documents, videos, and podcasts) which will ultimately benefit the student population. In addition to the benefits derived from three types of interaction (i.e., student-content, teacher-student and student-student) (Moore & Kearsley, 2012, p. 132), ADW Students will develop competencies that are essential to their success in the 21st Century: learning skills (i.e., critical and creative thinking, collaboration and communication), literacy skills (i.e., information, media and technology), and life skills (i.e., flexibility, initiative, social skills, productivity, and leadership) (Bates & Sangra, 2000, p. 21).

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