



SoTEL Symposium 19-20 February 2020

Digital Doves: Investing in Teacher Learning to Promote Student Learning

Sara Frizelle
Kristin School
sfrizelle@kristin.school.nz

Jennifer Moss
Kristin School
jmoss@lynfield.school.nz

Submission Type: Case Study (20mins + 10minsQ&A)

Keywords: Canvas, Professional Learning, Teacher Learning, Student Learning

Abstract:

Kristin School is an independent co-educational, international baccalaureate school from early learning to Year 13, in Albany on Auckland's North Shore. Kristin School has an impeccable reputation for academic excellence and ensuring that its students are 'Future Ready'. In 2016, after a robust school improvement inquiry, the school made the commitment to update its Learning Management System to one that was more dynamic and in line with the school's beliefs on learning and teaching. After a robust review of systems, Kristin selected Canvas as it will allow us to grow and adapt to an ever-changing K-13 landscape.

As George Couros writes in his book, *The Innovator's Mindset* (2015), with any new technological improvement or innovation that schools invest in, one of the first questions to be asked is "What is best for this learner?" (p. 21) and rightly so. In asking this question, we are inherently recognizing that in order to achieve enhanced student learning, we must first invest in teacher learning. While there is a plethora of research on teacher learning or teacher professional development, current literature points to the intersection of teacher learning and inquiry (Timperley, Wilson, Barrar & Fung, 2007, Couros, 2015). Recognizing this research and understanding that strong pedagogical practice must be at the forefront, Kristin invested in a robust, staged rollout.

Inspired by Timperley et al.'s, *Ten Key Principles for Teacher Professional Learning and Development* (2007), Kristin senior leadership allocated dedicated time for faculty learning with Canvas. Each faculty had a dedicated 'Canvas Leader' who had more in-depth training and were able to mentor their teaching colleagues. There were also different opportunities and modalities for teachers to learn from, including a course in Canvas about using Canvas, a YouTube Channel, faculty specific and general workshops, an active Twitter presence and the far-reaching Canvas Community.

Kristin has rolled Canvas out schoolwide, from Year 1 – 13 and is fortunate to have strong teacher leaders that have embraced Canvas and have challenged themselves to not just 'learn Canvas', but to approach it as a core learning tool. In the Junior School, one team of teachers use Canvas as a way to differentiate the learning of students in specialist classes through the use of short videos. While in the Middle School, one of our Languages teachers uses Canvas as an integral, interactive classroom resource, where students are introduced to new concepts, are given collaborative tasks, and are linked to additional resources.

In the coming year, Kristin will continue to lean on the work of Timperley et al., with the aim of strengthening the ties between Canvas and pedagogy and initiating inquiry groups around the use of technology in teaching and learning at Kristin. Recognizing an important part of teacher learning happens when we listen to the student voice (Timperley, Kaser & Halbert, 2014), an inquiry looking into the needs of our students will help to identify further next steps. At Kristin, we believe that when teachers are empowered to trial new methodologies and embed these successfully into their everyday practice, transformational changes will occur, in not just the learning of the teacher, but the learning experiences for the student as well.

References

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