

## The implementation of a Google+ Community at Evans Bay Intermediate

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I am a third year teacher at Evans Bay Intermediate. I have no official leadership titles within the school, however I am part of the e-learning team in which I have trialled the use of a B.Y.O.D classroom. In terms of leadership outside of the classroom, I have created a website template for staff e-Portfolios and led one staff PLD session in which I explained how to navigate around the site. I am naturally inquisitive and often discover theories, websites, or resources that I feel could be beneficial to others yet I have not found an effective way to share this information with staff. Therefore the change initiative I would like to propose is the creation of a Google+ community. A Google+ Community would enable staff to share resources, participate in discussions and seek technical support.

One reason why I want to implement a Google+ Community is because the current system does not support online access. To date, staff upload resources onto a locally stored drive, which can only be accessed from school. Google+ enables members to access a stored drive regardless of location. Another reason why I want to implement Google+ is because it acts as a hosting platform, which allows teachers to interact, therefore becoming more collaborative. The current resource drive is predominately used by senior management to upload annual plans and is not perceived as a space for teachers. Through Google+, teachers will know that it is a space for them where they can not only upload resources but also use it as a means of interacting with others. There are some staff members who share resources via Google Docs and email, yet the stream of emails can at times seem overwhelming and resources are often lost or deleted. Therefore the purpose of a Google+ Community is to create a hosting platform for everyone, where items are stored and accessed easily through categorisation.

If I were to implement a Google+ Community I would do so using a transformative leadership style. As referenced in my previous assignment, a transformational leader is one who inspires and stimulates followers to achieve extraordinary outcomes, as well as responding to individual needs allowing them to develop their own leadership capacity (Bass, 2006). If I am to receive buy in from staff, I would need to clearly explain my purpose and address staff concerns by encouraging discussion. I would want people to participate in the initiative because they will see the benefits and understand the shared vision. In order to encourage this, I would praise those who get on board and lead by example by contributing to the community (Tyler-Wood, 2001 as cited by Mexted, 2009). If we begin to use a Google+ Community within our school then it can be filtered through to personal lives where staff can use their own Google+ accounts to connect with educators outside of our school community. This in turn enables staff to develop their own digital competency.

In my previous assignment, I argued that a change in the education system was essential. The same can be said for the way teachers approach teaching. I propose a shift in pedagogy and teaching practise and that a 21st century approach is needed. In the diagram of 21st Century pedagogy, the following approaches have been listed as core components of modern learning. An approach that is collaborative, research-based, reflective and real-world learning (Heick, 2014). All of these reflect the open source, information sharing age that we currently live in.

Those who will be affected by the implementation of a Google+ Community include; teachers, admin staff and students. I will need to target those teachers who are inquisitive and willing to adapt their practices in order for this implementation to be successful. It is important to note that the teachers who are willing to adapt their current practise will perhaps be the easiest group to target as they are already innovators who are willing to “unbundle” established structures and design learning activities that fit with ‘real-world’ learning (Bolstad et al. 2012). It will be these teachers who are referred to as the early adopters, the ones who are already using Google+ in their personal lives and see the value in sharing resources with one another. These teachers are the ones with enthusiasm who are constantly verbalising the success that happens in their room. They are focused on student engagement and selectively use resources that students can relate to. This group will be the one who is active on the Google+ community. They will be the ones who are contributing to the discussions, sharing resources and posting answers to the technical support page.

Subsequently, the next target group would be those who know better but continue to do what they have always done because it is easier. These are the teachers who “teach what is easy but not always what is good to know” (Dede, 2007. As cited in Mexted, 2009). This group relies on the assistance of pre-made unit plans that included ready to print resources. They can see that the plans are out-dated and are not relevant to the students’ lives yet teach the lesson regardless. This group will be intrigued by the Google+ Community and while they will probably not contribute, they will look through and possibly use the resources.

Following this will be the resistant teachers. These teachers are the ones whose current teaching practises have worked for the last 30 years and would question why they needed to change. To encourage this group to contribute to the community will be the hardest. This group will require the most convincing along with the most technical support.

The only leadership practise, outside of the classroom, that I have been involved in was a staff PD session on e-Portfolios. This happened because I had asked the Principal for a project to work on over the Christmas holidays. During this time, the Principal sent me the documents that needed to be included on the site and gave me free reign over the design and layout of the site. After several editing conferences with the Principal, we agreed that the site was ready to be presented to staff.

The aspects that worked well were; the trust the Principal had in me to complete the task (Laissez Faire leadership), the conferences (Democratic leadership), the fact that I wanted to do a project to help the Principal achieve her visions (Transformational leadership). What did not work so well was; I had not given staff the opportunity to voice their opinions, nor had I involved them in the process. When it came to presenting the website, I was rushed and took for granted their knowledge of websites and ICT capability. If I had explained the purpose of the website better then I may have received more of a buy in from staff. However, during the presentation I handled questions and criticism well and emphasised the fact that this was only a template and staff had the autonomy to create their own versions. In leading the next change initiative, I will reflect on this experience and make it better.

The thought of using a Google+ Community came about because I observed how successfully it was used in our Mindlab courses. I discovered that I was learning so much from what others in my course were posting, that it inspired me to want to connect to other Google educators and communities. I was developing what Flockton was referring to as teachers seeing themselves as learners (Flockton, 2009). While using Google+ in my personal life, I could see the potential it had and how beneficial it would be for our school.

Before I began the implementation of a Google+ Community I would need approval. In order to gain approval I would need to understand my purpose and propose a convincing argument. The school already had a resource drive, staff were already emailing and sharing resources via Google drive. I want this to work and therefore I have developed a plan based on the lean canvas model, adapted by The Mind Lab.

Once I had identified my purpose and offered my solution, I would need to identify my stakeholders, of which are mentioned above. Following this, I would need approval from my Principal and for her to allocate a time I could meet with the early adopters. During this meeting, I would demonstrate how to set up a Google+ profile along with inviting them to the Community page. From here, I would identify those who were willing to promote the Community and encourage their input, especially for competition ideas/ways of getting people on board. I would also be involved in the process and make sure I lead by example by frequently posting in the Community and praising those who contribute. Once the accounts are set-up and members have the technical knowledge, it's easy to add resources and the project will sustain itself overtime as long as members continue to contribute. The difficulty will be overseeing the conflicts between sharing on the Community vs sharing via email or Google docs. This can be minimised by promoting the Community as a centralised space where resources are saved in categories which are easier to find. Another way to promote the use of the Community over the local resource drive is to use it for more than resources. It could be used as a platform for announcements,

competitions, electronic invites, screencast tutorials or staff discussions. This would act as a pull factor for reluctant teachers as this would be the only means of receiving the information.

Once the stakeholders are on board, it would be my job to monitor the project and ensure the community is meeting its purpose. In order to know whether the community is successful, I could collect the following data;

1. The number of resources that have been added.
2. The number of likes and comments per resource.
3. The frequency of the resources added.
4. Staff feedback through Google Forms.
5. Note the usage of resources used throughout the school, e.g how many resources are visible and being used in classrooms?

If the community is not meeting its purpose, I could use feedback from staff and the early adopters to figure out where improvements could be made.

The impact this innovation will have on teachers is that it will help them develop their digital competency. It will connect them to the 21st Century knowledge age where information is freely shared. It will reduce their workload, as they no longer have to create resources because they have already been made by someone else, thus giving them more time to focus on student engagement. It will impact the environment as it will decrease the amount of paper being distributed and essentially, this innovation is worth doing because it will give teachers the confidence to use online communities and connect with educators around New Zealand and the world.

1800 Words

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