



iPad2 Implementation at Lutheran High North: Embracing the change, engaging the future!

Mychal Thom
Head of School

Lutheran High North – Houston, TX
mychalthom@lutheranhighnorht.org

Summary: In today's world there seems only to be one constant - change! This project is designed to embrace that change and positively impact the student-learning environment at LHN. The goal of this project was to implement a 1:1 iPad2 program throughout the school (faculty and grades 9-12) and impact student learning in a positive way.

The initial results of this project look very promising. In short, when the iPads were used effectively in the classroom, students were more engaged in the subject matter and overall showed more organization. Parental support was tremendous through the year, indicating a 74% general approval rate in the first year of the program (20% neutral, and only 6% disapproval). In addition to increased engagement in the classroom, the teachers that put forth the most effort in the program, discovered many different ways to incorporate this device into their classrooms, improving communication, and impacting student learning in a positive way.

iPad2 Implementation at Lutheran High North
Mychal Thom – Head of School

Focus: The focus of this project was on discovery. As this type of implementation had not yet been done full scale (at least to my knowledge), it really was a way to discover just how effective the iPad2 could be with respect to learning in the classroom. In addition to discovering the uses that the iPad2 could offer, it was also a project in discovery for our faculty and students. In this world of change, it is important that in order for our faculty to continue to provide an excellent education, they must continue to discover new and engaging ways to impact student learning. In addition to faculty discovery, students must also learn to discover new ways to learn, and become familiar with technology that will continue to be a part of their world as they move onto college and ultimately the workforce.

Method: As early as the fall of 2009, I began thinking about installing a 1:1 program at Lutheran High North. As I researched the private schools in the area, it became obvious that we were behind the curve in this area and needed to offer our students a better experience in the area of technology. The first portion of this project actually began in researching other schools to see how and why they were doing what they were doing. Over the course of a year and a half I discovered that the 1:1 programs instituted in the area were all laptop computer based, and had achieved success to varying degrees.

As I spoke with my team, many of whom participated in the research phase, about the possibilities of a 1:1 program we began to devise the parameters of our plan. Ultimately, we came down to two paramount reasons for implementing a program – we wanted something that would truly engage students, and we wanted that to be delivered through a device that was easy to use. Those two specific mandates lead us to the iPad. At the time, Apple was on its second iteration of the iPad, therefore we choose iPad2 as our device.

We began to speak with the reps from Apple, and it became very clear to us that we would be the first in the area to be deploying these devices on the scale to which we were planning (about 205 for students and faculty). As a matter of fact, there were times when the reps questioned us on whether or not we wanted to follow through with the iPads, or switch to MacBooks!

In the summer of 2011, we began preparing our campus for the influx of the iPads – getting servers, bandwidth, and an apps list in place. We also ordered Otterbox Defender iPad2 cases, as we decided to require all students to have one for protection of their device. We also chose to self-insure the iPads, charging a nominal premium, and also developed a sliding deductible scale to handle damages.

In the fall of 2011, we began deploying iPads to the students. An acceptable use policy was developed and distributed, as well as an FAQ for the parents and students. As we approached our first deployment date, all of the iPads had been labeled, inventoried, imaged, and put in a protective case. We chose to have the students create their own iTunes account with their school email address, an account by which they could download free apps, but not paid apps unless they had a gift card to apply to their account. At that point, we felt ready to deploy the devices and begin our adventure!

We knew that constant checking and development would be a big part of the program, so we developed professional development days to help our faculty learn and ask questions as we went through the year. We studied appropriate uses of the Internet through online courses, and also went through a full day of professional development with Apple on challenge based learning using the iPad2. In addition to the scheduled days, we constantly shared resources and remained available to answer questions as they arose. The truth is that it is an ongoing process that takes time, energy, and a positive attitude in order to remain effective; but when those ingredients are a part of the program, success follows!

Ultimately, a three level vision was developed as we moved through the year. The first level was that we wanted the device to be used for increased organization and productivity for students. The students could now have all of their notes (Evernote and Notability were favorites), email (Gmail), calendar (Google) various assignments (Evernote, Good Reader), and the Internet with which they could check the school website as well as others, all at their fingertips. The second level of the vision was to expose students to course specific apps; such as Algebra Touch (Math), The Periodic Table, 3D Brain, Simple Physics (Science), iBooks (English), and the Bible and the Book of Concord (Theology). An additional benefit here was the introduction to the release of textbooks on the iPad2 toward the end of January. When this release occurred, we were able to completely outfit our Environmental Science class with the digital copy of the very book they were using in hardcover. The third level of the vision relates to critical thinking and application. In short, not only asking what the iPad can help one do, but what can a student make the iPad do? This travels into the realm of iBooks author and iTunes U. At this highest level of application is where I believe students will truly discover the greatest learning benefit of the device.

Results: We saw some very interesting and encouraging results of this project.

Here is a list of the most interesting ones:

- 205 iPad2 devices were deployed to faculty, staff and students
- 3 level Vision was developed and implemented
- Top apps used by students included: Bible (You Version), Pages, Notability, Dropbox, Flashcardlet and The Dictionary
- 74% average approval rating from parents in our first year (based on survey results)
- Measureable increase in student/faculty and student/administration communication
- Local and regional “Discovery Days” developed and performed on LHN campus to help promote program in other schools

- LHN “Resource Center” transformed into state of the art “Student Learning Center”
- Student organization and productivity levels increased (based on survey results)

Analysis and Commentary: What I found very interesting throughout this project was the constant stream of questions that I received. It seemed as though everyone I spoke with wanted to know how “the iPad thing” was going. At first I responded with the nuts and bolts of the program and how we put it together. As I moved through the year, I came to understand that the questions really weren’t about “how” to do it, but could the students really handle something like this...truly this was the underlying issue fellow administrators wanted to know.

In short, the answer to that question is a definitive “yes” in my opinion. The truth is that there is an adjustment period that everyone goes through at the outset of the implementation. Yes, this device will distract students initially, but it is all a part of the process! Once you get by this phase, the discovery the students go through, as well as the faculty, is almost magical. When students see the device for all it can be, and begin to discover all the ways it can help them organize, increase productivity, and ultimately learn, it is like seeing them on Christmas morning on a continual basis.

With respect to the success of the first year, I found it very interesting that at our final parent meeting of the year, 99% (there’s always one, right?) of the parental representation were in complete support of the program. Their comments were overwhelmingly positive, and their only request was to use it more in the classroom. Their ultimate hope was that the teachers that were a bit behind in the process would catch up quickly and help their students transform their education experience.

One added benefit to this project that I did not expect was the exposure my school got in the process. We deployed these devices in August of 2011, and by January of 2012 we were being asked to host informational days on our campus about how we went about implementing the program. We were featured on news

stories and reports throughout the year, and very much because the talk of the town with respect to technology. I saw members of my team light up when given the opportunity to share what they had learned, and the success stories they had experienced. I truly believe that this type of affirmation was much needed, and I would recommend that anyone seeking to implement a 1:1 program find time to celebrate the faculty that are on the front lines with the program each day.

My final comment on this project has more to do with the philosophy behind the program. It may sound cliché, but as my friends at Nike would say, “Just do it”. I believe there are so many benefits to following a path of discovery that perhaps the strength of your educational institution may one day depend on taking a leap before you have every last detail planned out. At the end of the day, this isn’t about an iPad, a MacBook, or any other device one could insert into the equation; it has to do with discovery. In order to maintain an atmosphere of growth and excitement, and move away from an atmosphere of, “this is the way we’ve always done it”, take the risk and the chance to try something with a high reward. As many educators know, most everything you need to know you learned in kindergarten...this is no different – go play, discover, explore, and I promise you’ll learn something!