Tulare County Adoption of Edmodo for Regional Communications

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I lead the technical and support side of Edmodo in Tulare County, and can address some of the strategies that we've implemented over the last few months.

Edmodo Domain

We were encouraged by Jill Florant to obtain a unique Edmodo "domain" for our county. After seeing the helpful administrative tools that come with having a domain, we were more than happy to obtain http://tcoe.edmodo.com. Since then, the administrative tools have proven helpful with our training cohorts.

Training and Documentation

We began our Edmodo experience by training all of our content area consultants and their staff support team to ensure they knew the basics on creating a group, posting within a group, using the Library, and sharing folders of resources to groups. Jill Florant also visited our office and provided initial training to our staff.

After this initial training, I provide continuing education to our consultants and staff as needed, and now teach 3-hour-long Edmodo introductions to teachers from around the county a few times a year, as needed.

I created an online Edmodo tutorial, using Google Docs, located at http://bit.ly/TCOEEdmodo. This is widely shared in all groups we create to provide follow-up information on the variety of tools within Edmodo, above and beyond what might be utilized in a basic professional development (PD) session.

Professional Development Support

After initial training, our consultants created Edmodo groups to support their ongoing Common Core Phase I and II professional development seminars. Attendees are provided very basic Edmodo-use training on the spot, and are walked through joining the PD-based groups. Attendees are invited to share their opinion, files, and even websites during the PD, creating a useful "back channel" for communication, sharing, and questions. It's always great to see one attendee answering another attendee's question, before the group leader can!

Over time, we've evolved how we use PD-based Edmodo groups, having learned to create groups for individual instances of training, while maintaining larger, long-term groups to bring attendees together over the long haul. Once a PD that uses Edmodo has been completed, we let the attendees know that we will be dissolving the group used for that particular training. Along with this information, an invite is issued to a long-term, related group, where they can "mingle" and continue sharing with knowledgeable members from around Tulare County.

Content Area Groups

Our consultants chose to break down overarching, long-term groups by content area and grade range. Because of this, we have K-5 ELA and 6-12 ELA, TK-2 Math, 3-5 Math, 6-8 Math, and High School Math groups. These are publicly advertised, and are to be considered as long-term general conversations and sharing opportunities. Anyone who wishes to join will receive a group code. Our consultants monitor these groups, just as they maintain a presence in the long-term, PD-based groups.

Edmodo Train-the-Trainer Cohorts

After the initial seeding of Edmodo awareness through PD-based use, we partnered with Edmodo to establish three separate Train-the-Trainer cohorts, 6-week blended online and in-class groups designed to produce knowledgeable district-level trainers. Each cohort was limited to 20 attendees. We contacted all of our school districts, inviting them to learn more about how Edmodo can help their teachers, students, and parents to communicate and collaborate.

Over these last six weeks, we've covered the basics of Edmodo, how to create and grade assignments, using quizzes and polls, how to use and organize the Library, sharing rich multimedia, and how to gain familiarity with the student and parent environments. Attendees have created site implementation plans, have tested out a few Edmodo apps, and have learned techniques to introduce Edmodo into their districts and schools.

Through a partnership with Edmodo, attendees who complete the assigned work will receive $300 in Edmodo Apps Store credits, which they can then use in their own groups, or to demonstrate to teachers who are interested in the variety of apps available to them.

We are wrapping up our last of the three cohorts tomorrow, and we've begun paying out the Apps Store credits. Our over 50 attendees are excited about the possibilities, including use of Edmodo in forming professional learning communities between teacher groups, as well as in support of grade-level and content-area classrooms.

Cohort members who complete the course are personally invited into a Professional Learning Exchange (PLX), which is a special group created by Edmodo providing free access to dozens of full-version apps, in order to test them out prior to purchase. We believe this is an incredible incentive to our cohort attendees, as it allows them to demonstrate apps to their district educators.

Curriculum Mapping

TCOE purchased and is distributing Eclipse, a curriculum mapping software customized to CA CCSS, ELD/P, CTE, and other standards. As our districts are using this software to design their CCSS curriculum units and lessons, they are communicating via Edmodo on the ongoing development. For instance, if a teacher finds a great new resource to add to a unit or perhaps wants to share a successful strategy related to a lesson, he/she posts on Edmodo. Edmodo serves as the communication device for teachers as they remotely and collaboratively develop and reflect upon curriculum and instruction in the Eclipse platform.

Technical Assistance

Besides using Edmodo for C & I support, we have also established Edmodo groups to support our Co-op, Title III, PI, etc. districts. These groups are not public. Information regarding program monitoring regulations, deadlines, etc. is conveyed via Edmodo and group members have a library of templates and forms archived and available for easy access. They much prefer this to sorting through emails to find the correct message and/or form.

Regional Communication

Region VII (Tulare, Kings, Fresno, Madera, Merced, and Mariposa) Assistant Superintendents share professional development offerings by posting PD flyers in regional Edmodo groups. Each county has a designated folder. Comments and questions about PD are communicated via chat. Again, this system is much preferred over email distribution.