Digital Learning Commons, Educational Technology Innovation, and Professional Leadership

Over the course of my teaching career, I have dedicated thousands upon thousands of hours to designing, developing, refining, and maintaining a comprehensive digital learning ecosystem through my personally developed and maintained website, drooker.ca (Password XXXX). Built entirely through personal initiative and significant personal financial investment, this platform represents more than a decade of sustained innovation in educational technology, pedagogy, student engagement, and home-school communication. Over the past year, the site received more than 13,000 visits from students, parents, and guardians.

The password-protected website currently features 83 curriculum-connected webpages that serve as digital learning hubs for students and families. Including grant and media-related subpages, the site contains a total of 150 pages, all of which I manage and maintain. These pages are intentionally designed to bridge classroom instruction with home learning, creating continuity, accessibility, transparency, and ongoing support throughout the learning process. Access is provided securely to students and families, ensuring resources remain centralized, organized, and available beyond the school day.

Each webpage serves as a comprehensive instructional hub and includes:

-- Clearly articulated learning goals and success criteria
-- Exemplars and strong student work samples
-- Graphic organizers and downloadable learning tools
-- Hundreds of bespoke teacher-created anchor charts
-- Instructional visuals and reference supports
-- Teacher-created tutorial videos and screencasts
-- Guided practice opportunities and review activities
-- Online practice opportunities and educational gameplay experiences
-- Curriculum-linked educational resources and best-practice links
-- Step-by-step supports for classroom routines and expectations
-- Digital toolkits that students can independently access throughout the learning cycle

Of particular significance is the extensive collection of online tutorial videos embedded throughout the platform. I personally script, narrate, produce, and edit these instructional videos to provide students and families with direct access to classroom teaching beyond the walls of the school. These tutorials allow lessons to be revisited, reviewed, and consolidated at home,

supporting differentiated instruction, student independence, equitable access to support, and improved confidence for learners requiring repetition or additional reinforcement.

The website also contains a dedicated “Work” section that houses yearlong student resources including workbooks, graphic organizers, answer pages, instructional supports, and learning materials that students and families can access at any time. Complementing this is a consistently updated classroom learning blog used to communicate instructional goals, reinforce classroom learning, and strengthen meaningful home-school communication. These updates are paired with structured homework supports and routines designed to promote accountability, organization, and reflective learning habits.

I would also like to direct particular attention toward several areas of the website that showcase highly creative, community-connected, and technologically sophisticated student work. Over many years, my students have completed numerous animated music video projects that have been exceptionally well received and widely recognized within the school community. These projects integrate literacy, media studies, music, storytelling, animation, collaboration, and digital production skills while providing students with highly engaging and authentic learning opportunities.

The website also contains extensive grant project webpages documenting a variety of experiential and community-connected learning initiatives funded through successful grant applications. These pages serve not only as instructional archives, but also as public-facing showcases of innovative classroom practice, student creativity, and meaningful partnerships between the classroom and the broader community.

Additionally, the site highlights our ongoing media studies and media campaign initiatives, which feature exceptionally vibrant and dynamic student-created digital work. These projects incorporate extensive use of green screen technology, animation platforms, digital editing tools, and supporting applications such as iMotion to create professional-style commercials, advertisements, public service announcements, and media productions. Students engage in authentic media creation experiences that blend curriculum expectations with creativity, collaboration, communication, critical thinking, and technological fluency. These initiatives have consistently fostered high levels of student engagement while empowering learners to become both thoughtful consumers and skilled creators of media.

My commitment to educational technology and digital pedagogy extends back many years and includes leadership at both the school and board levels. Early in my teaching career, after petitioning the York Region District School Board for greater access to instructional technology, I was informed that I became the first classroom teacher within the board to be provided with an LCD computer projector for classroom instructional use. At a time when such technologies were not yet commonplace in classrooms, I utilized the projector alongside digital learning platforms and a document camera to model student work, provide visual instruction, enhance engagement, and make classroom learning more interactive and accessible.

As a result of this work, Michael Cohen — who later became a superintendent after serving as my principal — invited me to conduct professional workshops for educators at USDS Private School. During these sessions, I demonstrated how digital technologies, projection systems, document cameras, and online learning platforms could be effectively integrated into classroom instruction to improve modeling, student understanding, and engagement.

I also served as a Technology Lead Teacher over the course of five years, supporting colleagues in the implementation of educational technology, digital tools, and innovative instructional practices within classroom environments. This role further strengthened my leadership experience in mentoring staff, supporting professional learning, and encouraging meaningful integration of technology into teaching and learning.

This work builds upon a longstanding commitment to educational innovation and digital pedagogy. Earlier in my career, I collaborated with respected educator Jenny Eather in supporting and implementing the Writing Fun online literacy platform, which provided students with access to graded exemplars, writing organizers, instructional supports, and opportunities to practice a variety of text forms within a scaffolded digital environment. This experience helped shape my understanding of how digital environments can meaningfully support literacy instruction, student voice, and differentiated learning.

I also collaborated with former educator Nicole Facella in developing an online marking and anecdotal documentation platform designed to work alongside the former MXWeb reporting system. The platform supported ongoing assessment practices, streamlined communication, and improved documentation and organization of student learning data.

My commitment to educational technology innovation also extended into early years pedagogy, where I independently developed a kindergarten-focused application designed to authentically document and organize student learning in alignment with contemporary kindergarten professional development models and inquiry-based learning practices. Although intellectual property and public-sector approval limitations prevented the application from formally moving forward within a public education setting, the project reflected a strong commitment to innovation, pedagogically sound practice, and meaningful digital documentation.

Several years ago, I also had the opportunity to help inaugurate the use of Mathletics across the entire primary division when the platform was first introduced. I played an active role in supporting its implementation and integration into classroom instruction, helping students and staff utilize the platform to reinforce mathematical understanding through engaging, interactive, and differentiated digital learning experiences. This opportunity further strengthened my understanding of how thoughtfully implemented educational technology can increase student motivation, accessibility, and achievement in mathematics learning.

Most recently, in keeping with my ongoing desire to remain at the forefront of educational innovation, I have designed and implemented more than a dozen personalized GPTs and AI-

assisted digital tools to support my professional practice. These custom-built tools assist with instructional planning, assessment design, anecdotal documentation, differentiated instruction, parent communication, idea generation, curriculum implementation, and the creation of student learning supports. This work reflects my continued commitment to thoughtfully exploring emerging technologies in ways that meaningfully enhance teaching effectiveness, organizational efficiency, and student learning outcomes.

The work I have undertaken in digital learning and educational technology has also resulted in opportunities for professional leadership beyond my classroom. On several occasions, I have been personally invited by renowned OISE professor, author, dramatist, and educational consultant Bob Barton to conduct paid professional workshops focused on the implementation of digital learning platforms and online instructional ecosystems within classroom settings. These presentations centered on practical and pedagogically sound ways educators can utilize digital platforms such as mine to improve student engagement, support differentiated instruction, strengthen home-school communication, and extend learning opportunities beyond the classroom environment.

Collectively, these initiatives reflect a sustained professional commitment to:

-- Innovation in teaching and learning
-- Accessible and differentiated instruction
-- Meaningful home-school partnerships
-- Student agency and independence
-- Reflective pedagogical practice
-- Educational leadership and professional collaboration
-- The purposeful integration of technology to deepen student learning outcomes

This body of work represents not only a significant professional investment of time, expertise, creativity, and personal resources, but also a deeply rooted belief that learning should remain accessible, transparent, engaging, and connected beyond the walls of the classroom.