

EDUCATING THE WOMEN OF THE FUTURE

WHOLE SCHOOL STRATEGIC PROGRAM DESIGN

Elmwood School, Ottawa
2017-18

NoTosh Team:

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Elmwood School, Ottawa, Canada, is determined to create an exceptional learning experience for each student. But how do you deliver an innovative and engaging education while working within the constraints of a rigid curriculum?

Elmwood School, an all-girls International Baccalaureate (IB) K-12 school, wanted to achieve a long-term and deeply-rooted change across the school, from primary up to diploma level. With support from NoTosh, they developed a proactive, focused and ambitious program to create an even more engaging experience for students. This bespoke strategic program, co-designed with the school, has energised how the leadership, teachers and students lead and learn.

Focusing initially on the Middle Years, the school embraced the NoTosh Design Thinking process, using the principles to tackle large, complex and challenging questions, issues and ideas:

- How might we better articulate our curriculum?
- How might we rethink assessment in the Middle School?
- How might we increase student voice in all areas of the school?

Following this, staff pitched their developed ideas to future stakeholders, including other members of staff, parents, students and school leadership.

The teachers reached out beyond their teams, interviewing parents, students and local members of the community, testing their early stage prototypes and giving and receiving feedback. They showcased these to leadership in a pitch to show just how their prototype would change the teaching and learning at Elmwood for the better. Almost every prototype pitched to the leadership team was approved for putting into practice over the long term. They included:

- a radically new Middle Years timetable which involves team teaching, to allow for shared planning time and reduce the need for a bell;



- a curriculum book articulating the school ethos;
- a new reporting system that aims to change pedagogy and move away from a focus on grades towards self assessment and continual feedback.

The motivation behind all of the ideas and prototypes is an increase in enquiry, more collaboration between staff, deeper use of student voice, better understanding of each girl's needs, and a decrease in stand-alone disciplines.

“The process was very clear, support was available at the drop of a hat, and all the NoTosh staff were dedicated and committed to making the online coaching work and deliver the best outcomes possible.”

Cheryl Boughton, Head of School, Elmwood School

Teachers were also introduced to other schools across the globe and this saw them build strong connections and relationships with other educators. The process has allowed Elmwood teachers to expand their thinking, reevaluate what they thought possible, raise their vision and shift their mindsets.

The school also embarked on a Deep Learning Week for students, a whole NoTosh Design Thinking program, working with the girls to solve real-world problems. The entire week was supported by NoTosh's great value online coaching, with a school staff facilitator on the ground. The students loved the online approach, and rose to the meet their challenge, which was more open-ended than anything they had attempted before. They delivered their pitches to the NoTosh team, in an environment that echoes what they would experience in a startup incubator. The students were dedicated, determined, and learned how to take on board the fresh ideas, advice and feedback they received.

The transparency of thinking and development shown by NoTosh has been absorbed by the Middle Years staff, with their thoughts, ideas and concerns now shared, they work effectively together in small groups using project nests and post it notes to drive their development. Ongoing support of the NoTosh team ensures that Elmwood School is fully engaged with the future challenge of driving change through the rest of the school, in phases of work involving Primary staff and finally the Diploma Programme team.

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Let's start talking.

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