

Executive Summary

Prepared for Board of Trustees Meeting
October 13, 2020
TIACON 2021 Wrap-Up

Board Goals

- Teaching and Learning
 - Develop and maintain a culture where learning remains our first priority
 - Incorporate best practices into teaching, learning, technology and leadership
 - Foster and support an advanced digital learning environment

Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to provide the Board of Trustees with a review of Denton ISD's altered TIACON digital learning conference that was held July 14 and 15, 2020.

Objective

TIACON exists to provide teachers and leaders with tangible classroom strategies surrounding the intersection of effective pedagogy and the innovative use of technology for learning. The conference has existed and adapted to align with this ethos for the last 11 years.

Operational Impact

TIACON is a self-sustaining program that has no impact on the district's operating budget, beyond the time spent by employees planning and executing the conference.

Results

At the beginning of the Spring semester, preparation for TIACON was in full swing and plans were in place to continue growing the conference and extending its reach throughout the state. By the end of the Spring semester, TIACON had been cancelled and then resurrected in an alternate form. The decision to cancel TIACON was made early in the pandemic. Doing so, while a necessary result of the COVID-19 pandemic, allowed us to shift our focus as a department from planning the conference during the Summer, to planning for the rollout of Canvas and Seesaw district-wide in the Fall. Additionally, when the decision was made to cancel the conference, our team began the process of refunding registration and sponsorship payments and cancelling existing commitments. While the team was very disappointed with the cancellation of the conference, the decision offered the unforeseen benefit of creating additional

time to invest in preparing professional development for Seesaw and Canvas, that would have been used to plan the conference in its traditional format.

As the Spring and Summer progressed and Denton ISD opted to leverage Canvas and Seesaw as the official learning platforms for students, the digital learning team identified an opportunity to use the days that had been set aside for TIACON to provide targeted professional development to teachers in support of Seesaw and Canvas. Thus, TIACON became a virtual conference for Denton ISD staff members only intended to provide professional development for teachers in pursuit of a baseline of proficiency in either Seesaw or Canvas.

TIACON went from covering over 150 unique topics to just four to align with the Curriculum and Instruction department’s plan to provide tiered training for teachers in Seesaw and Canvas by offering two training sessions each per platform. Offering synchronous online training for Seesaw and Canvas as an alternative to the asynchronous courses offered earlier in the Summer allowed teachers to choose their learning modality and build proficiency in a way most comfortable to them. TIACON became an alternative option for learning required content prior to the start of school.

While most teachers opted for the asynchronous version of Canvas and Seesaw training, a large number still opted to join the digital learning team at TIACON for synchronous professional development, facilitated by members of the digital learning team via Microsoft Teams. The tables below show total registrations by session and each session’s team of presenters and facilitators. Additional preparation for the conference was done by Thien Huynh, Digital Learning Coordinator and Holly Martin, Administrative Assistant to the Director of Digital Learning.

Seesaw

Session	Registrations	Presenters	Facilitators*
Tier 1	90	Jenny Wright (DLS - SMS) Leslie Teronez (DLS - RHS)	Amy Woodfin (Kindergarten, Blanton) Melissa McDonald (Kindergarten, Blanton) Jennifer Patrick (Kindergarten, Blanton)
Tier 2	117	Megan Elizondo (DLS - PDC) John Rogers (DLS - MMS)	Mark Jobe (3rd Grade, Cross Oaks) Michelle Heidrich (Librarian, McNair) Ami Ware (Librarian, Providence)

**Campus teachers and librarians with prior experience volunteered to join the sessions as non-presenting facilitators to answer questions within the session chat.*

Canvas

Session	Registrations	Presenters
Tier 1	117	Leslie Taylor (Blended and Online Learning Specialist - PDC) Dr. Joshua Tabor (DLS - PDC) Janet Cephas (DLS - NMS)
Tier 2	87	Tammy Dwight-Ministero (Blended and Online Learning Coordinator) Jessica Campos (DLS, BMMS) Benjamin Hokamp (DLS, DHS)

Each session followed the same scope and sequence of the topic's corresponding asynchronous training in an effort to ensure that all learners were exposed to the same content, regardless of the format they chose. The digital learning team and participating learners found value in the ability to explore the required training material in a way that better fit their desired learning modality. As the table shows, additional personnel were online in support of each session's active presenters to help answer questions and clarify content.

Feedback from participants was generally positive. When asked what could be done to improve the training moving forward, most participants shared that there was either nothing needed to improve, or that additional time to work in the platform at their own pace would have been helpful. We found it tremendously helpful to have the two days originally intended for in-person TIACON available to our team to facilitate synchronous professional development for Seesaw and Canvas.

Moving forward, we plan for TIACON to shift back toward the in-person event that it has been in years past, but our team has identified a selection of possible changes to the format of the conference as a result of this year's altered version, including providing a mix of in-person and virtual sessions during the conference for attendees unable to attend in person, recording virtual sessions for on-demand learning, and limiting the scope of the conference to a select group of topics, allowing for deeper exploration of established district instructional priorities and a higher likelihood of implementation of learning.

We believe the future of TIACON is still very bright and will showcase the great teaching and learning happening in Denton ISD. While we're not sure what the COVID19 pandemic will look like next Summer, we're confident that TIACON will be able to pivot to meet the needs of teachers and, as a result, students in Denton ISD and beyond.