



Upper Grand
District School Board

measuring the difference at Upper Grand District School Board

Ontario SEA students have attained measurable literacy improvements at all grade levels with the help of Read&Write.





background

Upper Grand District School Board (UGDSB) in Ontario, Canada serves approximately 34,000 students through 76 elementary and secondary schools in the City of Guelph, County of Wellington and County of Dufferin.

Student success is the goal of over 3,000 dedicated teaching and support staff who are aided by the contributions of caring volunteers and community partners.

UGDSB students are assessed in 3rd (age 8/9) and 6th (age 11/12) grades via the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) tests. These assessments measure students' ability to read different kinds of texts and express their thoughts in writing using appropriate grammar, spelling and punctuation.

In addition, grade 10 students are required to pass the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT) literacy test – administered by the EQAO – as a requirement for graduation.

the challenge

'Technology enables everyone', states Bill MacKenzie, educator, IT Liaison at Upper Grand District School Board. 'It's no box-checking exercise: it plays a big part in every student's educational journey: it's simply become an integral part of how you do things.'

Until a few years ago, students granted a 'Special Equipment Allocation' (SEA) for their additional learning needs were furnished with laptop PCs and an installed suite of dictation, text-to-speech and other software applications.

Valued at over \$3,500 per claimant, this costly package limited UGDSB's ability to provide technology to every child that needed it.



Upper Grand District School Board, Guelph, Ontario





the solution

In 2013, the entire UGDSB district shifted to implementing Google's G Suite for Education cloud-based productivity tools for teaching and learning.

The changeover was timely – and in 2014/15, UGDSB introduced Read&Write to more than 33,000 students from grades Kindergarten - 12. Available district-wide to every student, Read&Write is accessible on low-cost, easy to manage Chromebooks that have since displaced UGDSB's expensive laptop PCs that were previously only available for SEA students.

Created around Universal Design principles, Read&Write's easy-to-use text and speech and speech to text features give every student help with everyday literacy tasks.

It's embraced enthusiastically by students of all abilities and at all grade levels – and whether or not they have additional literacy needs. "Using Read&Write can be compared with predictive texting on your phone" says Bill. "That's a great example of friendly assistive technology that's there for everyone, whenever it's needed."

By switching to lower-cost Chromebooks running Read&Write from its previous dependency on costly PC hardware/software bundles, UGDSB has dramatically expanded the number of students who can enjoy the benefits of technology to boost their own literacy.

In 2015/16, UGDSB also became one of Canada's first school boards to introduce Snapverter from Texthelp, further leveraging the Board's investment in Read&Write. With a snap of a smartphone camera, this

time-saving Read&Write add-on digitises classroom papers, transforming them into accessible PDF documents for easy sharing and reading aloud via Google Drive. "It's a big help for our Special Ed teachers" confirms Bill. "If they've created paper-based worksheets for use in class, Snapverter lets them take a picture and bring it straight into the Read&Write workflow."

"Texthelp really is making an enormous difference in the lives of our students. This technology enables everyone: using Read&Write to support all learners is transitioning rapidly from a 'nice to have' to becoming a moral imperative for schools."

Bill MacKenzie, educator and IT Consultant,
Upper Grand District School Board.





results

Since shifting to Chromebooks and Read&Write, UGDSB has been able to fulfil 1,110 SEA claims annually – more than double the number when laptops and dedicated software were offered. What’s more, the total cost of ownership has dropped by 90% since the switchover.

Between 2013/14 and 2016/17, primary grade usage over time nearly doubled and junior grade use increase by 50%, and continues to grow. Chromebook adoption enabled all students to have access to the same device, students with Special Needs were not isolated. The devices/software were also easier to manage and maintain for both students and staff.

Since deploying Read&Write, literacy attainment levels have increased measurably for Upper Grand SEA students at all grade levels.

outcomes

A number of positive outcomes have been identified since UGDSB switched from laptop PCs with various desktop based AT software applications to offering Chromebooks running cloud-based Read&Write:

the number of **primary SEA students** who are successful in **Reading**



The number of **junior SEA students** who are successful in Reading has **increased by 98%**



The proportion of **junior SEA students** that have attained Level 3-4 in Reading has **increased by 30%**

The number of **Grade 10 SEA students** passing the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT) has **increased by 66%**



For more info visit text.help/RW-Upper-Grand

