



## Simplifying how professional development is delivered

Durham District School Board uses D2L Brightspace to create a central hub for professional development

The Durham District School Board's Professional Learning Hub, powered by D2L Brightspace, was created as an anytime/anywhere, personalized, on-demand professional development portal for 12,000 Durham District School Board staff. The "Hub" intelligently speaks to the school board's HR systems so that all employees are greeted with a landing page that highlights online learning modules and resources geared toward their employee role and grouping. Course content is created by a cadre of departmental staff and instructors. Currently, more than 200 active courses and workshops have been made available to staff in the district using this platform.

### At a glance

**Client:** Durham District School Board

**Staff:** 12,000

**Industry:** K12, Professional Development

**Website:** [www.ddsb.ca](http://www.ddsb.ca)

### Platform/Features:

- D2L Brightspace
- Awards tool
- Learning Groups
- Data Hub
- Quizzes tool
- Intelligent Agents

### Highlights:

- Professional development can be delivered remotely to provide flexible and timely training to staff.
- DDSB saw a staggering increase in course offerings, user log ins, courses accessed, and awards earned in the 2020-2021 school year vs. the first year of the Professional Learning Hub.

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## Opportunity

### **A Need for Central Access to Professional Development**

Durham District School Board (DDSB) is a K-12 school district located northeast of Toronto, Ontario, with roughly 135 schools, 72,000 students, and approximately 12,300 staff members. While DDSB had access to the Brightspace platform through Ontario's provincial virtual learning environment, it began to see a large increase in demand for blended learning.

Before launching its Professional Learning Hub in D2L Brightspace, professional learning was offered through various means: face to face, online courses, and resources housed on the staff portal. Online courses included mandatory health and safety training and optional device training courses for educators who wished to obtain a teaching device.

DDSB had heard from its Health and Safety Department that there was a need to deliver training and track completion for all staff (not just educators who had access to D2L Brightspace for classroom use). There was also a plan to revamp the staff portal that currently housed many resources and find a better way to organize and centralize professional learning and access for all staff.

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Due to the pandemic, DDSB also needed to change the way that learning is delivered to staff. Through D2L Brightspace, they have been able to deliver professional development remotely and to provide flexible and timely training to staff who require it.

As a result, DDSB decided it would create a separate instance of D2L Brightspace for staff use. A landing page was created for all staff with links to face-to-face learning opportunities, the DDSB staff portal, and other key professional resources.



## Solution

### **Personalizing Learning Development for Staff**

The goal was to use the Professional Learning Hub for all professional learning in order to make it organized, simplified, and unified. The Professional Learning Hub has provided an opportunity to continue to deliver professional learning to those who need it, to deliver mandatory health and safety programming, and to improve Human Resources' onboarding of new staff.

Using the My Courses widget on the homepage, each department sets up a custom theme created with their logo and colors, so users can quickly identify which department runs specific learning opportunities.

The Professional Learning Hub has also provided an opportunity to create introductory-level, self-paced, and on-demand courses. This allows for instructors who have historically taught these courses to delve into deeper topics and spend more time one-on-one to advance learning with staff. Many sessions that would previously have been offered at the end of the school day for educators and require excessive traveling can now be delivered on-demand and at the learner's own pace and timing.

For enrollments, DDSB relies on Learning Groups to create various groups based on user attributes. When courses are ready to launch, they are added to a learning group, automatically enrolling all learners in that group. This provides a personalized catalogue of courses specific to each learner, as courses available may depend on their employee role, department, job location, or specific job duties. Being able to automatically enroll staff into courses based on their employee attributes has saved numerous staff hours and has increased the number of staff who can access training in a timely manner.



For course development, the ability to apply department themes across courses and to use the new lessons content interface has allowed DDSB to create courses that are uniform and easy to navigate. The Quizzes tool helps confirm understanding and automatically awards badges. DDSB is using Release Conditions to pace content, Intelligent Agents to provide notifications and updates, and the Awards tool to track completion.

In addition to creating content using Lessons within the Content tool in D2L Brightspace, DDSB has relied on the ability to insert videos from various video sharing platforms. Many instructors embed their slides from presentation programs as well as documents, spreadsheets, and more. They've been successful with using SCORM packages and have used them in combination with the Quizzes tool to track user completion.

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*Linda Ford-DeCunha, Education Officer, DDSB*

## Result

### **Accessible, On-Demand Training Significantly Increases Adoption**

As of launch, there have been more than 200 course offerings, 19,000 users, 80,000 awards, and 170,000 log ins. When comparing the usage in the Professional Learning Hub this year to the first year of use, DDSB saw a substantial increase in course offerings, user log ins, courses accessed and awards earned in the 2020-2021 school year when compared to the first year of the Professional Learning Hub.

Staff can access professional development and training on-demand and data shows the impact this initiative is having on the district. Staff must complete courses on digital citizenship, inclusive education, and leveraging digital in the classroom before receiving a district-issued personal device. Using the Professional Learning Hub to make these courses more accessible to staff, there are now 4,016 teachers and 631 educational assistants who have earned personal laptops, and 253 early childhood educators who have earned tablets.

Linda Ford-DeCunha, education officer at the DDSB, shares: “The Durham District School Board’s Innovative Technology team has done an outstanding job developing our DDSB Professional Learning Hub supported within D2L’s Brightspace platform. This platform has been a highly effective tool for my curriculum team, providing an ‘easy to use and navigate’ communication tool with the educators and leaders across the board.”

This year, both education and corporate areas of DDSB’s district saw a shift to fully online training and professional development. With the success of online learning and training, our district will continue to run online courses for all training and professional development going forward.