



The Power of a Curriculum & Technology Integration Partnership

A Case Study in Collaboration with Felicity-Franklin Local School District in Ohio.

Forward Edge's partnership in Curriculum & Technology Integration with **Felicity-Franklin Local Schools** is improving their educators' technical skills, changing mindsets & increasing classroom engagement with technology.

BACKGROUND

Felicity-Franklin Local School District was awarded the Ohio Straight A Grant in 2016. Using funds from the grant, they were able to make additional upgrades to their district including installing reliable infrastructure, expanding access to digital devices and increasing the time and resources for teacher training. **A large focus of the grant was on implementing a purposeful professional learning program** to ensure teachers knew how to effectively use the tools available to them and see to it that these devices weren't becoming an expensive substitute for paper and pencil tasks.

Felicity-Franklin took the necessary financial measures to execute its vision for a 1:1 and blended learning opportunity for students. To support this vision, more than just a single-event, whole-group professional development was needed. **Bringing in an on-site instructional technology specialist from Forward Edge was critical to provide more just-in-time, job-embedded opportunities to make the initiative a success for both teachers and students.**

The on-site coach was an integral part of the success at Felicity-Franklin because it freed up district staff for big picture curriculum planning. The on-site coach would work side by side teachers to enhance their lessons, co-teach with teachers to present new technologies to students, and help teachers reach success in all their teaching and learning initiatives.

In addition to the onsite integration coach, teachers were asked for their input when designing professional development days. They were given a choice as to which sessions to attend, monthly optional "Appy Hours" were implemented district-wide, as well as many other supports that were put in place to support blended instruction.

Having so many options helped teachers feel empowered to explore more on their own, finding potential solutions to classroom barriers. However, teachers still felt pressed for time when it came to learning new technology skills to implement into the classroom. Just like the 1:1 and blended learning initiatives were moving students toward an "anytime, anywhere" approach to learning, teachers needed the same "anytime, anywhere" flexibility in how they learned and applied new technology and best teaching practices in their classrooms.

"Edge•U has given teachers the ability to make personalized decisions about their professional learning, while giving our admin team data to measure their progress and growth..."

-Dave Gibson, Superintendent at Felicity-Franklin



SOLUTION

In spring of 2018, Forward Edge developed the **Edge•U Badges system**- an online, anytime, anywhere learning platform. The program allows teachers to pick the topics they want to learn about, gives them the opportunity to learn the tools and skills on their own time, at their own pace, and awards badges to teachers for applying various topics into curriculum. **Teachers can turn in the points they earn for CEUs and graduate credits from Ashland University.**

This program provides educators the flexibility to explore tools they would like to use in their classroom, and to follow their curiosity to discover new tools they did not previously know about. Edge•U, coupled with the capability and interactions of the onsite instructional tech coach, provided teachers and other staff many opportunities to have the necessary support, feedback and understanding for implementing new tools in ways that significantly impacted the students' classroom experience.

The Director of Curriculum and Technology Integration at Forward Edge, Katie Ritter Siemer, comments on the reason for the development of the program. "We began to see a trend in teacher responses to our district integration assessments around Ohio: that teachers wanted more access to **anywhere, anytime learning** at a shockingly high rate. So, we decided to create that platform. **We developed Edge•U around research-based best practices for today's adult learners**, which just so happen to model best-practices for 21st-Century learning in the K12 classroom as well."

Every badge in Edge•U is aligned to ISTE's Standards for Educators, ISTE's Standards for Students, and the SAMR model, so teachers can search for a particular solution to a problem of practice instead of just picking a random tool and trying to force it into a lesson.

"This is truly a program that is relevant to today's learners of technology. Teachers feel much more comfortable using and introducing certain programs to students if they can navigate it easily as well."

-Kathy Frye, Ed.D.,
Curriculum Director at
Felicity-Franklin



HOW IT WORKS

Educators at Felicity-Franklin participate in Edge•U by logging into the Edge•U site, searching by ISTE standards, problems of practice or specific digital tools. Once a tool is selected, teachers learn how to use the tool with the video tutorial and additional resources provided on the badge webpage. Every badge includes a classroom implementation task, requiring teachers to actually use the tool with their students and submit evidence of that use. Then, the evidence is reviewed by one of Forward Edge's Technology Integration Specialists, and once approved, the teacher is awarded the badge and points. As participants earn more badges and points, they can turn those points into CEUs or Ashland University graduate credit, while also receiving incentives for their hard work!

Easy-to-use and well aligned to other professional learning at the district, Edge•U provides clear success criteria to measure progress and creates a sense of personal accomplishment and excitement amongst all teaching professionals.

Felicity teacher Daniel Rothwell has, "three main reasons for using Edge•U. The first is *choice* - this is the "YouTube" of professional development. The second is *individualized* - I can choose my own adventure. Finally, the third is that this program is *gamified* - I can earn badges, points, incentives, and level up to move up to the leaderboard."



TRAILBLAZER
Other Educators look to this Educator for Ideas & inspiration



TRANSFORMER
Creatively changes classroom dynamics & student engagement



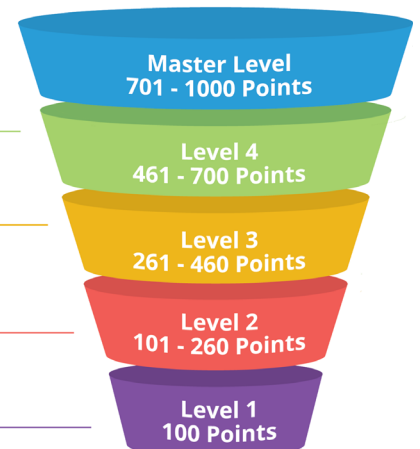
ENGAGER
Effectively uses technology to engage students



ACHIEVER
Adopts key learnings & implements



INITIATOR
Excited to learn & introduce new ideas



CRITICAL ACTIONS

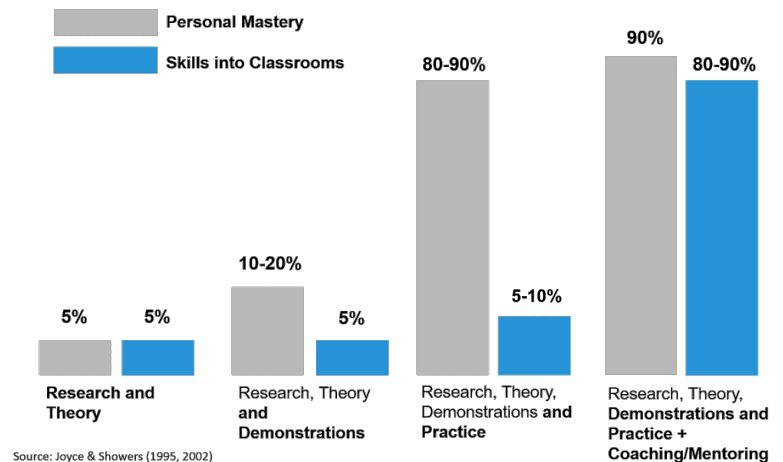
With the goal of enriching learning across the district, Felicity-Franklin and the Forward Edge Curriculum & Integration team took conscientious actions such as utilizing staff meetings and district professional development time to introduce the Edge•U program and allow teachers to sign up and start earning their badges.

In addition to making the extra time for teachers to have the opportunity to learn new tools and strategies, **the district had the full support and participation of the administration which helped create a culture where teachers could learn and thrive.** Administration support on any district initiative is absolutely critical to seeing it through. The Curriculum Director and Principals earned badges alongside teachers, as well as building principals encouraging and directing teachers to specific badges in reflective conversations.

Edge•U Badges were also integrated into other learning initiatives in the district, such as aligning available badges to the district-wide book study of “Innovator’s Mindset” to point teachers in the direction of available tools to achieve similar outcomes from the book. **This made Edge•U part of the life-long learning culture at Felicity, as opposed to one more initiative.**

Lastly, and most importantly, having an onsite technology integration coach to help learn particular tools if teachers weren’t comfortable doing it independently, be an extra set of hands if the teacher needed help implementing tools in the classroom, and to follow up if educators did not meet criteria for certain badges improved the way the teachers understood the material and integrated the tools into their classrooms daily. Research shows that instructional coaching drastically increases teacher’s mastery of new skills, and more importantly, the application of those new skills into their teaching. *See chart to the bottom right.*

Forward Edge’s Michael Roush serves Felicity-Franklin Local Schools as a full-time Technology Integration Specialist. Michael has noted, “the teachers have really warmed up to using the Edge•U Badges system. They feel like they are learning new things that they can use right away. And, if they need some ideas on how to use a particular tool with an upcoming lesson, or they want suggestions on which badge they might want to try next, they know they can reach out to me for help any time.”



RESULTS & TRANSFORMATION

During the first 30 days of implementing Edge•U, **district participants earned 220 badges, impacting over 263 instructional hours!** With **60 percent of the staff signed up and earning badges in the first 30 days**, Felicity was seeing a growing number of teachers that were perceiving implementing technology as a doable, self-improvement opportunity rather than a chore. They realized they didn’t have to know everything about how a tool might work before they gave it a try.

RESULTS & TRANSFORMATION, CONTINUED.

A snowball effect started to permeate at Felicity-Franklin which created a mindset among educators of opportunity rather than resistance, leading to over **80% of staff actively earning badges** in less than a year.

Felicity-Franklin immediately started to see signs of improvement with some teachers venturing outside of their comfort zones to try new programs and even sharing with others by reflecting on their successes and opportunities to grow. Other teachers found new ways to use digital tools, including ways to enhance students' opportunities to collaborate with each other beyond the classroom walls. **Teachers were able to take ownership of their learning and finally felt validated for the hours they invested in learning** how to redesign their curriculum and apply new tools because they could finally earn credit for doing so.

Jaime Casap, the Chief Education Evangelist at Google, has been famously quoted saying, "people aren't afraid of change, they're afraid of pain," when discussing changes that need to be made to today's education system. **Edge•U creates an opportunity for teachers to change their practice while avoiding the pain of doing it completely on their own, without any support or compensation for their time.**

Administration at Felicity-Franklin finally had measurable data, outside of standardized test scores, to see a return on their investment with instructional technology training and support. They could see which teachers were earning badges and which badges were being earned, and therefore implemented into instruction. The fact that teachers must provide evidence that they executed the tool in their instruction also guarantees teachers are actually using the skills they learn, which is not always true in traditional "sit and get" professional development. Administrators are also better equipped to have conversations with teachers about the skills and technology they hope to see in the classroom because they have data about which badges are being earned.

A NOTE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

Felicity-Franklin Superintendent, Dave Gibson, said Edge•U, "has given teachers the ability to make personalized decisions about their professional learning, **while giving our admin team data to measure their progress and growth, and therefore data to measure the return on our investment in technology integration support.** We have seen a direct impact on student learning and meaningful use of technology in the classroom. We value our partnership with Forward Edge and the difference it has had on advancing instruction at Felicity-Franklin schools!"

MORE ABOUT Edge•U

Ignite your district's professional learning and increase impactful classroom hours with **Edge•U: Forward Edge's 'anywhere, anytime' microcredential badging program.**

CHOOSE: Meet your classroom needs by choosing badges to complete.

LEARN: Explore various topics that you want to learn at your own pace.

IMPLEMENT: Use your new skills in your classroom to directly impact learning.

EARN: Earn badges and turn your points in for CEUs & graduate credit.



**CONTACT US TO LEARN HOW WE CAN IMPACT YOUR DISTRICT!
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