



## Margaret Tracy – benefitting from the Microsoft Educator Community



### Overview

**Country:** South Africa

**Location:** Hillcrest, Kwazulu-Natal

**Industry:** Education

### Software and services:

Microsoft Innovative Educator Expert program

Microsoft Educator Community

### Websites:

[www.education.microsoft.com](http://www.education.microsoft.com)

[www.hhs.co.za/](http://www.hhs.co.za/)

Microsoft Innovative Educator Experts advance the conversation about improving student outcomes through innovative uses of technology in teaching and learning.

Nelson Mandela once claimed that ‘Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world’ but Margaret Tracey, the Technology Integrator at Hillcrest High School in KwaZulu-Natal, believes that education can be even more powerful if it is transformed by technology coupled with sound pedagogy.

“Introducing new strategies provided by new tools is new territory for all school, which is why Hillcrest High joined the Microsoft Schools’ Program at the end of 2016”, explains Margaret. Hillcrest High School (HHS) acknowledged the need to embrace the rapid technological changes of our world and the need for teachers to promote 21st century skills. Staff took the Microsoft in Education School Transformation Survey to establish a baseline of how technology is being used at the school and staff plan to use this tool to track and measure the progress of the school as they implement new strategies.

“The journey officially began in February 2017 when Microsoft Teacher Ambassador, Ronelle Klinck enabled our first twelve teachers to register on the Microsoft Educator Community and initiated the training in three workshop sessions. We have benefitted greatly from Ronelle’s input. She got us excited about implementing the opportunities that the Microsoft Educator Community offers our teachers and helped us to find free online courses that addressed both professional development and technology skills.”





*"Schools locally and internationally should make use of Skype more often to forge closer links. Global exposure can be a powerful tool in the classroom."*

*"Technology can be a powerful tool to engage our students and enhance teaching and learning. However, without a pedagogical impetus, the transformation of education through technology cannot be presumed. The Microsoft Educator Community and its learning pathways provides teachers with the necessary support and direction to adopt blended learning at Hillcrest High."*

*Margaret Tracy  
Technology Integrator  
Hillcrest High School,*

### For More Information

For more information about Microsoft in Education, visit:

[www.microsoft.com/education/ww/solution/~/Pages/index.aspx](http://www.microsoft.com/education/ww/solution/~/Pages/index.aspx)

To find out about the Microsoft Innovative Educator Expert program, see:

<https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/education/educators/miee/default.aspx>

For more information about Hillcrest High School, visit:

[www.hhs.co.za/](http://www.hhs.co.za/)

Following the initial training, even more teachers registered on the Microsoft Educator Community as staff were eager to access the free online courses that would also allow them to earn continuing professional development points through the South African Council of Educators (SACE). "Now teachers can pursue an internationally recognized pathway of Microsoft points and badges in their own time and at their own pace. I believe that as teachers we need to lead by example and in so doing, we are instilling a culture of learning at HHS" says Tracey who tracks the progress of teachers by seeing which badges they are awarded.

### Using tools and sharing ideas

Margaret has found that the key to promoting the use of Microsoft tools is to first showcase the benefits of using an appropriate tool for the lesson being taught. "Teachers are very pressed for time so I often contextualize training. When a teacher is learning a particular Office 365 app, training is based on a particular lesson or unit of work. In this way, the teacher is not taking time out to be trained but is preparing a lesson which can be developed over time or as is." Margaret is also on hand to support teachers through their first few lessons that integrate technology if this is required.

Some of the tools that Margaret has shared with teachers include OneNote and Sway. "I am impressed with the power of OneNote and the opportunity it provides a teacher or student to organise one's work. Sway is very easy to use and looks very professional. The beauty of Office 365 is the online/offline synchronization and their multi-media possibilities."

Margaret encourages sharing technology tool highlights among her teachers. "I hold a fortnightly lunchtime Knowledge Café where teachers demonstrate the effective use of a particular technology tool. In this relaxed environment, teachers discuss issues that may arise or why they believe a particular tool will work well in their lessons." Some of these sessions have included teachers watching webinars together, such as the #LearnWhatsNext and Ten Great Ideas for teachers webinars hosted by Teacher Ambassadors Ronelle Klink and Bonolo Sedupane.

### Involving students

"Another avenue to support the teachers and the student body in the classroom, is to train student IT champions. This is an extramural activity for which students can register if they have an interest in technology." After getting advice from Ronelle, Margaret challenged the IT ambassadors to boost their computer skills by completing the Microsoft Digital Literacy Certificate and she also provides training on a particular aspect of technology one afternoon a week. "We've also introduced a Student Knowledge Café in a designated classroom during break time. Students are encouraged to meet to discuss any technology related issues."

Margaret and Hillcrest High School learners have participated in Skype collaboration. "Last year our Grade 9 students were part of The World's Largest Lesson. This was an initiative of Sir Ken Robinson to globally involve students in the Global goals."

### Key Technology

- Office 365
- OneNote, Skype, Sway
- Microsoft Educator Community