

How one Ontario school doubled enrollment and managed the pandemic with Twine

In 2019, St. Thomas Community Christian School (STCCS) was faced with a challenge. Another local private school was closing its doors, and many of the students were signing up to join their school. This would, in effect, double the amount of enrolled students and create some logistical challenges for the administration, including Amanda Luth, the school's executive assistant.

"We were a school that did everything by paper and our secretary just knew everything," Ms. Luth said.

On top of the influx of new students, STCCS had also planned to expand their K-8 school to include grades 9-12, which would require more stringent reporting requirements through Ontario's OnSIS data collection system.

After struggling to find school management software that would meet their reporting needs and provide timely onboarding and support and spending most of the school year in limbo with another software company, Ms. Luth convinced the principal to give Twine a chance.

Ms. Luth said it was only a day or two from when they reached out to Twine to when they were set up to start the onboarding process. When she was told they would be all set up within two weeks, she said she was skeptical, due to the many months she had spent working with their previous software company to get onboarded.

Much to her relief, they had all of their 9th grade students and teachers set up in March 2020, within the promised 2-week window.

The school had plans to potentially expand to their K-8 students in the following school year. Of course, it was around that time that many schools transitioned to virtual learning due to the COVID-19 crisis.



“ Having Twine set up was really perfect timing with the pandemic.

We were ready to launch for our additional 250 grade school students in September 2020. We were nervous hitting that submit button to send out invites to parents, but it went smoothly.

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- Ms. Luth
Executive Assistant of St. Thomas Community Christian School



Although the grade school students primarily utilize features like attendance reporting, rather than regularly having assignment submissions online, having the ability to shift to online learning with Twine has been helpful for classes under quarantine during the 2020-2021 school year.

“ When we have classes that have to quarantine for two weeks at a time, the transition to Distance Education is quite seamless.

If a child is home sick, they are able to keep up with the class -- the reading, writing, and arithmetic are all there.

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- Ms. Luth
Executive Assistant of St. Thomas Community Christian School

Another area where Twine helps STCCS is with gradebooks and report cards. “It modernized us significantly,” Ms. Luth said. “Before teachers did pen and paper, or some made their own Excel spreadsheets. In Twine, all the standards are linked in the gradebooks, which has been really helpful.”

Prior to Twine, printing and preparing report cards was a week-long process for the school, but now they can print the report cards and mailing labels with a few button clicks and get them on their way.

One of the things Ms. Luth and her school appreciate about Twine is the responsiveness and commitment the team has for ongoing support. She mentioned that any time they've had any concerns or questions, the Twine staff has been able to help quickly.

“We've been so happy with Gary and Mark and their teams when it comes to training and figuring out our little quirks -- they've been very accommodating and helpful,” she said.

Even when she's not directly dealing with a person, Ms. Luth said that she can often get the help and support she needs from the dedicated Twine help center, which has written and video tutorials on a lot of the topics schools frequently ask about. This is especially helpful when she gets questions from teachers on features or tools she doesn't use much as an administrator. She can help by locating a video or set of instructions and it usually answers the questions they have.

“ **I don't need to be an expert because it is all laid out for me** ”

- Ms. Luth Executive Assistant of St. Thomas Community Christian School

An addition STCCS is planning to use next year is the ability to quickly and easily gather the information needed for the in-depth OnSIS reporting they, and other Ontario schools, are required to submit each year. Last year was a lot of manual data entry, Ms. Luth said, and they are looking forward to being able to upload that information directly from Twine during the next reporting period.

Overall, she says having Twine has made a positive impact on STCCS, especially with the additional challenges this year has posed to schools. “We've been very pleased with Twine and the support that we've received and we're looking forward to continuing to grow with Twine in the future,” she said.

