

Creating a Professional Learning Community for ESSB Preschool Classes
PDIG 2017-2018

Final Report

Our goal of this year's project was to establish a professional learning community online for our ESSB(Eastern Shores School Board) preschool teachers. It was proposed to set up the online tool and establish a list of pedagogical resources for the preschool teachers and build a benchmark document to assist with preschool evaluations. Our hopes were to promote ongoing communication between ESSB teachers and to promote ease of access to resources and materials pertinent to preschool education. Through increased knowledge we hoped to ensure student success in our classes.

We had planned three online meeting days to establish the Professional Learning Community (PLC) online tool, compile a resource document, and build a benchmark document. We also planned one day release for a professional development day for preschool teachers in our board.

The project went very well. We modified certain ways of getting together due to our vast and unique geographic region. However, all the main activities were carried out. First, we had one change in participants due to the teacher from New Richmond School being out on leave. Jill Sinnett from Gaspé Elementary replaced her. We had planned to meet through video conference with our Belle Anse and Chandler teachers travelling to New Richmond for the three online planning and work sessions. Therefore, we had asked for our budget to cover kilometers travelled each time. However, we ended up using LEARN Quebec's Zenlive platform, each from our own schools without travelling.

At our first half day meeting in September we set up zenlive and went over the details of the project. We also prepared a list of preschool teachers in our board and an introductory letter to be sent out.

Our second meeting was in October and we discussed that there was a change concerning our PD day originally planned within our project proposal. The Gaspé and area teachers were having a Play 5 workshop with ELA and French board consultants in December in New Carlisle and our team was invited to attend and present the second day. We agreed we would do this and plan a second presentation for North Shore, Fermont, and Metis teachers later in the school year. We set up a facebook page as an online tool for sharing resources, documents and discussions.

In November we met a half day to work on our online tool, our resource list, and our presentation to colleagues in December. We ended up switching the facebook page to a facebook group, as this provided a better layout and seemed less complicated.

On December 5th we were in New Carlisle and presented the project to the first group of teachers. We introduced them to the facebook group and made sure everyone was added and showed them the resource list we had compiled so far. We also had a resource sharing session and started discussion on a benchmark document. (Note we originally planned to hold the PD session later in the school year.)

Our next half day meeting was in February. We made additions to the resource list and finalized it, uploading it to our facebook group. We sent reminders to colleagues about the group and resource list. We went over suggestions for the benchmark document and worked on revising the document. A google survey document was started by adding some questions for the end of the project. Finally, we discussed how we could meet the North Shore, Fermont, and Metis teachers.

Since we had saved money in the travel budget from not travelling to meet for video conferences, we were able to plan for having an additional two hour zenlive session with the Fermont and Metis preschool teacher. Also, since the project coordinator was asked by consultants working on a RTI workshop to present to preschool teachers of the North Shore in Port Cartier, the last group of teachers would be covered by this visit.

In April the project manager was unable to meet with North Shore preschool teachers in the board to present the project, talk about the facebook group, review the resource list, and work on the partly revised benchmark document. Unfortunately, a late spring snow storm in Sept Iles and Port Cartier cancelled flights and entire day of meetings. We were also to share some resources and look at competencies for the four-year-old program and the five-year-old program and essential goals and activities that correspond to these competencies.

Therefore, the following week in April, we similarly did the presentation previously planned for the North Shore online, through Zenlive, with the Fermont teacher and included those we had hoped to meet in Port Cartier. (Due to teacher in Metis going out on leave we were unable to reach her and a few others from North Shore were also absent due to short notice.)

At the end of April we had one more day Zenlive session to wrap up our project. We made final changes to the new continuum document, (we decided to change the benchmark document to more of a continuum). We uploaded it to our facebook group. We also finalized the survey for teachers and sent it out via email. The project coordinator will collect the results and communicate them to the other project members and keep it for reference for next year's project. Finally, we worked on our end of year report.

In summary, we have succeeded in establishing an online PLC for our teachers and making it easier to find resources. We have offered support and encouragement to our teachers.

The biggest challenge we had in our project was ensuring we met with all our preschool teachers despite the vast geographic area. Sometimes, we had to modify our ways and adjust our means and budget.

We have to continue to encourage and support teachers to participate actively in the PLC - to share more, ask questions more, and express concerns more. However, this year's project was an excellent start and we plan on continuing further.

As we have seen, PLCs can be of great benefit to teachers. Thus, we recommend that other teachers carry out similar endeavors. We conclude the project was indeed a success!

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