

PDIG Final Report

The Power of Presentation

The Project:

The aim of this project was to develop confident communicators and powerful presenters at each grade level of elementary school. Developing oral skills within a culture and climate that is supportive and tolerant of opinions, ideas and knowledge. This project was able to serve as a springboard for many critical areas of learning. Cross-curricular competencies, effective communication and social emotional learning (SEL) were implicated. The project was a great success.

We began by developing a shared understanding of skills needed in the 21st Century. Creation of rubrics; fluency, formal presentation, daily communication, team work, active listening Infusing social/emotional components: support, tolerance of opinions, perspective. Projects were developed at each grade level. Providing a classroom culture that promotes student reflection and positive interaction was key. Collaborative Problem Solving (CPS) methods, examination of lagging cognitive and executive function skills were explored. The aim; to infuse positive collaboration into powerful class presentations. Fostering open respectful communication in the classroom and new ways for students to relate to their peers in order to produce a common goal - becoming strong orators who respect the collaboration process. Rubrics were redefined and further planning of individual projects and presentations geared towards a CPS mindset alongside powerful oral communication skills.

The goal: To develop communication skills through dramatic role-playing. Experiential learning for both staff and students. The activity begins with deep listening and advances what it means to practice empathy. Teachers collaborated in cycle teams in order to create effective lesson plan to bring the program to life in the classroom with students; defining appropriate vocabulary, topics, structures and strategies.

The workshop: Not only a self-contained workshop, but an example that operationalizes a number of 'developmental exercises'. These are exercises that, when repeatedly engaged over time, are capable of promoting enduring character growth and socio-emotional learning. For example, to expand one's capacity to empathize. Areas addressed:

- The cognitive dimension of empathy which is needed to understand what another person might be feeling and thinking
- The affective dimension of empathy which is needed to feel for/emotionally respond to the experience of another person

Our session was aimed to engage:

- Perspective-Taking Training: Deliberately training our ability to interpret what another person might be thinking and feeling. Empathetic Role-Play: Drama and

role-play so as to improve our ability to connect, and be moved by another person's feelings

- Dislodging Self-Serving Biases: Expanding our awareness of the moments just prior to our 'self-contracting', so that we might more easily identify opportunities to engage and act upon empathetic intentions.

Deep listening and empathy building created more collaborative in class communication and effective classroom presentations.

Focus back to specific presentations for oral communication in class and project presentations. Using all of the methods explored, teachers redefined and reflected on approaches. This was followed by a re-examination of formative and summative communicating assessment tools for both process and product. Revision of rubrics and checklists to enhance the communication competency of oral language development.

The project centered more on the SEL aspect than originally expected. It was discovered the interpersonal skill and community building process was even more important than originally anticipated. In order to achieve the goal of effective communication and presentation these elements required added teachings

Project Goals:

The goal of the project was to create speaking, listening, and presenting opportunities school-wide. Teachers developed projects at each grade level with on-going communication goals and presentation opportunities. The students participated in units of study within their English Language Arts curriculum. These projects included the competencies of reading and writing, with an intensified focus on using language to communicate and learn. Cross-curricular competencies were emphasized; to use information and communication technologies, to work cooperatively with others, to adopt effective work methods and communicate appropriately. They followed a curriculum that included daily communication, conferencing, team building, differentiation, and reflection. The students were guided towards an appreciation for different perspectives and develop a respect for people's individuality as well as value their ability to be a contributing member of the group. The process was supported through collaboration with The Segal Centre. These programs aim to develop character development through drama and oral presentation. Teachers gained knowledge in how to guide and coach students in working cooperatively within a community. New strategies fostering communication in the classroom and peer relations in order to produce a common goal were explored.

Project Outcomes:

Gains/knowledge acquired through project: Teacher Evaluation /Reflections/Journals:

- Grade 1 - Children Around the World: I absolutely loved every part of our presentation. The kids loved it and were extremely excited about it throughout. It was their first time really collaborating and working as a group. The skills acquired both academically and emotionally were invaluable. I think we all agree the project was worthwhile.
- Grade 2 - Readers Theatre Presentations: Through the process, the students acquired more confidence in volume, tone, and pacing. They gained a respect for each other that I did not know young children could embrace. A definite sense of community was developed. Students helped each other grow and had positive feedback for one another during rehearsals.

- Grade 3 - Literary Event: A group of powerful, kind, supportive presenters was achieved. The children were each other's advocates. The encouragement to push themselves outside their comfort zones and support along the way was priceless. The end result was outstanding! (Both academically and as a community)
- Grade 4 – A Day in the Life: Having more in class mini presentations helped formal presentation of material. The students were excited. The practice and process felt so different.
- Grade 5 – Debates: Great gains in communication. The time spent focusing on the writing/research skills was enhanced as collaboration issues were minimized.
- Grade 6 – ‘Ted Talk’s: The students spent more time preparing for oral presentations. As a result, they were better orators. Each presentation conveyed deeper meaning. Breaking off into smaller groups for discussion allowed us to cover everything of importance at different skill and social emotional levels.

Project Reinvestment:

Opportunities to expand the program into French oral language instruction, in each program, creating bilingual presentations is the next step. As communication is ever changing and on going, the possibilities of this project seem endless.