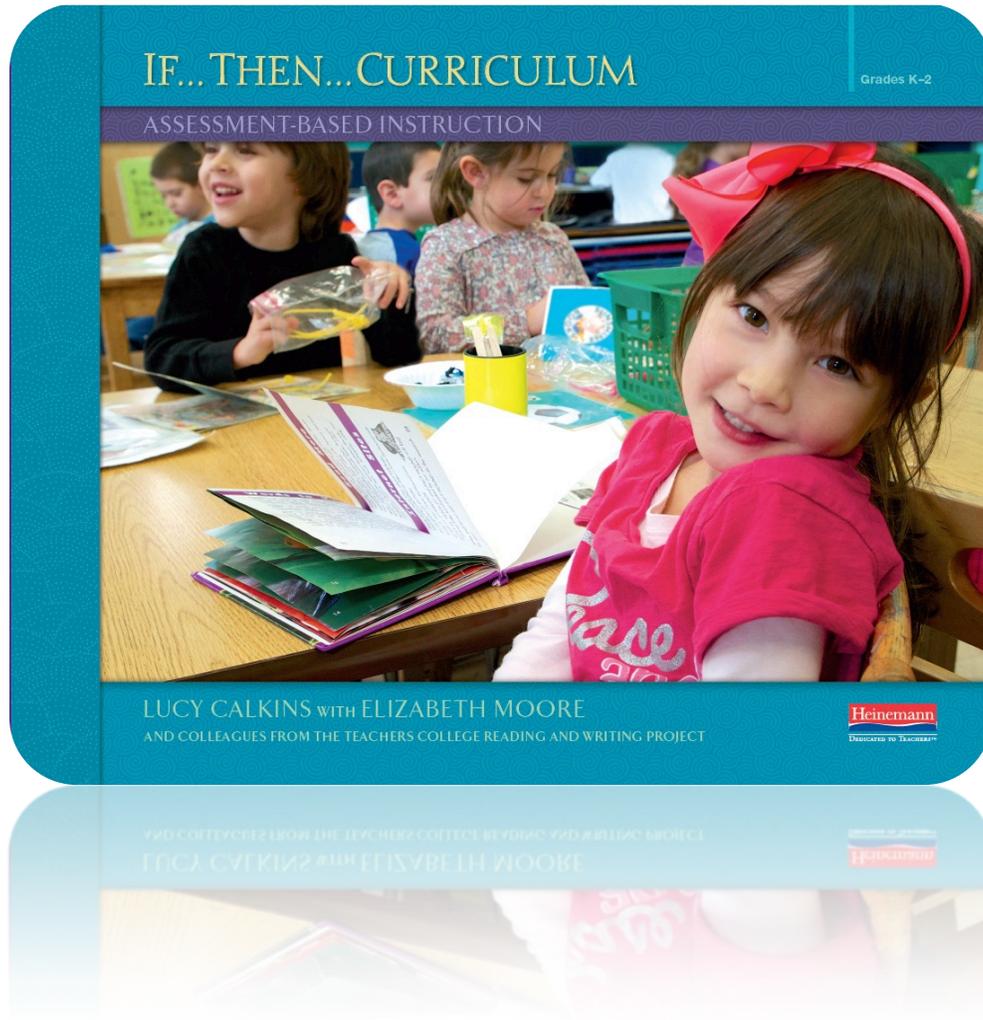


**Cycle One Lucy Calkins PDIG Final Report
2017/2018**



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Project Description:

To help with the writing on self-selected topics, we turned to the work of Lucy Calkins. Specifically, two components of her writing kits for cycle 1.1 that teachers selected: Small Moments and Writing Non-Fiction Chapter Books. These units ask students to use their own experiences and background knowledge to generate ideas for writing; students wrote on topics they knew deeply, thus promoting engagement and independence. Teachers were impressed by the wide variety of ideas that reluctant writers, indigenous students and students recently arrived from other countries chose to write about. This project enabled teachers to continue the work of helping students to produce high quality writing on self-selected topics.

What Went Well

Each of the goals we set out to meet was met. We did find that half days were better as opposed to full days. These half days were used very effectively- teachers would pinpoint areas of the units that they would go back and study later. Due to the extensive nature of the note taking required, teachers preferred to do this on their own time and come to the meetings with already a strong sense of the content in each of the lessons- this way they could use the planning time during our PDIG days to plan as opposed to reading the material. Teachers found that the note taking required was quite extensive and was best done prior to the meetings days and so we instead worked using half days- having already come with extensive notes to share on the material.

A Synthesis of Each Day:

On Day 1, October 11th, teachers showed samples of students writing so far and we discussed the connection between reading levels and written work; getting a good sense of the unique make-up of each different teacher's classroom. Teachers shared teaching strategies and tools they used for writers workshop and the structure for setting this up in their classroom. We delved into the *Small Moments* unit and looked at the outline of mini lessons and the resources needed to engage students in an ongoing writer's workshop. Using the Lucy Calkins resources, teachers prepared for their upcoming week of writer's workshop.

On Day 2, December 18th, we discussed in detail where in the units teachers were and the effect this teaching was having on students. Teachers provided details of how these lessons from the small moments helped to create excitement and engagement. Teachers found that students were driven because they were simply encouraged to write without stopping to edit or revise, and get all their ideas out on the page. Calling students master authors also had a

significant impact in helping them see the value in their own words on the page. Teachers found that students had begun to write much more and the phrase “you think you’re done, but you’ve just begun” became a mantra that was well received and pushed them to write more.

We took time to explore and look in depth at students writing samples and used the If..Then..Curriculum to determine what feedback we would focus on for each student. We carefully considered what one thing would immediately move this student forward as a writer. Using the Calkins If..Then..Curriculum to guide us was key to this discussion and a very helpful tool in anchoring the focus of each piece of directed, instructional feedback.

On Day 3, January 17th teachers referred to the non-fiction unit and engaged in planning. We looked at the materials needed, teaching points, mentor texts to support the lessons and teaching materials (charts, teacher’s writing to be used as a model). Teachers discussed what they were noticing throughout this unit as well as some of the potential challenges they anticipated. We really unpacked how Lucy Calkins asks teachers to use their own writing as a model and discussed how her emphasis on this was changing the nature of teachers practice. Teachers found the act of writing along with students and inviting their continuous feedback to be a way to focus on the process instead of just the finishing piece.

On Day 4, April 11th teachers shared student samples of work for the non-fiction unit and we looked at patterns of student growth in their writing over the course of this year. In particular, teachers shared specific exemplars for small moments - where the writer unfroze people and slowed down the moment; evidence of the inside coming out. This skill was taught during the first small moments unit. We also looked at year end exemplars for non-fiction that covered table of contents, dedication and introduction. We made links to the poetry mentor texts by Dorfman and Capelli as well as the poetry books that teachers already have available to them in their resource libraries. Our session then moved into a reflective piece looking at our growth as educators over the course of this year, using and integrating the Calkins writing units into our teaching. What became so evident during this reflective time was that without a doubt Calkins has changed our practice as educators.

What Proved to be a Challenge:

Teachers found that each lesson took quite a bit of time to wade through. While Lucy Calkins provides detailed examples, anecdotes and teaching instructions- it does require quite a bit of advance reading and planning and teachers really had to factor this into their preparation time, especially if they were working with her material for the first time.

Project Goals:

Day 1: Teachers will refer to selected unit- Calkins' "Small Moments" to plan 12 lessons which include:

- a. Materials needed, organizational needs of the room
- b. Teaching points (with the process and strategies to use)
- c. Mentor texts to support the lessons
- d. Teaching materials (charts, teacher's writing to be used as a model)

Teachers met this goal and were able to take this half day to engage in discussion surrounding organizational needs of the room- the key strategies they were going to use with the teaching points provided and how they would integrate the visuals, models and materials into each of these lessons. The conversations were rich and enabled teachers to think deeply about each of these lessons. They also took time to look at a few student samples to get a picture of the various types of classroom environments they were dealing with.

Day 2: Teachers will bring their students writing to share. Teachers will work together to make teaching decisions that would be appropriate to cover during conferences with students. Some student writing will be chosen to use as exemplars with students.

We met this goal by looking in depth at students writing samples and using the If..Then..Curriculum to determine what feedback we would focus on for each student. Lucy Calkins clearly outlines the way to structure feedback in a one-on-one conference and teachers practised following this model as we looked at each of their samples. Through this process teachers were able to mark samples that they could use as exemplars with future students.

Day 3: Teachers will refer to Calkins' "Non-Fiction Chapter Books to plan 12 lessons which include:

- a. Materials needed
- b. Teaching points(with the process and strategies to use)
- c. Mentor texts to support the lessons
- d. Teaching materials (charts, teacher's writing to be used as a model)

Teachers were really excited to begin these non-fiction units as this was a less comfortable teaching area for many of them. We met this goal by really unpacking how Lucy Calkins asks teachers to use their own writing as a model and discussed how her emphasis on this was changing the nature of teachers practice. This conversation build momentum and excitement as

teachers planned to launch into this next unit. **Day 4:** Teachers will bring their students' writing to share. Teachers will work together to make teaching decisions that would be appropriate to use with individuals during conferencing time. Some student writing will be chosen to use as exemplars with students.

Again teachers met this goal by using the Calkins If..Then..Curriculum, specific to non-fiction, to consider what feedback they would prioritize for each student piece. At the heart of this conversation was the importance of moving the writer, not just the writing, forward. Teachers really gained a lot from deliberating and then coming to consensus on what areas they would hone in on in their feedback as they looked at students samples together. Teachers were also able to really get a chance to see the diverse range of students in cycle one that is represented across the four different schools.

We were successful in meeting each of our goals. We did find that half days were better as opposed to full days. Teachers found that the note taking required was quite extensive and much of it was best done prior to the meetings days. We instead worked using half days- having taken a bit of time to review the material prior to the meeting days.

Project Outcomes:

What became so evident during this reflective time was that without a doubt Calkins has changed our practice as educators. Teachers had worked with small moments in narrative, non-fiction and were also beginning a third unit. Teachers found that Calkins provides you with the strategies to help students with their writing challenges- this is so evident in the If..Then Curriculum Book and this resource is so pertinent to the daily challenges young writers work through that teachers deemed it's use needs to be widespread to all teachers of this grade.

Calkins advocates how important it is to let kids just write- there is time later to focus in on conventions-give students the space and freedom to write. In taking on this perspective this year- teachers were surprised by just how much more students engaged with the writing process. They were delighted with this outcome and this adopted perspective became their own.

In moving Calkins into a wider sphere we discussed that it would be helpful to have the resource teacher-push in model- to support the Calkins units. This would allow for twice as much conferencing and this is key to propelling students forward in their writing. This will be something that teachers can communicate next year as they continue to use the Calkins units in their lessons. Teachers imparted that Calkins has made them more mindful that everything has been placed in the text for a reason and sharing the intentionality of writers serves as a model they continue to ask their students to follow.

Using Calkins has made teachers more specific with their feedback and this shift was also evident as we looked at pieces of student writing and discussed what areas we would hone in on to push that students writing forward- teachers developed a solid understanding of the action plan they would set in motion for that student upon reading their writing. Teachers were forced to consider: am I moving the writer or the writing?

Calkins allows for links to daily 5. Calkins also emphasizes that the drawing comes first as a precursor for writing. Teachers watched as students engaged in much more talking before, during and after writing. Emphasis on sharing enabled them to engage in discussion and to think things through. Setting a clear time limit for kids so that they know they have a set amount of time to be writing- with the perspective that when you're done- you've just begun was an integral part to the success of working through these units. The one drawback that teachers found was that the Calkins units required you to wade through quite a bit of material for every lesson and extensive note taking is required.

Reinvestment:

Through these reflections teachers were adamant about continuing to use the Calkins units next year and how excited they were to build off of the knowledge they had gained this year as they had worked through three of the units. The gains had been clear. Teachers had achieved the following:

- Gained experience in modelling when helping students to become writers
- Effectively use mentor texts to support writers
- Conferenced effectively to move writers forward
- Developed a network of teachers to further develop their expertise as teachers of writing
- Clarified teaching points in the ELA Writing Curriculum
- Established exemplars when looking at student writing samples
- Their reflections demonstrated their personal growth in all the above mentioned areas

Sharing this project:

Teachers will have the opportunity to present and share this project with other educators on a designated board wide English Language Arts Network day; teachers will get to showcase the work they have done with the Lucy Calkins Units. Teachers will not just share the tools and strategies that they have used but will also have the opportunity to share student writing samples that coincide with the Lucy Calkins If...Then...Curriculum. Teachers will also share these

tools and writing samples within their school ELA departments so that this knowledge can be transferred and teachers can consider how these same tools and strategies for cycle one might be adapted and used within other cycles as well. While this was a cycle one specific project, the way Lucy Calkins leads teachers through engaging students in writers' workshop and providing targeted feedback applies to all cycles in English Language Arts.

Looking beyond:

Looking beyond the teachers this year, we see this project being reinvested as we work to continue this PLC next year and incorporate teachers from additional elementary schools. Our goal is to successfully introduce these tools in all elementary schools in Western Quebec. This will enable a common language to be developed, as at least one teacher in each of these elementary schools in cycle one comes to experience working with the two units: "Small Moments" and "Non-Fiction Chapter Books" as well as the Calkins "If...Then ...Curriculum" for providing feedback for both fiction and nonfiction texts. Each year we will continue to expand this project until every cycle one is reached in every WQSB school. Teachers within schools will be designated to share with their cycle one colleagues so that every cycle one teacher has the opportunity to use these tools. Writing samples will continue to be built as teachers add to this throughout next year as well and this resource will be made available on the ELA google drive and shared with all teachers throughout the board.