

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Describe/show to what degree the project was carried out as planned. Include what went well and what proved to be a challenge. Include a synthesis of your journal entries.

Ruwani Payoe and I have worked in collaboration with consultants from RECIT, ALDI, Pedagogical Services (EMSB), and Student Services (EMSB), and Librarians (EMSB) on the Reading and Media/Research Station in the Advanced 5 Literacy Framework. In this 4th year of our on-going project, we focused on the accessibility of the Writing Pursuit within this same A5 framework to help students achieve their educational objectives, and more importantly, to witness students' recognition of the value inherent in becoming lifelong learners.

Based on our observation of writing skills in the Secondary 4 and 5 classroom, and conversations we had with specialists, Ruwani and I used the framework from Ruth Culham's book "Traits of Writing: The complete guide for middle school" which was introduced to us by Susan Waite and Lynn Senecal at an EMSB RTN (RESOURCE TEACHERS NETWORK). This theoretical framework is structured around the 6 pillars of great writing: Ideas, sentence fluency, organization, word choice, voice, and conventions. One thing that went well this year was that we were able to select resources that will help us teach writing in our classroom - Writing Essentials by Regie Routman and Patterns Power by Jeff Anderson; furthermore, through the A5 initiative at the school board level, we also received training on and were provided with access to updated guided writing templates from www.shapesofmind.org.

With Susan Waite's (Speech Language Pathologist) guidance we also used EmPOWER Writing strategies (Architectsforlearning.com) as a framework. Susan Waite has the training, expertise and materials to incorporate these strategies in our classroom. Our students have demonstrated that they benefit from explicit organizational frameworks like BrainFrames - however, this is where we face the real challenge in our school: time. We see students for a one year or two year program, and they do not have enough time to practise using strategies; furthermore, our students are working under duress because of Sec. 4 and Sec.5 Ministerial Exams. Having said that, one thing that did work well was that Susan has been working with us for a decade so we have nurtured a collaborative relationship which has allowed her implement a curriculum based consultation process that directly benefits the students in an authentic way. Despite time constraints, Susan worked shoulder to shoulder with me in the ELA classroom at Perspectives II, once a week, assessing the needs of students as well as coaching and conferencing when possible. The fact that Susan Waite has known some of our students since elementary school has helped build trusting relationships in the classroom to identify and address needs.

Students have continued to use assistive technology, such as Read & Write and Word Q, to support the implementation of the Writing Pursuit. Through guided writing, conferencing, team consultations and PLCs Ruwani and I created Learning Profiles for two target students who would benefit from individualized, scaffolded learning, which was one of our objectives.

PROJECT GOALS

Describe/show to what degree the goals of the approved project were met. If the goals were only partially met or not met at all, describe the reasons for this.

We were allocated 3.5 days each out of a requested 6 days. We adjusted our goals accordingly.

When we applied, Ruwani and I were co-teaching at Perspectives II High School. Circumstances changed; while we remained in the same network of Outreach Schools at the same grade level, we no longer were teaching in the same school.

The logistics were more challenging this year because we had to plan around two different school calendars (ex. staff meetings, school outings, school ped days, parent-teacher interviews etc.)

Nothing comes without its advantages, and we recognized early on that we had effectively diversified the learners that we discussed; furthermore, we realized effective collaboration requires a common language, which we had been able to build and practise over the last decade. This project helped us improve as teachers, and recognize the sustainability of an inter-school partnership in addressing writing needs in secondary school.

With Susan Waite (SLP, Student Services) we practiced creating learner profiles in order identify students and help understand what specific writing interventions would be effective, such as Brainframes. The learner profiles allowed us to discuss student adaptations in a professional manner, and compare and contrast learner traits and patterns.

The PDIG allowed us to work hand in hand with the A5 Pilot Project, steered by Paul Ketner and Donna D'Amato (Pedagogical Services), in collaboration with the Senior Outreach ELA PLC. The initiative allowed us to look specifically at the Writing Station to explore, discuss and evaluate various writing frameworks and shared resources. Before the end of the year, we expect to have another training session with Lynn Senecal.

BREAKDOWN OF GOALS ACHIEVED

Day 1

We had an Initial Visioning Meeting where we discussed the Writing Station within the A5 framework in our respective classrooms. We discussed and evaluated different writing interventions. We also discussed possible ways of sharing our information because literacy interventions can be effective within the outreach network if we develop and maintain continuity and sustained practices between the various senior schools.

Susan presented EmPower to us, discussing the importance of Evaluating the Question/ Tasks to determine the Parts/Jobs and select appropriate Brainframes.

Day 2

Instead of a SETT Framework we identified two students from Tier 2 of the Response to Intervention (RTI) framework to follow. We did a general learner profile. Using Google Classroom we looked at writing samples and discussed interventions.

We also continued our mini EmPower workshop taking a closer look at BrainFrames and looking at how thinking is a 3 dimensional process and acknowledging that writing doesn't happen in a vacuum. We recognized that talking about ideas at the conference table is an effective and sustainable pre-writing intervention for some students.

Day 3

As our PDIG and A5 Pilot Project converged we used this day to synthesize the breadth of the information that we had gathered over the past 5 months, including a recent workshop with Lynn Senecal, Coordinator for the Inclusive Schools Network Coordinator. We have a follow-up workshop with her in June.

We discussed the updated Guided Writing Template (Teaching with Purpose) with respect to the Shapes of Mind Learner Profile guidelines.

One of the challenges we had within the A5 Literacy Framework at the High School level was incorporating the Word Works Station as an independent Pursuit. We disagreed that it should be eliminated but agreed that it could be effectively paired with writing, and even reading. Ruwani considered taking the Word Works Pursuit out of the A5 framework, but reconsidered it recognizing the need for students to consider their word choices in the writing pursuit. According to Bonnie Singer, the writing process has to be staged in the classroom. We considered ways to stage the word works pursuit within writing. We recognize that we need more time to explore the models we have for writing - planning, drafting, and editing/revising, and work with the consultants to create a design for that makes sense in our classroom and that also empowers the students.

Day 4 (½ day)

Wrote Final Report

PROJECT OUTCOMES

Describe/show the gains that the participating teachers achieved through this project.

- Reading and discussing the traits of writing; and selecting resources for further professional development
- Learning about EmPower - BrainFrames (architectsforlearning); guided writing templates; other effective ways to intervene with Tier 2 students to increase their writing stamina and engagement in the Writing Pursuit.
- Continuing to learn through collaboration - recognizing the value of professional development to ourselves, our classrooms, and our schools.

REINVESTMENT

Clearly describe how the resources created and/or the learning achieved by the participants can be of benefit to the educational community at large. If applicable, comment on whether or not this project should be carried out by other teams and if so, how it could be improved.

What stands out is that our community is filled with educators who are willing to create a common language to share and work towards improving the students' experience in the outreach ELA classroom. With this project we have continued to generate important collegiate discourse in order to create a systemic way to address and scaffold the learning needs in high schools within a Balanced Literacy Framework. This has had a significant impact, especially in the Outreach Network for at-risk students, because our students are catching-up; and while teachers need interventions at the secondary 4 and 5 level, teachers also need to talk about at-risk learners to develop a common language to discuss learning needs, adaptations, and assessment.

Now that we are at the end of the project, we see that we have a selection of resources that we can share with our colleagues in the outreach system, and in the resource teacher network; we often mentor student teachers who are also eager to know how to teach writing to students in high school - where the expectation is that the students have acquired basic writing skills - and who value the resources they can take with them in building their own inclusive classrooms.

FINAL REPORT

Write a report in professional manner and suitable for posting on the LCEEQ website.

We had difficulty wrapping up. We keep coming back to the ongoing question: **What are the adaptations needed for Tier 2 students in the writing pursuit ?** Although we have not applied for another PDIG next year, we recognize that the work we have done needs to continue in order to be sustainable. We expect to use our PLC to continue the ongoing development of the project and hope to apply, again, in subsequent years to PDIG.