

PDIG Final Report: Learning Over Distance with Technology (MOSD and WQSB)

Introduction

The goal behind this project was to better equip teachers with the tools needed to assist students with hearing loss. Students with hearing loss who live in close proximity to Montreal have access to the Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC); a curriculum that addresses learning needs that are specific to students with hearing loss and/or those with dual sensory losses. This service is locally provided by the Montreal Oral School for the Deaf (MOSD). This project allowed for release time for the teachers involved with the students' education, to meet 1:1 either in person or via a secure Skype session, to discuss the students' progress, needs and next steps. It also allowed for the teacher to observe and participate in a weekly therapy session over Skype. During this time, the teacher and provider from the MOSD would meet to discuss the student's needs, progress, concerns and happenings in the classroom, and then meet with the student for a 30 minute therapy/speech session.

The main goal of this project was to provide 2 students with sensory loss, who are not centrally located, equal access to the Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC). At Chelsea Elementary, this goal was achieved and was a great benefit to the student, the teacher, and special education technician involved. The project also included a student and teacher team at Pierre Elliott Trudeau School however, due to staffing changes and associated complications, the project was not carried out. At Chelsea, the teacher was able to work alongside the educational specialist (provide) from the MOSD, and provide those teachings to support the child with hearing loss. The student, therefore, were able to benefit from the service even though they are not located directly in Montreal.

Chelsea Elementary

This was an amazing project to be a part of. It provided the teacher and special education technician involved with a unique opportunity for professional development, collaborative practice, and hands on experience. The teacher was able to work 1:1 with a student with hearing loss while having an educational specialist coach her by providing/modeling strategies, answering questions, providing resources, support, and modelling lessons during therapy sessions. The student's team was able to meet on a regular basis (once weekly) either in person or via a secure skype session. Therapy sessions and speech were done in the presence of the teacher so that these skills and strategies could be transferred to the classroom to best support the child with hearing loss.

In addition to the individual benefits for the student with hearing loss, many of the strategies were of benefit to other students in the class and thus influenced the way the teacher delivered her lessons. The teacher has been able to take much of what she has learned and share it with her colleagues who are either involved in the child's education now, or will be in future years. This allowed for collaboration amongst educational professionals, as well as applying universal best practices to improve students' listening. Information from the sessions was shared through staff working groups.

Through this project, the teacher was able to create a learning cart. This cart has the binder of lessons with corresponding materials, graphic organizers specific to the student's objectives, and technology to support

the learning and the tele-practice session. These materials will be shared and available to help guide the student's program next year and with other teachers in the board.

Pierre Elliott Trudeau Elementary School

The teacher involved with the project at PETES, unfortunately, took a leave of absence. Given that the amount of time the teacher would be away was not clear, the project was not transferred to the replacement teacher. The teacher was out of contact following her leave of absence so further communication regarding the project was not possible.

Conclusion

The project was critical in supporting both a student with hearing loss and her teachers at Chelsea Elementary School throughout the school year and has also raised awareness among staff of best practices when working with students with a hearing impairment. It highlights the importance of communication and collaboration between educators and specialists. The on-line component allowed for consistent and frequent tele-work sessions and the transfer of these practices to additional therapy sessions as well as the classroom. The materials that were created through this project will be shared with other staff at Chelsea Elementary and the expertise and materials will be shared with other teachers in the school board. In collaboration with the Director of Complementary Services of the Western Quebec School Board, the teacher will share the materials created and the expertise gained. As this is very specific to students with hearing impairment, it will be shared in a small group format or through 1:1 visits and consultation. It is very unfortunate that the project was disrupted at the second location.