

DEFINING ELA CYCLE ONE ESSENTIAL LEARNINGS- 2017/2018

Members:

Stephanie McCully- teacher Sec 1 and 2

Julie Huard- teacher Sec 1

Amelia Brooker- Sec 2

Sandra Henderson- Sec 2

Annie Francis- Sec 1

Laura Pleavin- Sec 1

Wendy King- Eastern Townships School Board ELA consultant

Project Description:

Within a Professional Learning Community context, we collaborated to examine our current ELA program goals and content with the intention of defining a guaranteed curriculum for Cycle One. Keeping in mind recent trainings in Response to Intervention and also Universal Design for Learning, we focused on defining essential curriculum, clear learning targets, common formative assessments, and best practices to ensure that every student can learn those essentials at a high level. This work allowed us to collaborate and bring together a number of pedagogies and research that different members of the team have been involved in over the last couple of years, and helped us to begin to align curriculum for the Cycle, tying together all of these important new influences in education.

In our meetings we worked to identify essential learnings for each of the 3 ELA competencies using information from the QEP, the Progression of Learning, and The Scales of Competency. We used the following three criteria: Endurance, Leverage, and Readiness for further study. We also examined data from the Sec. 2 MEES results as a way to target where the areas of most need are for our students. We worked to unpack the previously identified essential learnings into student friendly language learning targets. When considering these learning targets we worked together to consider what prior knowledges students should be expected to have and what teachers need to do to provide relevant, meaningful and engaging instruction. We debated what the difference between learning targets should be in Secondary One and Secondary Two as we established that the essential learnings in each competency would be the same in both Sec. 1 and Sec. 2.

We then began the process of building rubrics, criteria and checklists related to these specific learning targets in the Production competency. We focused on building common assessments that could be used to assess a variety of student work related to the learning targets identified for each essential learning in the Production competency. We also built common assessments and rubrics (both for a written speech under the Production Competency and performed under the Talk Competency).

In our final meeting we met with the Cycle 2 ELA department and shared essentials and learning targets for Cycle 1 and 2. We spent time reviewing how we might support our students across the cycles and build on learning targets identified at each level. We also attempted to identify what learning targets are slightly secondary and would not be targeted for interventions

and where learning targets had been repeated, consequently discussing alignment for skills and targets across the cycles.

Project Goals:

- Our goal of defining essential curriculum and clear learning targets was met. These documents were finalized and also discussed with the Cycle 2 department. This process was lengthy and filled with discussion and consequently took more time than we expected. The time was extremely well spent, however, in defining these essentials and targets the team developed a greater understanding of what we would consider a guaranteed curriculum for our students.
- We began the task of identifying what common summative assessments we would use to evaluate these targets and then building the rubrics that would be used to assess student work. We were successful in developing several assessments but this was an unexpectedly large task that was not completed in the course of the PDIG. It came to our attention that all of our assessments should be adapted to our identified learning targets. Now that the process by which this work will be done has been established, we will be able to more quickly identify and build these tools, using the already developed tools as models. The process of this proved very important as we all had to agree on what we would consider evidence of learning and our levels of expectations.
- We have applied for another PDIG to continue this work. We have, in our discussions, identified that there are several more common assessments that need to be developed. More importantly, we have realized that we need to build common formative assessment tasks and evaluations to be able to identify where interventions and adaptations of our teaching need to happen. We also hope to build a bank of student models to use as a guide for our assessments.

Project Outcomes:

Teachers involved in the process of the PDIG gained several advantages:

- A greater understanding of what we would consider a guaranteed curriculum for our students.
- Agreement on what we would consider evidence of learning and our levels of expectations.
- Common summative tasks and rubrics (tools and checklists) to use with our students to increase continuity and alignment in both Secondary One and Two and across those two levels.
- A greater understanding of the link between Cycle One and Two essential learnings and targets.
- An understanding of the value of working in a PLC to discuss student learning, outcomes, and adaptation of our own practices.

- A renewed and solidified respect for each other and the process of working together to align our curriculum.
- An enlightening and invigorating sharing of best practices.

Reinvestment:

The process of defining essential curriculum and clear learning targets in student friendly language is a valuable one and should be undertaken by all PLCs involved in attempting to align curriculum and unpack the Ministry's expectations for greater understanding.

The tools we developed for use in our department (checklists, rubrics, and tasks) could be used by any Cycle One English department and have been shared with both our Board's ELA consultant and our school's Cycle Two English Department with the intention of making those tools available to any teacher who might wish to adopt them.

Our team would be willing to share with any department, ELA and otherwise, our process in identifying the essentials and unpacking the targets as well as our rubrics and assessments.