

PDIG no. 17991

Developing Authentic Literacy Opportunities in the Full Time Four-Year-Old Kindergarten Classroom

### Final Report

**1. 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.**

Looking back at the project, and the modifications and changes that arose as it was progressing, we are pleased to report that we feel we followed our original project outline. As expected, we had to make slight modifications to the scheduling of events, as well as changes in participants due to staffing changes. However, we did not deviate from the outcomes we originally had written in our plans and we accomplished our initial goals.

What we feel went well is that participants were all very keen and did not hesitate to share stories, pictures, questions, and examples from their classrooms. Teachers appreciated taking the time to work together and to exchange classroom practices. They feel this this type of inter-school collaborative PLC is essential to our profession but often lacking in our practice.

A challenge that we faced during the creation part of the project was that participants needed more time to exchange personal experiences and challenges in order to validate their common realities. Once they had had the time to share, support each other, and were stimulated using articles, videos and photographs, they were able to create materials that they felt were worthy of being shared with others. Another challenge was that participants did not feel 100% comfortable using the newest technology available to create and share their templates. Some used Microsoft Word, others Notebook, etc. We wish we could have adopted a homogeneous method for creating the graphic organizers and writing templates.

### *Day 1*

All participants had the chance to introduce themselves, including support staff and school board consultants. We had a chance to compare and discuss daily routines, activities and schedules.

We then reviewed the five domains of development of the Preschool Education Program for 4-year-olds. We looked at a PPT on using Loose Parts and Literature in the classroom.

Participants were able to choose books and materials that were displayed in the room and create a play invitation/provocation that they could use in their classroom, with their students.

### *Day 2*

We visited the Step by Step Child Care Centre in Kahnawake in the morning. First, the director of pedagogy gave everybody a tour of the Centre and described how they had designed areas of the Centre with the needs of parents in mind. She showed us the parent/community room and explained that a parent counsellor was hired on staff to assist and guide parents with any family problems/crisis they might be going through.

The second part of the visit consisted in the participants visiting classrooms in action, giving us the opportunity to observe teacher/parent/child interactions and communications. We also noticed the presence of the Mohawk and/or family culture in the teaching and the physical setup of the classrooms. We took note of the documentation and evidence of learning that was present in the classrooms and in student portfolios.

The last part of our visit was dedicated to the two program coordinators presenting a slideshow that explained the Centre's philosophy as well as the process of building student portfolios.

After lunch, we all gathered and discussed what we noticed and liked at Step by Step CCC, how we could be inspired by our observations and what changes we

could make to our own classrooms and schools, or our activity planning, in light of what we observed.

### *Day 3*

We began our day by sharing pictures taken in our classrooms that showed an activity or a modification of the physical space. The inspiration for that was our visit of the Step by Step Child Care Centre from our last PDIG Day.

We followed that sharing session by doing an activity called "Put yourself on the line". Shannon Collins read four statements and participants had to stand on an imaginary line based on how they felt about the statement read. Discussions and justifications ensued. After that, we watched a thought-provoking video (TED Talk) on a Kindergarten class in Japan. We proceeded to show a presentation of participants' pictures regarding the use of literacy during play. Participants commented on what they saw, took notes, and exchanged ideas based on the photographs.

After lunch, we did a "Panel of Experts" activity and invited Sylvie Dumouchel, FLS Consultant, and Shannon Collins, ELA and Preschool Education Consultant to prepared answers to three questions.

The questions were:

1-How could you use culture and the arts (music, dance, visual arts) in the classroom to teach literacy and/or complement children's literature (make links between books and art)?

2-How could literacy be used to (encourage, influence) organized play/free play in an outdoor setting?

3-How can literacy be used in the preschool classroom to foster curiosity?

After each "expert" answered a question, teams of 3-4 participants were asked to brainstorm and make a list of activities they could offer in the classroom or outdoors. We ended that activity with a gallery walk (posted group work on the wall and people went around the room to read other participants' work).

We ended the day by discussing classroom and school matters in a more informal way. Schedule, portfolios, purchasing of materials and books, problem-solving, etc.

### *Days 4 and 5*

We looked at some materials created last year during a MEES project completed under the direction of Shannon Collins. We created activities and play invitations, based on the same templates used during the 2017-2018 MEES project.

We put together an online sharing group so that all participants could keep in touch with each other and continue to exchange ideas and documents. We looked at the different resources available to teachers on the LEARNQuebec website. Participants were mostly interested by the Kindergarten Development Profile and the resources on play in the classroom.

We created play centre templates (as a means to include literacy in authentic play situations). Each participant had chosen a play centre or dramatic play situation (garage, gardening, birdwatching, ocean life, pizza parlour) and developed tools, brainstorming the curricular links and materials needed to support children during their play. The templates were added to our sharing forum, available to all members in our PLC.

Shannon Collins asked participants to read an article entitled *The Worksheet Dilemma* and led a discussion on the importance of play in the four- and five-year-old preschool education programs, and the detriment of the overuse of worksheets which are developmentally inappropriate.

We watched videos on teaching outdoors, introduced *Outdoor Classroom Day* and the *Take Me Outside* challenge, and expanded our talk on the importance of children spending part of their day outside, as outlined in the QEP. The videos were shared on our learning forum.

Finally, the teachers discussed the possibility of adding next year's six new four-year-old preschool education teachers to our PLC and sharing knowledge and materials with them. This will be done once the new teachers are hired.

2. 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.

The following goals were met during our PDIG meeting days:

- 1) We created a PLC during which we shared experiences, everyday realities and were given opportunities to find solutions and reassure each other.
- 2) We learned from our consultants' expertise and knowledge through discussions and the sharing of articles, videos, websites and other materials.
- 3) We visited a facility that presented best practices that we could emulate in our own classrooms.
- 4) We began creating materials for incorporating authentic literacy opportunities in play settings in our classrooms.

3. Project Outcomes: Describe/show the gains that the participating teachers achieved through this project.

We created a network of people with similar realities who:

- ◆ support each other and understand that they can benefit from working together.
- ◆ now know where to find resources (websites, people, documents, etc.) if they need support or answers.
- ◆ have more confidence in their practice and a common vision of what desirable practices are in terms of play and literacy in their classroom.
- ◆ are sharing materials and knowledge with their peers in order to improve their classroom practices. This valuable collaboration saves precious time and energy.

4. 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.

Even if we stated that our precise goal was to create literacy opportunities, the major gain accomplished was to **network with our peers**. This type of PLC would be beneficial to all, and we are so grateful that through LCEEQ's PDIG program, we could get together and exchange on what was most important to us, to create the best possible learning environment for our young students. The fact that the teachers' support staff (additional classroom resource personnel) were present also really empowered them to **fully take on their role in the classroom and feel a sense of belonging and partnership**.

Even though this PDIG is over, our PLC will continue and grow with the addition of six new 4-year-old preschool education classes in our school board.

We want to make the documents created as a result of this PDIG available to the 4- and 5-year-old preschool classes of our school board on SharePoint on the Preschool Community page. Shannon Collins and Melanie Robidoux are presenting at the next QPAT Conference and will be using pictures and documents created as examples of good classroom practices during their presentation.

We feel like technology was an issue that needs to be addressed, since the skill levels varied from participant to participant and slowed us down in creating materials. We would recommend for other groups to find one forum that most teachers are familiar with and/or provide time for quick training, so that everyone can feel comfortable using it with confidence and be more efficient with their time.

