

PDIG Final Report: Increasing Reading Engagement and Volume in Adolescents

Project Description

The project allowed four Secondary English Language Arts teachers to take the time to explore new and novel approaches to teaching in order to create a classroom community of readers who value reading are able to enter into authentic discussions about books. Participating teachers engaged in a cycle of investigation, reflection, and enactment of teaching practices supported by feedback and sharing in a collegial setting (Kazemi et al, 2017). The project involved a shift in the epistemic stance of some the teachers involved in the sense that were asked to re-think their approach to the Reading competency in Secondary ELA.

There was a last minute change of teachers. Two teachers from Marymount Academy needed to be replaced. Cynthia Bennett (Royal Vale High School) and Samira Chawki (Royal West Academy) were brought in as replacements. Once the teams were in place we were able to get started in early October 2018. In addition, one teacher, Stella Halaris, was on leave for part of the project. In the end, the project only required two of the four allocated release days to get the work done as the team worked on the project in-school as well as during their release days.

Project Goals

The project goal was to work with a small team of English Language Arts teachers from EMSB Secondary Schools to explore ways to increase reading engagements and encourage adolescents to read in the Secondary classroom.

Project Outcomes

1. Encouraging collaboration amongst teachers from different schools and grade levels.
2. Exploring innovative pedagogical approaches to reading (offering choice, literature circles, etc.)
3. Creating pedagogical materials for literature circles that can be shared with the wider English Language Arts community.
4. Creating pedagogical materials for promoting reading engagement and creating a classroom community of readers.
5. To develop and share classroom practices within a cycle of investigation, enactment and feedback.

Example of our Meeting Agenda

Day 1

Goal: Encourage collaboration amongst teachers from different schools and grade levels. To explore innovative pedagogical approaches for reading.

Activities:

PD: setting up discussion groups-Reading of "180 Days: Two Teachers and the Quest to Engage and Empower Adolescents" by Penny Kittle and Kelly Gallagher (select chapters) and discussion.

-Brainstorm ideas for pedagogical practices

-Discussion of available books for literature circles and ways to organize them.

-Planning ways to engage students (reading interest inventories, book speed dating, book "shelfies") with a view to trying them out and bringing back the results to the group.

Feedback: Exit card

The goals of the project were met and teachers created resources that will be ready to share in the 2019-2020 school year.

Reinvestment

The teaching resources created as part of this project will be shared with EMSB teachers at future professional development days. The team may also be interested in presenting their project at LCEEQ or at ATEQ Springboards in 2020 or 2021. The project will continue to grow through the newly-adopted classroom practices of the participating teachers. The connections made during our sessions, and the ability to work collaboratively as a team, will serve the teachers in their teaching practice.

The documents created by the team will be collated and shared in a digital platform for all EMSB teachers. In addition, the project manager, Anne Beamish, may also share the resources with ELA colleagues through the DEEN Language Network.

Final Report

In order to effect a change in teaching practices, it is important to work with beliefs. When it comes to reading, the belief that choice drives engagement and that the value of talk and this happens naturally when readers are engaged in discussions about books informed our work throughout this project.

The project was designed to provide teachers with the time and the resources needed in order to explore ways to introduce their students to new books, create a classroom culture of reading, and encourage and empower students to enter into authentic discussions about books. Participating teachers will engage in a cycle of investigation, reflection, and enactment of teaching supported through coached feedback and sharing (Kazemi et al, 2017). This exploration was intended to be carried out through a process of investigation of approaches and teaching practices (such as engaging students in small group discussion using Academic Conversations or leading whole group discussions in Socratic Circles).

The work done by the team of teachers resulted in the creation of resources for increasing interest in reading and setting up small groups and running book clubs in the Secondary English Language Art Classroom. Resources include how to lead a book "speed

dating” activity, guidelines for creating book “shelfies” and other alternate book reviews, and setting up book club discussions using classic, contemporary and graphic texts.