

**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.**

Our project has turned out to be very similar to what we originally had planned. We had decided in our proposal, that we would split our teachers by school for certain days. However, early on it was found that Ms. MacLeod could not attend due to an unexpected leave of absence, and therefore would limit the number of teachers originally foreseen. Due to this, we decided we would get more knowledge and collaboration if we worked together.

We found that the biggest challenge for our committee was to unite our way of delivering the content while also focussing on literacy. Our students are required to complete different exams and are at different levels. Hadley teachers are teaching to younger students and even though they do have similar exam formats, they do not have a Ministry exam. We concluded that their way of teaching is more flexible and allows for more accommodation. In our initial discussions, we believed that the level of difficulty students experienced in regards to language in our courses was centred in regards to quotes, or the length of text they are exposed to. We also discussed that these measurements were very different at each school. At Philemon Wright, students are exposed to texts that are often exact quotes of historical characters from the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century. The grammar, the syntax, the vocabulary they are exposed to is not the same as what they are exposed to in their everyday life, nor in their classes they have previously attended.

As a team, we believe that we have several areas in which we succeeded. More specifically, what went well is the desire of the team to excel. We were an eager team of teachers who were not afraid to take the time to mirror our way of teaching and assess the delivery of the content. We also discovered that we all wanted to create a similar format for students during their time at Hadley-Philemon; believing that this would lead to more student success overall.

There was also great interest by all members in regards to other teachers' resources, templates, rubrics, apps, teaching strategies and other teaching tools. The team was really respectful throughout our project when a member was showcasing a lesson they had produced within the time spent together or a discovery they wanted to share. We felt that we were inspired by each other and we were working closer as a department; something that we felt we had been lacking in past years.

One area that we believed would have increased our success would have been to connect with another school. Specifically, it would have been beneficial to attend schools where teachers are required to teach history at all levels. They could have given us some direction/comparison/tips on how they address literacy issues within their programs and across the many grades in which they teach. It also could have been

better if we had another English teacher or two, to give feedback on how they teach and deal with literacy in their classrooms.

### **Day 1:**

What do we want to do:

Literacy = How can we get the students to understand what they need to answer

Activities to engage but yet bring understanding

Chunking - step by step to answer questions?

Workloads: Chris grade 7/8 history

Jen Grade 7 Geo and History

Mel Grade 8 Enrichi History (Grade 7 French)

Nic Grade 9/10 Enrichi

Meg Grade 10 History

Steve Grade 9 History

Charlotte Grade 8 History/Geo

### 2. How do you organize your class?

Notes/content/assessment - so much content, so give the notes and then focus, then assessment - Homework (online and on paper)

Chris - 7s do not take notes, Grade 8s do - read sentences but understanding is difficult through textbook/workbook so simplified in notes. His classes need help in understanding words that are not part of their vocabulary. Often reads to his students - stops and asks what it meant, then explain it. Visual, stories, chalkboard, assign questions. Team games tourney - cards and questions. No homework. Shake out the picture - put up an image and students have to pick out detail. Then they have to describe the importance of that detail.

Mel starts with vocabulary - they have to find their own definitions. "Replacement words" Highlighting in the workbook. Mindmaps. Homework if they have to finish something

Jen has them take down info in red (notes) - main points - calming needed with the grade 7s, Plickers

Meg takes notes - powerpoint, videos, stations, work similar to the exam, Kahoot!, History Jenga. Homework if they haven't finished - usually based on how the work period goes.

### 3. What do you think your students need to be successful ?

- Review work before they hand it in - does it make sense? Numbers match up - EDIT
- Review puzzle - REVIEW - Discovery education word search
- Study sheets - outline for assessment - ORGANIZING STUDYING
- Create questions they believe will be on the assessment - PREP
- HOME support is important
- Partner work - COLLABORATION
- Music
- Brain Breaks - videos, games, activities, movies (visual learning)
- Connections to their lives - make it on a level they can understand (things they can remember)
- CORNELL NOTE TAKING? - strategically designed to organize them
- Docucam

4. What classroom literacy do you use now? Which have been successful? Which ones not?

- Vocabulary terms
- Stations - word search, scrabble etc.
- Highlighting the most important information out of the workbook

5. What are the demands of History?

- Ministry exam as a final assessment - Success rates - Grade 9/10
- Grade 7 exam - in class and written by teachers
- Grade 8 exam - in class - used to be in the gym - over two classes
- Keeping the students interested - Middle school = classroom behaviour

6. What literacy skills are required of students in your course?

- A better understanding of questions/texts
- Visual literacy - maps, pictures, graphs
- Scanning for keywords - activity (given words need to scan text), highlighting

7. What literacy skills, knowledge and understandings do students bring with them (from previous years)

- Understanding of timelines, centuries
- Concepts of social organization (leads into 9/10)

- Grade 8 Colonization - but how much do they remember after summer
- 9/10 not a lot of overlap but they do require a lot of the same final assessment

8. What text types are used in your course?

- Quotes
- Written documents
- Visual (maps, photos of icons, art reproduction, political cartoons, graphs)
- Rubrics

9. What strategies are more appropriate for history?

issues that continue to pop up is the ministry exams - more strategies needed to maneuver the final exam - decoding text above your level

Collaboration - activities that allows them to figure out the text

Chunking the process

Casey has resources to present on a future date (reading)

10. What are we trying to do? What needs to be accomplished?

Nic - come up with more activities to re-assess before evaluations (new activities). More time to create.

Chris - wants to start doing stations with his students, graphic organizers (students make it), flip book. Chris wants to look at researching skills

Meg - wants to get away from note taking and make more activities

Mel - more time to create

Jen - effective ways to communicate (teachers/students), prep and strategies.

Mix it up.

11. What literacy skills will we focus on?

Chunking

Vocabulary/synonym

Summarizing

Scanning texts

Mind maps of terms (like titles/generic terms)

Reading/writing - actively asking questions as you read

Context - understanding the context - come across a word you don't understand try to figure it out - guess

ELA points to teach alongside history

**\*\* Possible Future dates \*\***

Tuesday, November 13

Monday, December 10

Monday, Feb 25

Monday, March 18

Monday, April 29

**Day 2:** Following the discussions of the last PDIG day, the group came together and discussed any changes they had implemented in their classroom. We then proceeded to review the lessons that we had created previously. From here we shared any new ideas that we had stumbled upon since we last spoke. We discussed the uses of Google tools to help with literacy, including google classroom, google slides, Quizlet and Quizlet live.

Following the demonstrations of these tools and how we could adapt them, we discussed the theme for the day: LES in literacy. We discussed the expectations of creating an LES in literacy that would run as a pairing with our LES in our topics. Chris was concerned about tying it all together. However, the rest of the day was spent creating LES's that would help our students simply with literacy. Nic and Melanie were very excited to try the Quizlet Live tool to teach terms and definitions, of both literacy and concepts.

Overall the afternoon was extremely productive, and all teachers involved developed several more lessons. Our next PDIG day will cover any new ideas that we find, as well as creating several more lessons.

**Day 3:** First, we began by talking about any changes, or new implementations in our classrooms. Some interesting conversation revolved around a new project in the grade 10 program that could be used in our PDIG and was easily adaptable for the intermediate years. Lapbooks is a homeschooling technique that I found online. Nic and I decided to use it as a review tool as well as a literacy builder. Rather than simply taking notes, or reading the textbook students needed to make connections between the content and the type of exam questions they would be required to answer. These lapbooks are student created and would require students to have both documents and isms to connect them to the content. The goal would be that students would be able to understand and make connections on their exam; it would be a tool that the students could take with them easily while studying anywhere. It would also be a key to review,

as it required the students to build it first. Our conversation really started with this project and breaking it down into rubrics and expectations.

Charlotte MacLeod is still away dealing with a family medical issue. She will not be able to participate in this PDIG.

Jen also talked about using Quizlet live with her Grade 7s and how engaged the students were with this activity. She received positive feedback from the students, as they told her they were "learning all the things." She did experience issues with the competitiveness, as students were trying to sabotage each other. She would like to explore the idea of prize or something that would lessen the competitiveness. She also found that students that had been away struggled; wondered about adding a small review before engaging in the Live activity.

Chris talked about wanting to explore close reading of text today as well as our next PDIG day. This would make the students' breakdown a text three times. On the third time, it would be a successful reading. This progression is something that Chris used to use in English and would like to apply to history if he could. It would allow students to have a greater/deeper understanding of the content.

After our warm-up discussion, many of us paired off with our respective age groups to discuss our next lessons. Nic and I paired off while Jen, Chris, and Mel joined to talk about the Hadley aspect. Today's meeting would be focused on creating and completing a fourth (and possible fifth) lesson for our LES.

Nic and I talked about the various activities that we were currently implementing into our classrooms, and if we noticed any changes in our students. We both agreed that we were seeing positive change, however, we believe the major "test" will be their mid-year exam results.

For the afternoon, each teacher created their lesson. We noted that we have been struggling to come up with lessons that are completely focused on attacking the literacy issue. We have found that in our past meetings that some of our lessons (upon further review) looked more like content-based lessons. We discussed the importance of reviewing those lessons and breaking down where the literacy came in. For our next meeting, we agreed that we should take a part of the morning to break down what we have left to accomplish and where we need to go now that we are almost at the end.

**Day 4:** Today we started with a review of the previous meeting and discussed what our goals were for today. We decided we would continue to work through our LES and discuss after lunch what we have left to complete.

Nic introduced a new app that we could use for mind maps. The app is called Creately, and you can create a wide range of organizational diagrams such as mind maps, infographics, and flowcharts. This could be adapted for teachers to use as a creating tool, or given to the students to make them for projects. Nic and I explored this app in the morning to see if it is something that we can use in our lessons. It was great, except that you could only make 5 mind maps on the free preview - we will have to upgrade if we want to continue with this site.

Nic and I also talked about our midterm results. They were not what we were expecting. Students did poorly, but when looking at past reports they were typical or on par with past years. This counteracted our results based on tests and quizzes from the term. This is something we decided to explore for the next PDIG date. Is there anything that we are missing in regards to literacy? What's working and what's not?

After exploring the app, we worked on our individual LES plans. We focused on lessons 5 (and possibly 6) of the LES. Chris is continuing to focus on areas surrounding reading text and the close reading of complex text. Mel chose to implement mind maps as well today as part of her LES. She is following closely with Nic to try and be in line with what he is doing. They believe that this might be an effective way to make sure students have the same experiences all the way through their time in the enriched history program.

Following lunch, we got together to discuss where we are at in our individual prep. including discussions about what we have completed and what we have to do in our next two meetings in March. It was decided that on March 18 we will complete our LES (most of our lesson plans) and begin compiling all the data for the final report. March 26 will be the final date for the PDIG and will consist of finishing all aspects. Nic has agreed to help complete the final report with me next time as I am worried as a first-time organizer that I will have difficulty completing the task.

It has been decided that members will have no later than April 18 to hand everything in. This was communicated however as the last possible date. I discussed with them that it is necessary for all lessons and LES to be completed by the last day of the PDIG (March 26).

**Day 5:** Today, we looked at the amount of work we still had to do and put it in perspective within the fact that we had only one more day to complete all the work we had planned.

Nic shared about the toolkit activity builder in the SMART notebook software that he had discovered. This literally allows students to move around events, images, dates or any other type of data and put them in chronological order.

Also, the toolkit has a timeline activity that allows students to assess themselves regarding previously built timelines by teachers. This really can reassure students prior to evaluation, for instance. This is something that we can use in LESs regularly in terms of literacy. It is also something that we can build on in future PDIG or classroom planning.

Before breaking into pairs, Nic also shared about the Histoire communauté website. This site has a ton of documents, files, lesson plans, images and other teacher made activities that would really help our crew to build our own lessons. This resource is very powerful since it's community-based as well as limited to social science teachers.

We also found out that Junior High school had their own version of the site so Hadley teachers such as Chris, Jennifer and Mélanie would also be able to enjoy this tool.

For the next part of that day, the team went into smaller groups in order to better come up with a lesson format that would allow students to better focus their learning with the literacy aspect in mind via a myriad of activities, lessons and even note-taking opportunities.

**Day 6:** This day was our last day to meet. We decided first to organize our files into clearly labelled names in link with the format the team came up with during the previous day. The team decided on when all files and documents would be due/ submitted to the project leader.

The next step was creating actual lesson plans that would connect the files we produced with the intention we had in mind when we decided to focus on literacy within our teaching. We then discussed what we each had left to create, what we had already created, and how we were going to present the information.

Those lessons plans are really easy to read, reuse and share. The structure is crucial as we are trying to standardize our way of teaching to ensure that our pupils are exposed to the same format throughout their education. This will not only make literacy skills more and more efficient for students but, also make learning easier and more engaging for them. Their performance on tests should reflect this improved learning process. Thus making learning History more fun for both teachers and students.

Overall, this last day was a day of finalization. Allowing each member to finish creating and discussing the outcomes.

**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 greatest gain the team received during this experience is definitely the fact that now we have a standardized pattern on how to deliver content. This was one of the most important goals for our team. We wanted to not only ensure that students learned strategies to deal with literacy, but also to ensure students are capturing the essence of documents, data and content; all of which is required for the grade 10 course. Many students get to their grade 10 year and are expected to pass the Ministry exam, which can be not only stressful but extremely difficult for them. We are now confident that we have laid the basis for strategies that can be built and repeated through their grades 7-9 years, making them less overwhelmed and stressed by their government required exam.

Since we started working together, we have been able to mirror, adjust and connect our mindsets to better create LESs, including evaluation tools. This will grant students opportunities to better acquire new knowledge, make connections with the real world, and develop strategies that will allow them to better decode texts. Since this was the original goal behind our PDIG, we feel very confident that we have attained our original purpose.

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

Our team has gained many tools from our project and time together. Specifically, formatting lessons, after we started brainstorming, on how to emphasize literacy decoding skills while assessing students' performance. We each have taken the time to personally sum up what we have taken from this experience.

"I have personally gained confidence that my students, being part of the Enriched program, are struggling with literacy and reading skills. I have come up with a variety of tools that will allow my students to better access the message of a specific piece of writing, ones that they will be exposed to during a summative evaluation. Of course, the goal of this is to ensure the maximization of students' academic performance upon their June Ministry exam." - *Nic Vincent, Grade 9/10 French Enriched History, PWHS*

"I really enjoyed the opportunity to discuss and share struggles that my students have, and to discover that other teachers in my department notice those same issues within their students. It was beneficial to break down vocabulary in regards to the expectations on the final exam - including isms and words that student do not use in their everyday speech, along with visual literacy skills. I, along with my colleagues have created station activities, classifying activities, and new note-taking methods for our

students, that we believe will have an overall positive change on our student's results.” - *Meg McConnell, Grade 10 History, PWHS*

“I feel extremely satisfied with the fact that my students are going to better use specific vocabulary through my LESs. I have come up with short activities built within other larger activities that allow me to chunk and assess data retention in students quickly.” - *Mélanie Gagnon, Grade 8 Enriched History, Hadley*

“We feel that we got a great level of collaboration with great colleagues. We experienced a “support group” for what our subject area struggles with, as we discovered that we have similar ones. Those same colleagues shared techniques that work in their classrooms, including apps such as Quizlet and Kahoot!. Other strategies that we found helpful included true or false, pre and post-reading exercises, margin notes for major themes and how to use graphic organizers to allow students to best achieve the understanding required in answering history based questions. Finally, the greatest gain came from the ability to take time and pause to get organized for better lessons for our students.” - *Jen Christie, Chris Morin Grade 7/8 History, Hadley*

**4. Reinvestment Clearly describes 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.**

This project allowed for us as a department to create a full LES each in our respected courses. This was especially beneficial, as we usually spend our planning time on content-based activities and very rarely focus solely on the literacy aspect. This is disheartening for us as we know that this continues to be a struggling point for our students. Having the time and the brainpower to come up with strategies new and old, gave us the ability to build our students' literacy skills, and therefore build their confidence in regards to the actual content and evaluation aspects.

We believe that this project should be carried out by other teams. Student's continue to be challenged in regards to their level of literacy. Specifically, over the last several years we notice a dip in literacy skills with our students. We have looked at the middle/high school levels and believe that it could be beneficial to look at these strategies and who they could be applied to at the elementary level. We also think that these strategies could be looked at with different subjects. They are simple techniques that can be easily applied to other subject areas.

We do believe that this project can be improved and extended. It would be advantageous to document and then share any data on the results of these strategies in

terms of students evaluations both at a school and board level. We also think that any reading strategies already implemented in English classrooms could build on our project.

All resources will be placed in a GoogleDrive folder within the Philemon Wright History account. This will give easy access to those who wish to use the LES's for their programs, or explore ideas to adapt their content too. The link is available at: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1EaHsoboujerR5MWiFJLx2nDc2NaGGMTn?usp=sharing>