

# **Social Studies PDIG Final Report**

## **1. Project Description**

We feel that we made great progress in our Social Studies planning when we met on our four PDIG days. We had previously felt that Social Studies was given less attention than it deserved, due to the time allotted in our schedules (one hour weekly) and a lack of planning time available. We now feel that we are prepared to deliver an excellent program which correlates to the QEP, yet also holds the attention of the intended learners. Because of split grades in our cycle, we have chosen to develop a two-year plan to avoid repetition of topics for students as they progress through the cycle, while ensuring that all students cover the required content.

We began by assessing the tools available as well as dividing the eight books available in our school into a two-year plan. We decided who would work on which topic, then spent time researching other available material. We made a chart of the two-year plan to facilitate scheduling in future years of the Social Studies curriculum. Should there be new teachers to our cycle, they will find it relatively simple to also follow the plan. A Google drive was also created in order to share material within our school and board. We chose to have some of the content taught using Power Point, mini-projects, internet research, posters, etc. This provides a variety of methods to ensure the interest of the students, as well as to accommodate the diverse learning styles of our population. We each piloted our first topic in our own classrooms to ensure the feasibility of the students being able to complete the assigned tasks and to give us an opportunity to adjust any content that didn't work well. Evaluation tools were also created for each topic.

## **2. Project Goals**

Our goals were met, as we were able to create the content that we originally set out to do and feel that we are now prepared to teach these topics over the course of the next two years. At that point, we will have each piloted the eight topics in our own classrooms and can meet again to assess our work and make any required adjustments. We feel that we have created engaging lessons that cover the curriculum. In the past, we only had the books *Places in Time*, which were dry and unappealing to students. These lessons will still cover the required content of the QEP but in a much more enticing format. Students love to engage in hands-on learning, so we have incorporated as much of this as possible into our lessons.

Having these lessons prepared and ready to deliver, will ensure that each teacher can be more proficient in teaching the Social Studies curriculum. Time previously spent researching a topic prior to delivery is now unnecessary, as the preparation phase has been done by our team. We believe that Social Studies will no longer be the subject that causes students to groan, but instead, they will be engaged in their learning.

### **3. Project Outcomes**

Our main goal was to develop an effective and cohesive Social Studies program that reached all learners. We believe this goal was achieved and will benefit several educators and students. Firstly, as busy teachers, having time to meet and discuss our current program was very beneficial. Gains were made in our current program based on these discussions alone. Secondly, we were able to create a structured two-year plan to outline the needs of the program and all QEP expectations. This chart not only helps the current teachers in our cycle but will help any new teachers by providing them with an easy-to-use timeline for the program. Thirdly, we have created diverse and engaging lessons for our students. Each team member was responsible for a portion of the planning, which included lessons, evaluations and modifications/adaptations. Placing these lessons onto a Google drive results in fellow educators in our school and in our board to benefit from our time spent on this project. As mentioned above, having these lessons prepared and ready to deliver, will ensure that each teacher can be more proficient in teaching the Social Studies curriculum. Overall, we believe we have been successful by creating diverse lessons rich in Quebec history for our students.

### **4. Reinvestment**

The resources we created as a team, and the learning achieved in this professional development initiative can be a benefit to the educational community at large. We have created a Google drive that can be shared with any new teacher, or veteran teacher, to the Cycle Three Geography, History and Citizenship program. Additionally, we are easily able to share this file with any other Western Quebec school or teacher. We feel that it is important to share information and resources with other professional teams and individuals. This promotes collaboration among teachers and allows for positive and further growth of networking. Often teachers can get overloaded by meetings, marking and planning, and it can be difficult to find the time to create rich and meaningful unit plans, ready to go and fully developed. We feel we have accomplished this.

It is beneficial for any Cycle Three team in the Western Quebec School Board to collaborate to ensure that all parts of the curriculum are covered, and having a clear plan is crucial. Our team has taken each of the eight books for *Places in Time*, which cover the Cycle Three curriculum, and compiled the pertinent information into teacher friendly unit plans that accommodate to the needs of a diverse classroom. As unit plans are readily accessible, this allows the Cycle Three Team to meet and focus on other branches of the delivery of the program, such as creating rubrics or other evaluation tools, incorporating cross-curricular opportunities (i.e. creating a model for art of a harbor in Quebec in the 1820's or re-enacting a scene of battle for drama) and meeting to discuss co-teaching opportunities. In this way, the program can grow, and more resources can be shared or created among the teachers who delivery the program in our school and in the board.

This project could be carried out by other teams of individuals who seek alternative ways to deliver the curriculum. As we divided the tasks that we wanted to cover for this PDIG to accommodate to time management constraints, our unit plans are thus individualized and may not allow some teachers to explore other alternative strategies to the delivery of the content in the program. For this PDIG to progress even further, it would be ideal if there was more time to create alternative lessons that offer different modes of delivery so the teacher can choose the unit plan that is most suitable to his or her group of learners and will achieve the most success from the students. More time allotted to this project would result in richer evaluation tools and resources that could meet even more of the needs of students that currently represent our diverse classroom environments.