

Small School Initiative PDIG Report 2018-19

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1. 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 original long-term goal was to create a sustainable, school-wide house system, beginning in the 2020-2021 school year. The 2019-2020 school year was meant to be used as a pilot year in order to test the system and resolve any potential issues. Our mission was to create an engaging environment in which students feel like they matter and have access to adults who will support them with the goal of fostering student sense of pride in belonging to the LJA community.

As a group, we feel that we were adequately supported throughout this process. Many discussions took place in order to align schools of thought and collaborate within departments. We invited guests to meet with us and their input was appreciated. Our school Principal, union, Anne Nicholson (Ed. Consultant), Brigitte Lakota (School Org. Tech) amongst others all provided input and guidance.

As a team, we deviated from our original goal of a house system to create a format that would realistically work within our school. We dedicated our energy to developing an “advisory model” as described below.

One major obstacle was how to implement this system while still respecting the collective agreement in terms of workload. Our “advisory period” model would fall into the “support” (encadrement) section of our assigned duties. Unfortunately, an advisory period of 15 minutes/day over the course of a 9 day cycle would result in 135 minutes being added to our existing workload. This, combined with our supervision tasks, would essentially eliminate any remediation time teachers could be offering their students. Both school administration and union saw this as a major, if not insurmountable hurdle.

2. 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.

Original goal as indicated in the PDIG application:

- 1) **Our long-term goal is to create a sustainable, school-wide house system.**
- 2) **The ultimate goal of this PDIG is to better support all students' well-being and academic progress.**

Due to scheduling restrictions and other factors described in 1 of this report, we came to adapt our original goal of creating **a sustainable, school-wide house system**. The PDIG took many twists and turns as documented in the following [document](#) and as elaborated throughout this report. The goal of creating house system was not met, however we continue to develop an advisory concept and strive to have it take shape in our school.

The ultimate goal: **to better support all students' well-being and academic progress** remained at the core of the PDIG. Though we did not find a way to implement a house system, we very thoroughly explored the idea of better supporting all students' well-being and academic progress and continue to explore approaches in order to find a sustainable system that will effectively support the entire school population.

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

Even though our initial objectives were not met and our original goal has deviated greatly, we have found tremendous satisfaction in coming to a few understandings. The first being that there is certainly a need and desire for a change to be made in our overall strategies when connecting with students and ensuring they have a sense of belonging to the community within their school. We have come to see that regardless of how we achieve this goal; the goal is key. Secondly, it has permitted us to self-reflect and to reassess our own teaching. We have realized more than before how important it is for us to make that time within our own busy schedules; full of pedagogy, curriculum etc, to ensure that those students who may be “falling through the cracks” have an opportunity to connect with others on more meaningful levels.

Our project allowed us to understand more fully the complexity of what it is we wish to accomplish but at the same time has highlighted the simplicity and necessity of our goal. It has infused us with a desire to continue to pursue the matter and create an alternative to our plan. One which can meet the requirements set by the various restrictions we have encountered but that can also mutually benefit all that are involved.

4. 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 could it be improved.

During the time we dedicated researching and restructuring the main concept of this PDIG we created some resources to help guide us in our developmental process: we created a presentation for the administration, we scheduled meetings with union representatives and compiled video resources to demonstrate the validity of our ideas. We developed a powerpoint slide to present to teacher council, a mock schedule and a detailed tracking system to record our discussions, points of interest, progress and detours.

We believe our endeavour, the research, time and energy that we invested into the possibility of creating a house system to foster a sense of belonging in our community can serve as an example for other schools. Although the project remains uncertain, we detoured numerous times and we encountered many roadblocks, the teamwork, ideas and dedication from staff members was impressive and inspirational. In fact, it was so inspirational that it led to one of our team members to examine our school to see how we can improve it by banning cellphone use. She created a proposal, brought it up with staff and inspired our Governing Board to take action.

Ultimately, this project that we have worked towards will not be implemented as we had envisioned, but many avenues are left to be explored by future staff or team members, such as:

- Possibility of embedding a house system/advisory period directly during teaching hours as to not impact rules based on the Collective Agreement
- Possibility of alternating floating advisory periods that can flow through the schedule to spread out the academic impact this might have
- Possibility of embedding advisory periods during a given period and then pairing with another teacher during the periods the other teacher is off. This would mean creating teams of teachers.
- Possibility of creating smaller units of time embedded in classrooms to add the advisory periods.

Next steps:

We are invited to meet with LEARN to explore the [NEXT School](#) initiative. We look forward to exploring this initiative and finding out if this aligns with our small school and advisory mission. If so, we hope to be able to present this initiative to Laval Junior Administration in the near future, and possibly other high school teams in our school board.