

A Continuum for Reading Success  
Sherbrooke Elementary School  
PDIG Project 2019-2020

The goal of this project was to determine the essential knowledges for reading development in the classroom setting for Kindergarten to Grade 3. We recognized that this was a vital step as our school continues to use the Professional Learning Community (PLC) and Response to Intervention (RTI) structures to support our students' development. At the onset of the project, we quickly became aware that this would not be an easy task. There are many schools of thought and a wealth of ideas surrounding reading development. We began by sharing our best practices, consulting the Quebec Education Program, seeking out the support of a Speech and Language Pathologist and exploring widely recognized source materials. ( See list below) It was important to us that we used materials that were recognized by our school board in order to ensure correlation with our teaching and learning community.

The support of our Speech and Language Pathologists and school board English consultant were invaluable. They helped us to determine that we had to develop clear guaranteed learnings in the following areas: book awareness, phonological awareness, phonics, reading strategies, sight words, and reading response. We recognized that it was vital that teams worked together to establish their guaranteed learnings in order to ensure continuity for our students. As we started to compile our essentials into each category it quickly became apparent that we had too many in each category. We had to take a step back and consider what an essential really was. We used Solution Trees Three Essential Standards Criteria (How to Leverage PLCs for School Improvement © 2015 Solution Tree) to guide us. The criteria are endurance, leverage and readiness. This part of the process helped us to bridge the gap between classroom instruction and targeted support for students during RTI.

After establishing our essential knowledges and ensuring correlation between the grade levels we moved into creating a timeframe for learning. For each essential, we took into account when it would be introduced and mastered. This step was crucial in order to help us begin to consider our formative and summative assessment practices and how they should be used to guide intervention. Teams were motivated to get started in this area and began to share what they used in their classrooms and considered what would need to be created based on the established guaranteed learnings.

Unfortunately, this next step was not achieved due to the current COVID 19 health crisis. We recognize that this step will be very important as we work to implement our reading continuum next year. In the original project proposal, we were going to develop a set of common formative assessment tools and a timeline for implementation. This was to support intervention groups and ensure that none of our learners “fall through the cracks”. As a school team, we are looking at how we can work on this next year.

Despite this unavoidable situation, we feel that we achieved a lot during this project. Teachers have a better understanding of the complexity of reading development and how they can support learners in the classroom setting. Teachers feel more confident in their approaches and are collaborating with student development in mind. The project has also allowed us the time to explore and share our best practices. The continuum will also serve as a clear guide to teachers that are new to each grade. This will ensure that students in every classroom are getting the instruction and support they need.

We recommend that each school take the time to carry out this project. It is extremely beneficial to support student development, collaboration among staff and intervention practices. It helps to ensure that student learning is the guiding factor and promote the use of formative assessment to guide intervention. After reflecting on this process we would make a few small adjustments. Our project was to develop a continuum from Kindergarten to Grade 3 and focus on doing the same with the older grades next year. Rather than limit the project to Kindergarten to Grade 3 we would invite members from all grades from the onset. We would do this because we realized how vital it was for receiving teachers to be aware of the learning undertaken in the previous grades. We also found it beneficial, to explore the essentials for each grade by looking at the success criteria of a Grade 6 student. Working from this perspective was beneficial and helped to guide us throughout the process.

Reference materials used throughout the project:

- *The Quebec Education Program*
- *Joyful Literacy Learning by Janet Mort*
- *The Reading Strategies Book by Jennifer Serravallo*
- *The Literacy Continuum by Irene C. Fountas and Guy Su Pinnell*
- *Speech to Print by Louisa Moats Ph.D*
- *Visible Learning by John Hattie*
- *Florida Center for Reading Research*

- *How to Differentiate Instruction in Academically Diverse Classrooms by Lynn Erickson*
- *Modern Curriculum Press "Plaid" Phonics program*
- *Super-Duper Publications Phonological Awareness Chipper Chat*