

Pre-Kindergarten: A Developmental Approach SWLSB 2019-2020

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Project Description:

In addition to the teachers funded by LCEEQ, SWLSB funded an additional 6 teachers to collaborate on this project enabling the participation of teachers of varying Pre-Kindergarten teaching experience, and representing the diverse learning environments of our territory (urban/rural, large/small schools, economically disadvantaged/more affluent). The increase in funding for Pre-Kindergarten classrooms in regular school settings created a unique opportunity for Pedagogical Development for all teachers in the SWLSB to understand the Pre-Kindergarten curriculum, address challenges, share successes and develop content for these Pre-Kindergarten programs. It was recognized that there is a unique skill set to teaching a developmental program versus an academic-competency based program.

We began by taking apart the program and really developing an understanding of its components to have a shared knowledge base about a Pre-Kindergarten program with developmental goals and outcomes. There was an introduction to setting up "lesson plans" that focus on developmental outcomes and not academic ones and throughout the year batches of lesson plans were developed and were workshopped in classrooms outside of the PDIG meetings. As well, a variety of communication of learning tools for school/home were developed and also workshopped throughout the year.

Project Goals:

Our overall project goals fell into 3 areas of understanding, planning and preparing.

- understand the major components of a developmental program
- understand how to set up optimal learning environments in order to facilitate observation and instructional practice
- understand role of “play” in instructional and learning practice
- know how to plan for instruction and “evaluate, assess, report” including bank of tools
- understand how to identify student needs for early intervention in a PreK environment
- have strategies to work with partners
- develop comprehensive bank of lessons, linked to program and with developmental learning objectives at their centre
- prepare for the next year of school learning in Kindergarten including the role of PreK in the transition process of students

Each session primarily provided opportunities to explore each of the three areas of understanding, planning and preparing. The teachers were able to address challenges and share successes, thereby learning from one another despite experience and/or classroom realities.

The team collaboratively created and workshopped tools to communicate about learning with parents. Feedback gathered from parents suggests the effort was very well received. Samples of these communication tools are provided in the general folder (link below).

The onset of Covid-19 made the follow up of identification of student needs for early intervention and preparation for the transition from Pre-Kindergarten to Kindergarten challenging. We continue to collaborate on the discussion of these topics virtually.

The bank of lesson plans were completed. The lesson template used was a modified Kindergarten lesson template created by SWLSB. The lessons, fully entrenched in the Pre-Kindergarten program, focus on relevant instructional strategies (cooperative learning, visual/hands on/interactive projects, inquiry based (through play) practices, effective technology for young learners, etc.). The lessons are by no way comprehensive in that they are a guide to follow from beginning to end. Rather, they are jumping off points that are well situated in the content of the program and teachers can adjust as they see fit for their own realities. In some cases, questions for further thought and development remain. They are included in the link below.

Project Outcomes:

These teachers benefitted, first and foremost, from the opportunity to create a collaborative networking partnership with their fellow Pre-Kindergarten colleagues. SWLSB significantly increased their Pre-Kindergarten classes for 2019-2020 and this collaboration and pedagogical support was essential.

They finished the sessions with a thorough understanding of the competencies of a developmental curriculum, and walked away with practical tools for communicating with parents about student learning, as well as a bank of lesson plans that are based on relevant instructional strategies.

Reinvestment:

As the funding of Pre-Kindergarten increases in Quebec, and as university educational programs continue to adjust their teaching programs accordingly, the process for understanding, planning and preparing undergone by this group of dedicated teachers, is surely to be beneficial. SWLSB already has a significant number of additional Pre-Kindergarten classes for 2020-2021 and the process of learning and materials created will become the foundation of our continued support provided.

Access to the lessons, communication tools, and other relevant documents are contained in a Google Drive folder: Pre-Kindergarten: A Developmental Approach