

PDIG Final Report 2019/2020

The Master Plan

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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.

Brief Overview of the PDIG Project: The Master Plan

We need a Master Plan to integrate each of these projects together, so that, teachers do not feel as though they need to choose which needs to be done and/or where to start without omitting the requirements of the Quebec Education Program. This has been a request by many teachers, to have a “cohesive plan” and has been echoed by teachers in other schools. We want to create a plan, which goes beyond a curriculum map; it is the Master Plan for multi-project integration.

Our team realized that teaching is only part of our profession; professional development, engagement in other team projects, developing programs, project meetings with other schools, professional learning communities, etc. make pulling projects together or seeing them through a real challenge. Once schedules did align, there was a shortage of supply of supply teachers. Scheduling time to meet was the most challenging part of our project, one of the first greatest hurdles, thus, our project did not commence at the time originally proposed.

A change to our plan was after a few attempts to arrange dates with consultants to join us, our team discovered that we had all of the expertise within our team. Each member of the PDIG team represented one of the competing projects and we knew what the challenges were in getting our projects moving. We already knew what the problem was: we needed to bring all the competing projects together under one “operating system”. Furthermore, we realized, that our team had sufficient technological abilities to create an on-line platform. Thus, our change, no school board consultants were part of the team. Our team was confident that our shared ideas and vision would develop into a cohesive and solidified final project.

We did not create extensive lesson plans, we discovered, that we already had the lessons plans within the broader special projects. We did not need to create more, what we needed to do was figure out what we already had and how to bring it together. We decided on creating Launch Weeks, these will be discussed further.

Another change to our project, was we did not survey other schools, instead we used informal discussions with colleagues in other schools to learn about details in how extra programs were amalgamated into the curriculum. We discovered, yet not surprised, to learned that our colleagues have similar issues – all needing “cohesive plans” and ease of access to information. We did survey our own staff. Overall, we felt that these were a few minor changes, as in every PDIG project, and in no way affected the outcome of our project.

What worked extremely well, was that we did have a representation from each of the major projects that were being championed to be moved forward in our school. In our case, our PDIG team was

derived by these teachers who have become experts in their areas or “Lead Teachers”. Our focus was on Robotics, Outdoor Education, Mindfulness and Restorative Circles.

Another successful point was we were able to have authentic discussions on the real challenges of not being able to move our competing projects forward. We were able to drop the “competing” and look for the “unifying” of our projects. It was through these discussions, we were able to find the real issues that need to be addressed, before the weaving together of projects could take place.

It was through these authentic discussions we were able to articulate the fact that, we as teachers were busy not just teaching, but being involved in so many other projects. That we realized that we are not always working from the same framework or time tables and we do not always have access to the same information at the same time. This created real challenges - this was our major discovery. It was during our first planning sessions, our PDIG team realized that the alignment of the most of the special projects with the QEP had been completed, however, we need to find the time to embed them in the curriculum and bring these ideas to the attention of our colleagues.

Taking the above into account, our PDIG team feels very successful in having created a plan goes beyond the curriculum map; it is our Master Plan for multi-project integration. At first glance, it might appear that the outcome of the project is designed for our school alone, however, the same scaffolding we used would be used in another school with a few minor changes as each school would have different projects.

The major hurdle, was of course the COVID-19 Pandemic, schools closed, meetings cancelled – everything halted. We did not have our final two meetings to finish off the actual project integration portion, final documents, such as lesson plans for the Launch Weeks were not all completed. We did try to meet online, it was challenging as many documents were at the school, we were unable to complete this portion of our project.

Our team is extremely proud of having created the digital platform for our Master Plan. We are equally proud of the fact that we did begin the work on the Launch Weeks. We believe that other schools will still be able to use our material in their planning.

Thus, our work began here are our Journal Entries Synthesis

Day 1 – Half Day

Although we had set a schedule and wanted to commence our PDIG meetings earlier, we ran into issues with find substituted teachers for our release. We could only meet a half day.

We spent the time collecting information on the broader projects that our school had committed to not only as a staff, but through our school project and to our school governing board.

We looked at documents needed to support our goal, reviewed our school's Educational Project, and identified our school's special projects and focus, such as Wild School, Restorative Justice, Makerspace, Robotics, Sexuality Education, MindUp Curriculum, ABAV, and various ECA's. We also reviewed the QEP to see where everything fits together. With this, we tried to narrow our goal/focus and decided where we wanted to concentrate our efforts - set the schedule / guidelines for the rest of the PDIG.

Day 2 – Half Day

We reviewed in detail the MHES Annual Report and discussed the current school direction. We reviewed the Educational Project to help decide what programs must be implemented. We discussed the QEP and how the proposed programs and activities can be part of the overall learning and are found in the Progressions of Learning. We discussed problems associated with all of the current projects, making a list to be used to generate a teacher survey.

Day 3 – Full Day

We created a common, easily accessible virtual place - a shared Google drive where all important “documents” for our school and school board are organized. We created teacher survey to understand what major challenges exist facing teachers in our school/board to implement special programs/activities in the schedule.

Day 4 – Full Day

We looked at the survey results and found little response. We decided to re-launch the survey with hopes of getting more feedback. We continued entering more documents into our virtual database (Google Drive). We discussed how to integrate the many whole school special projects by combining the activities and reviewing the teacher/student schedules.

Day 5 – Full Day

Created questions for another survey. Continued work on the virtual data base. We began working on a virtual calendar. We began a review of projects and discussed dates for projects. We reassessed all major projects to determine the issues in being able to maintain them. After looking at our projects we realized we needed a new solution to get teachers involved: Launch Weeks. Began looking at project in detail to figure out how to create a Launch Week. We discussed dates to present work to teaching staff at our school.

Day 6

Then COVID-19 struck and our meetings came to a halt. We did try to accomplish some ideas through discussions online. This proved challenging as we could not access all of the documents and we could not proceed with experiment with an activity.

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.

We believe most of the project goals were for the most part met with some adaptations and extreme challenges.

The COVID-19 Pandemic did not permit us to have our last two team meetings due to school cancellation. We did not have the opportunity to create the Launch Weeks, the lessons that went with the Launch Weeks, nor complete the integration of special projects. However, we managed to do some distant planning for our school and as a result, we began to set the Master Plan in motion for the school year 2020-2021.

The goal of having the PDIG team comprised of a person from each of the various championed programs come together to find a solution in how to weave together all of the projects while addressing the

Quebec Education Program was a real success, in effect, our PDIG team become the Lead Team through our work, this was monumental in accomplishing the goals set out in the is project.

Our goal was to create a Master Plan, and we did. In fact, we believe we achieved even more than we thought we would. As our PDIG team learned more about each other's championed projects, we discovered a different approach to engaging our staff and students. What we thought at the beginning the best way to approach this project, shifted. We now realized we had to make information available to teachers in the simplest manner, alleviate stress, and help teachers gain their confidence in incorporating new projects with in their curriculum with ease. We had to work together at developing a unique approach. This approach is explained in detail in the Gains section.

We achieved our goal of creating a digital tool to organize the QEP, teaching tools, as well as a multitude of other documents, which we call the Master Plan – Home Base. We also began organizing the goals of our special projects as the pertain to Launch Weeks, however, we were unable to complete the plans for the Launch Weeks. Please find documents attached.

We believe that the goals of our project were 75% met, however, we did not have the ability of carrying out the larger plans for each of our major programs. In any event, we are ready to implement our project in September 2020, and will seek some release time to create the Launch Week materials.

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

The gains our PDIG team made thus far we feel have been excellent. Our PDIG team feels that we have identified many issues facing ourselves and colleagues and even our principal. We are extremely satisfied with the solutions we found as a team. In sharing our plans with our principal, our ideas and proposals were met with equal enthusiasm. We have been asked to share our findings and work with our colleagues and proceed with implementing our plans.

The only part we are disappointed with is not being able to complete the integration component of our project, the Launch Weeks, we would have required the extra time.

These are the gains we made:

The Master Plan

The major gain of our PDIG was the creation of a Master Plan.

We felt that before we could get to the project integration, our team need to address the percolating issue of access to important documents such as: protocols, timetables, forms, resources, programs, etc., and of course the access to the special projects. Thus, hampering the teacher engagement.

Our PDIG team began extensive research to locate documents, files, programs, etc. to help with our current project. To achieve this, a great deal of research and discussions with other staff members as to what they saw as inaccessible in order to get daily work done whether for academic work or administrative work. We were surprised to see how much teachers had to search for documents in order to accomplish their tasks all of this took up so much valuable time. This time loss dealt with such things as: field trip sheets, procedures, actual program content information for robotics, lessons for wild

school, how to run restorative circles, mindfulness activities, request forms, parent emails, resources, board consults, QEP, etc. This took up valuable time which could have been used to learn more about the special projects, such as Wild School, Mindfulness, Robotics, etc. as a result, teachers began lacking the confidence to try incorporate these projects all creating stress in having to do more. This is even more intimidating to new teachers, who may not even know where to begin asking questions.

We quickly discovered that we needed a “place” in which to hold this information, for our constant referral, The Master Plan began. You will find an example of The Master Plan attached. The Master Plan is an on-line platform which our team organized for use of our teaching staff. We used the Google platform as we felt it was the most easily accessible vehicle for our teaching staff to access. The Master Plan will help diminish stress in educators, especially new staff as Master Plan provides all information regarding curriculum, special projects, innovations as well as information for special projects with lesson plans which are easily accessible on-line. Description of all special projects and pedagogical targets, QEP curriculum areas to insert critical learning activities, lesson plans to integrate several special projects, timelines and suggested subject integration as well as access to Launch Week information.

We did not realize at the time that The Master Plan would evolve quite like this, we are incredibly excited in the access to information it provides. We needed a frame from which to work from. Everything is accessible to the teacher!

The Lead Team

A Lead Team would be established. Comprised of teachers who are the experts in the field of the special projects, such as Robotics, Mindfulness, etc. This Lead Team would work with the principal to review The Master Plan for the school year, ensure that all teaching staff understand how to use The Master Plan platform. In addition, The Lead Team would plan and organize and seek funds along with the principal for the Launch Weeks. The Lead Team would be in charge of overseeing the integration of the programs.

Integrate the programs

Our PDIG Team felt that integrating the many programs at key points in the school would greatly help teachers in their own pedagogy, and help teachers learn new skills, alleviating stress. Therefore, the notion of a “Launch Week” for each of the programs was decided upon with dates scheduled and specialists engaged. The Launch Week would take place for a full week. Students and teachers would rotate through the activities. The creation of the Lead Teams to set dates for Launch Weeks, plan the Launch Week and enlist the specialists. The integration of the programs through the Launch Week would lead to educators actually integrating the special projects in their teaching practices on a regular basis stress free.

Launch Week

We decided that having a Launch Week would help all staff become immersed in the special project needing to be integrated in the school curriculum. By having an opportunity to work mainly on the project idea activities for an extended period of time, would permit the activity buy-in and actually encourage the teacher to pursue the inclusion of the ideas such as Mindfulness, in the greater curriculum. Also, the Launch Week was the way to integrate multi-grade levels. The Launch Week will have students participating in innovative, inspiring and critically engaging lessons, resulting in heightened student engagement and increased success.

After the Launch Week, it would be expected that educators continue the learning of the special projects in their teaching practices regularly. As they would now possess the knowledge necessary to move forward, without the stress of not knowing what to do.

Find Specialists

Our PDIG Team also felt it necessary to find specialists in each of the fields in which we wish to support our special projects. Experts could be teachers from within our school and released to organize and help the “Launch Week”. For instance, enlisting our school boards EdTech Team and/or LEARN to assist with Robotics program, or the teacher who is the expert in outdoor education to teacher get the Wild Project started.

Using a specialist is definitely a shift in the way teachers might run things, generally the “owner” of the project has difficulty getting the ideas started due to lack of time to get project going, lack of buy in amongst busy staff, lack of participation due to staff feeling ill-equipped in incorporating the project in their educational practices. In fact, a specialist starting off the project is what is need to launch the project.

The gains made in this PDIG project were monumental in creating a Lead Team from our PDIG team. Prior to our PDIG, we could not see how to integrate programs and felt that all but one program should be dropped. Together, through authentic discussions and true assessment of our best practices, we were able to discover the root of our problem: teachers not having enough time to absorb a new project which they were not familiar with nor have the opportunity to learn more about the project. Having a specialist launch a project would only help build a better foundation not only our team but for our school.

Reinvestment: 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 it could be improved.

This project should be carried out by other school teams who have struggled with similar problems implementing the plethora of school programs in a school year. While the Master Plan which our Morin Heights Elementary School PDIG team prepared is unique to our school as it addresses the needs which arose in our lengthy planning discussions, the structure of our plan could be of great use for other schools who are juggling the many projects/programs teachers asked to teach, the apprehension teaching the QEP in addition to these other projects and finding the time to incorporate everything in their teaching pedagogy.

Creating the Lead Team

Beginning with the creation of a committed Lead Team. The Lead Team should be formed by one teacher of each of the various major projects. Then the Lead Team, along with the principal would review all aspects of the school structure, programs, information, issues, etc. Structuring an access point to get information. Please refer to The Master Plan. Here we have provided a template to be used as a guide, however, each school will need to adjust their own to suit the specific needs.

Master Plan

Have a Lead Team create and organize a Master Plan. Having everything in one place. Easily accessible by all teachers, especially new teachers. Included is the information for any specific projects. Dates for

Launch Weeks, etc. This clear structure makes finding information easy. It also provides the assurance that projects of merit actually move forward at a specific time. The certainty of projects moving forward, also helps to secure funding either by government measures, grants, and or donations. The Master Plan can easily be used by other schools with similar special project integration challenges.

Launch Weeks

We also recommend that the Lead Team along with the principal take time to plan at the beginning of the school year, if not at the end of the current school year, in which to organize the specific projects and Launch Weeks. We have shared what our various programs look like, see the attached documents, and have provide guidance in how to establish a Launch Week.

Funding

Our PDIG Team recommends that funds be set aside to release the Lead Team, who would regularly update The Master Plan digital format during the school year. Funds would also be necessary for a Lead Team to meet. The Lead Team would also require time to organize the integration of programs such as, Robotics, Wild Project, Mindfulness, etc. during Launch Weeks. This way, projects to move ahead and thus, not lose momentum because teachers cannot find the time outside of their work hours for detailed team planning.

Timing

We also recommend that early in the school year, all teachers be made aware of the Master Plan as well as the special projects which the Lead Team would be launching/supporting. The Lead Team should meet with the whole teaching staff early in the school year to show how the Master Plan works and review all dates and projects moving forward. Teachers can present other ideas and at the time it would be important to see where a new project could be imbedded in the Master Plan for the current year(s).

Once a The Master Plan is in place, things are not only set in stone, everyone is aware of the events, information is easy to locate, dates, special programs are introduced to everyone at once and they are set to happen! Furthermore, the Launch Weeks help solidify the special projects by providing knowledge to the teacher. Giving the teacher an opportunity to participant and learn. If teachers are part of the Launch Week, observing their students and acquiring new learning in which to build on, it helps ensure that the special programs continue to be taught in the manner and frequency prescribed by the actual program. In the case of MHES, we wanted everyone to understand the specific programs to run all year, and not be intimidated by the new information.

Our PDIG team would like to share the Master Plan with other schools through a school board workshop. We believe that our work is a truly innovative pedagogical tool.

In closing, during this COVID-19 Pandemic, wherein teachers have never been so separated from their colleagues as some of us are teaching in the classroom, while others are supporting students at home through virtual learning, the Master Plan is perhaps the most essential tool teachers would need. The Master Plan would give them access to important information, programs, and more, quite literally, right at their figure tips.

Note:

Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, our school did not complete all of the work for the "Launch Weeks" we had planned for the spring. Some documents are incomplete and/or missing.