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Course Syllabus Development -- Middle School Option Courses

PDIG Final Report

Project Description

Our goal for this PDIG was to create strong, pedagogically sound courses that would enrich the educational experience of our students. We wanted to research best practices in these fields, and design courses to offer at our school that students would be excited about. We wanted our students to come to school and have fun, to gain valuable knowledge in an area of interest to them, and we wanted to prepare them for our ever-changing world.

Over the course of the release days, teachers managed to work together to create common syllabi and marking rubrics. Using a pass/fail model was not a possibility, so after much discussion, it was decided to create a general skills rubric that was adapted to each class as necessary. The goal remained to keep students engaged, not worried about grades or large assignments.

Through discussion, teachers' goals were to create courses that were hands-on, that potentially involved guest speakers, and field trips and the release days allowed time to discuss the development of their courses, have time planning, and making plans on how to showcase these courses to the new, incoming grade 6 students so that they could make an informed choice.

Working together always led to rich discussion, but it was challenging to be able to meet together and each take the allotted 5 days of release. Sometimes, days of individual planning were necessary, depending on PD availability or substitution restraints. Consequently, we were not able to use all the days of release given.

Project Goals

The main goals of the PDIG were achieved. Everyone was able to create a course syllabus for a Middle School Option Course of 40 hours per year (2x60 minutes/9-day cycle). These

documents are attached in the final report for those who would like to consult or use them as a starting point for a similar course. The team also created a grading scheme based on relatively general skills for their course, which can also be found in the attached documents.

We did not have the opportunity to peer-review the syllabi and give feedback, but there was much discussion and sharing of ideas along the way!

Project Outcomes

Through this process, teachers stepped out of their comfort zone to create a brand new course. This required much discussion, research of best practices, and being able to self-reflect on what was working well in the course and what could be done differently moving forward in the following years. Because of the mixture of staff members, we had a nice mix of new (under 5 years) and more experienced teachers which led to valuable discussions. In the Robotics and Coding Option Course especially, a lot of PD was done learning about new technologies and how to work programs or tools available to us.

Also, some staff members visited a French school in Magog which offers concentrations for all from grade 7-9. We believe that our option courses are a small step in that direction.

Reinvestment

The tools created are available for the English community to use. Our team remains available to discuss or meet with any other team that may be thinking about moving toward this type of model. We realize that we have a long way to go before offering full-on concentrations, but the courses are very well received by our students and the community at large. All developed syllabi and/or LES' and evaluation rubrics are attached to this report.

This project could definitely be carried out by other teams; either by using these courses already developed or creating courses to reflect the local flavour of that school.

Related Documents

As mentioned, all documents are attached to this report. Should anyone need more information, please feel free to contact Melissa Larocque, Vice-Principal, Chateauguay Valley Regional High School.

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