Vertical Planning in Alternative Learning Pathways at PCHS

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.

This project was born of our team's desire to make sure our pedagogical practices were unified and best serving the students with whom we work. We wanted to ensure that the decisions we made regarding student progress and lateral and vertical movements within and across programs were well-informed and accurate to the students' skills and needs.

Despite meeting some challenges, our team feels confident in the gains that we have made both as individual subject departments and as a unified alternate learning pathways program (ALPS). We met as planned and it was determined in the fourth meeting between resource coordinators that an additional meeting would be beneficial so as to iron out some details within subject levels. This was the case predominantly for math. It was determined that when it comes to content, certain gaps in knowledge existed between WOTP3 and WOTP1 which would make the vertical movement between programs all the more challenging for students. Additionally, given the stage component in WOTP1, the topics and timeline needed to be revised. The additional meeting day allowed the math teachers to discuss how best to proceed in both cases.

The French teachers were able to use the additional meeting to further differentiate content within programs, given the diversity of learners within each respective program. Similarly, the English teachers were able to discuss content and learning materials, whereas previously the goal was to establish skills and knowledge within each level. In short, the additional meeting permitted the math teachers to revise certain issues identified by the resource coordinators and the French and English teachers to establish a body of materials. This will

prevent overlap in materials used which sometimes contributes to students questioning their abilities and confidence. For example, studying the same novel or short stories from one year to the next when the student was promoted from one level to the next can be confusing and deflating for students.

While my team initially set out to meet once per department, with the support of our resource coordinators, the need to have an additional meeting was identified. This final meeting not only allowed us to address areas requiring further attention, but it also provided us with the opportunity to compare experiences across subject groups and thus meet as a unified ALPS team. This was helpful as it developed into a discussion that touched on individual worries, practices, approaches, etc. It allowed for a sharing of ideas that otherwise would not have happened.

With regards to challenges, the size of our team proved to be a minor difficulty to coordinate a meeting date that everyone felt comfortable with. This was exacerbated by our project beginning so early in the year when interim reports, IEP's, religious holidays, etc. were already taking place. Additionally, some changes in team members meant that certain members were absent from a subject meeting. In this case, fellow teammates who were familiar with the program's progression of learning filled out the document until such a time as the new member was able to contribute and revise. Finally, our goals were ambitious, and while they were achieved, we needed to extend our project's timeline.

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.

The goals our team set out to accomplish was to create tools that detailed a progression of learning for each level within our alternative learning programs that was cross referenced to ensure a meaningful learning experience that would strengthen skills regardless of how students

moved through their respective pathway. We wanted to ensure to avoid gaps in subject knowledge, skills, and- as was later determined and discussed above- content. Each teacher produced an overview of their progression of learning which was then fused together to produce a master document per subject. This tool will allow for replacement teachers or teachers new to teaching ALPS to have a roadmap for their work. Additionally, a document which will facilitate end of year promotion discussion was produced. This document includes essential knowledge and skills which will allow teachers to reflect on student readiness to make vertical and lateral moves. While we made good progress within our initial timeline, we were able to further strengthen our work with the use of an additional meeting day.

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

As was previously touched upon, the participating teachers benefited from this initiative as a subject area, as a member of the ALPS department, and individually. The opportunity to meet with colleagues is immensely beneficial as it allows for a sharing of ideas, experiences, concerns, and solutions. This is something that is reinforced within collective efficacy. Similarly, in terms of self-efficacy, the individual teacher benefits from a collaboration and discussion for much the same reasons. It is reinforcing and validating to share experience. While the tools were created to best serve the community of students with whom we work, an additional benefit was the knowledge that we are creating tools that will facilitate and enhance our pedagogical practice. The opportunity to reflect upon individual approach to teaching and providing learning opportunities, then sharing this within and across subject areas and ALPS programs was meaningful to all 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. Make sure you include these resources with your report. If applicable, comment on whether or not this project should be carried out by other teams.

The tool that we labeled "Expectations per Program" will, as previously mentioned, act as a roadmap for teachers within and across ALPS programs. For those teachers coming in the program as a replacement or newly appointed team member, it will empower them with knowledge of what needs to be addressed. This will reinforce the teacher's sense of self-efficacy as there will be less doubt and trial and error as they familiarize themselves with the program(s).

The tool that we labeled "Progress Assessment Tool" was designed to facilitate discussions regarding vertical and lateral movement within and across programs. It can be challenging to determine whether a student is adequately prepared to move on to another program that has different expectations. This tool will encourage reflection within individual teachers and help to guide talks that happen between the educational team. This will ensure appropriate and meaningful placement for each student.

These tools will be shared with our PCHS colleagues outside of our ALPS department as well as the alternative learning and resource programs in our school board. This sharing of tools will reinforce the importance of reflection and discussion within and across departments and programs. Perhaps in sharing our tools, a larger discussion between programs and schools will begin, which would further contribute to collective efficacy.

We feel that this experience has been beneficial to those who participated. As such, we recommend that other teams carry out similar exercises to ensure a cohesive understanding, view, and delivery of expectations. This will benefit both staff and students.

Team Journal Entries

Entry 1 (English): We discussed personal approaches to teaching essential skills. This was a validating experience because it allowed us to see that we are all on the right track. Overall, this experience was conducive to self and collective efficacy. Our originally conceived template for "Expectations per Program" did not serve us as we had hoped it would.

Initially we thought to pull learning targets from the progression of learning and then further narrow our focus to establish expectations within each program. It was effective to our process but not necessarily the end goal document we sought to produce.

We reformulated our approach so that we each worked in tandem with the teacher in the subsequent program. This allowed us to more easily establish targets for entry from one level to the next. We were able to meet our goals of discussing current practices, establishing baselines for learning targets, and creating an evaluation checklist.

Entry 2 (Math): We discussed the essential skills that are needed for each group and the differentiation that is often needed within each group. We discussed the difficulty in assessing the students' development over time. We created a checklist for assessments for each level. We were able to create a system by which we can share the student's progress over the school year, as well as between each year. We realized that our students are not advancing linearly in their development for each topic, which makes it difficult to assess their knowledge and progress from one year to the next.

While we are trying to create vertical planning, it is difficult because our groups in each class are incredibly diverse and do not progress vertically. We recognized that the way we assess our students in the different programs is different because of their individual needs.

We were able to identify essential skills per program, we collaborated to make connections between programs and created an assessment checklist for each program.

Entry 3 (French): We discussed the difficulty teaching French to modified students as they are all at different levels in the class and at times we do not have the time to differentiate. We struggled to get everything done as there was no true guideline that was provided. We ended up using the DELF A1 and A2 guidelines to direct our work, along with the sec 1 and sec 2 guidelines. We tried to identify the coherence between the groups.

Today, we created a checklist for all ALPS groups so that we can use it to direct the class throughout the year. We also realized that there is a need to create a specific modified book for each level so we make sure that we are covering the curriculum. We felt that we needed more time in order to do this collaboration as we are less teachers. We also felt that there are not enough resources to teach the curriculum for modified students. As well, students do not use their technology enough to help them with French and we need to get them more familiar with it. In addition, because French seems to be the hardest course for them and they do not practice during the summer, they seem to lose their abilities.

Yes, we did meet the goals as we were able to have discussions and create a program.

Meeting 3 (Resource Coordinators): Today, we looked thoroughly at the checklists to make sure that all subjects were able to cover all material. We were able to accomplish this goal.

- English: WOPT1 English, the teacher was not present and we need to add more specific details to the program to make sure that the students are prepared if they go into grade 9 regular program.Next time we meet it would be a good idea to put into possible novels, short stories and videos so we are not using the same materials.

- Math: ALPS 9-The program is at a level that the modified students have not reached yet and therefore, adjustments have been made to the program. WOTP1-program is has a lot of concepts for students that are only in 3 days a week and may need to reduce some topics to focus on essentials for grade 9. Adjustments were made to the program. We also noticed that the WOTP3 and WOTP1 program do not flow which means that parents will also need to provide additional support for math

- French: There is a need for us to make our own materials and workbook since there is nothing that exists. Therefore, we will most likely apply for another PDIG in order to create this resource. As well, there needs to be a conversation with parents if we move a WOTP3 student to WOTP1 with regards to French. We will need to put some responsibility on home for them to get French support if they are to transition as WOTP3 does not flow to WOTP1.

We feel that there is still a need to meet with teachers to go over all the changes that were made to the checklists so that we can all be on the same page.

Meeting 4 (ALPS Full Team):

Math Team: Worked to provide clarity on the gaps between WOTP3-WOTP1. We acknowledged that not all students in WOTP3 will progress to WOTP1, but instead move onto THRIVE or DELTA programs, as well as the world of work. We've identified some of the gaps between the two programs, and provided topics to be covered in order to help make the transition to WOTP1 more fluid. More so, we've identified ways to provide enrichment to students who are doing well in WOTP3, as well as provide students/parents with possible topics to focus on during transition.

Regarding ALPS9/Intensive 9, some sub-topics have been removed. Probability and Stats have been removed in the entirety, also due to time-constraints. The level of scaffolding and support varies based on the student.

Regarding transitions between WOTP3 and WOTP1: The list of objectives in WOTP1 is the goal by the end of the program, however many may not achieve this. Topics like probability and statistics would be the first to be removed. There is a lack of linear movement between these two programs. Regarding ALPS9/Intensive 9, the obstacle encountered was identifying what the end goal really is.

Overall our goals were met, seeing as the main objective was to provide insight + a path to successfully transition between programs. Goal was to reduce WOTP1 topics. Probability and statistics were removed, and other topics may be scaled back due to time constraints. The same goes for the ALPS 9/Intensive 9.

French Team: We focussed on looking at themes as our progress assessment tool was very detailed. We accomplished editing our chart as well as coming up with 6-8 French major themes that would be covered. We then started to take these themes and think of how this theme can be done in three different levels.

It was very hard to distinguish the themes by grade level so we rather divided them up based on 3 levels of difficulty. This gives the teacher options to assess the different levels present in their class. We started to think of project ideas based on the theme. We then took this project idea and then created three different versions of a same activity (3 different levels).

Our goals for today were met, but we have not finished to fill out and complete the information for all of the themes. More time would be needed in the future to do this.

English Team: We focused on compiling a list of materials that each class study in a year. This list will offer teachers a choice of materials to use at a particular program level grade depending on the students that make up the class that year.

We found there were some overlapping materials and discussed the need to communicate between teachers across programs. That said, the list of materials compiled spans the entirety of each program allowing for much individual choice. Therefore, the overlap should not present too many problems.

Overall the goals were met. We have made a comprehensive list of a variety of materials used at each level. The lists made will be flexible depending on the students we teach each year (we may add or omit texts). Alternative texts will need to be found for texts that are no longer viable. With regards to the goal of linking content knowledge to material, we realized that the same concepts are focused upon across programs and texts, so it was deemed unnecessary to connect each theme and concept to specific texts.