PDIG 2022-2023

SUMMARY

We spent three very productive days with our teachers and, together, had all four arts disciplines represented. After exploring Universal Design for Learning and what it means in the four arts, each teacher approached their own project based on their actual needs. Most participants created student learning tools that also inform the evaluation. One teacher created a structure to share music resources for elementary generalists that will help non-specialist teachers infuse their practice with music in a natural and non-threatening way.

DETAIL

Universal Design for Learning makes learner autonomy possible. When teachers apply UDL practices in the design of their classroom activities, learners are able to hone their skills in making choices and moving from stage to stage in their work without constant input from the teacher. Ultimately, this can lead to greater self-knowledge regarding what they need to learn and grow in a particular discipline.

Any production in the arts is a complex task with many parts. Arts teachers have the challenge of needing students to be autonomous enough to make artistic choices, and also to be able to keep all the steps of a project in mind when moving through their artistic production. The participating teachers all reported during discussions that students are not able to do both – that is, they are not able to be fully immersed in the creative process, as well as keeping all the steps of the project straight. This manifests in questions like "What do I do next?", that come at different points for different students. Teachers then have to be constant managers of the logistics of a project and do not have time to focus on a studio practice approach to mentoring students through their competency development. If you're constantly telling students what to do next, its difficult to find time to talk to one student about the development of their vanishing point technique or how well they are able to develop a character on stage. An added variable is the time allocation for arts subjects, which means that students are constantly being thrust in and out of the artistic process, exacerbating this pull between artistic flow and logistics.

4 of 5 participants worked on student learning tools that would allow for greater autonomy in moving through the process of their artistic production. At the same time, the student tools include criteria for success for each step in the process. Some teachers were even able to field test their learning tools and make modifications, which led to the development of several tools, for various projects. Most teachers developed checklist-type learning tools, that allow for ongoing self-evaluation, as well as peer and teacher evaluation. The teachers who were able to field-test reported that their students had greater autonomy to move through the project steps, as intended. One teacher worked on creating a resource a document titled "making music happen in your classroom" which included a list of read-aloud books that can be used to link with a music/dance program.

Another point of discussion was managing student learning tools. Students often show up to the subject of their arts with a sigh of relief that they no longer have to think about bringing their binder, textbook, pencil case etc. While the idea that our Arts classrooms are a safe space for students is gratifying, it would also be nice if students came prepared to jump right back where they left off last time. Teachers get around this obstacle by storing student folders with their learning tools in the arts classroom – which is sometimes an auditorium with limited storage possibilities.

The results of the project will be shared with the whole anglophone community (elementary generalists and secondary specialists) via the LEARN website, the MAD2 for Educators Drive (https://tinyurl.com/MAD2PDIG) as well as being amplified via the MAD2 Facebook group. Consultants will share internally through their school board pedagogical services portals/websites. We will also consider giving a workshop at QPAT under the umbrella of the Spotlight on the Arts.

We had originally hoped to meet in person but as the project continued, we realized that meeting online, even though not the best to make connections, worked out wonderfully. As such, we did not use any of the additional expenses allocated to this project. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to us. Thank you for giving us this opportunity.