
EBP PHASE 2 SUMMARY REPORT

2017-2018

(SIR WILFRID LAURIER SCHOOL BOARD)

**Note to reader: Modified version of report submitted by board. Financial information has been removed for sharing purposes.*

Project 1

SWLSB Evidence-based Practice Project – Using PLCs to improve student learning in the ‘AC’ program

Goals and Activities

The goal of this Evidence Based project was to change teaching efficacy through a PLC model in order to consolidate the learning of ‘at risk’ students entering the high school system.

The intention was to use project funding to finance the associated costs with convening regular Professional Learning Communities Meetings in the four schools that run the ‘Academic Consolidation’ (AC) program. This program is intended to help identified students consolidate the learning of elementary academic content along with study and process skills they will require to enter secondary one in the following year. In doing so, the intention is to increase the likelihood of these at-risk students graduating. Accordingly, Students on the program are considered to still be on a ‘graduation track’.

The rationale of this project was that the establishment of Professional Learning Communities in the four schools running these AC programs would allow teachers of the traditional ‘Big Five’ subjects; ELA, Math, Science & Technology, FSL, GHC to work collaboratively and in doing so, embark upon iterative cycles of enactment and reflection in order to increase their efficacy.

These PLCs would provide the SWLSB with excellent professional development opportunities to develop teacher’s capacity for evidence-based practices.

Accordingly, PLCs were established in all four schools.

The PLC teams met regularly in 3 out of the 4 schools (it proved problematic to establish regular meetings in one of the schools).

Each was planned and led by a school administrator, aided by ‘one to one’ support from assigned educational consultants from the Pedagogical Services Department.

In addition, personalised follow up support meetings and coaching sessions took place between individual PLC members and consultants in terms of both general pedagogy, and subject specific assistance.

PLC meetings also resulted in teachers attending focused PD session such as a Literacy Centre ‘fishbowl’ workshop.

In an attempt to glean some insights in a systematic manner regarding the efficacy of these PLCs, the Pedagogical Service Department assigned our member of the Lead Data Team Initiative (Vanessa Rayner) to this project. Her role was to attend these meetings, observe the process, and collect qualitative evidence (in the form of observations).

Outcomes

A total of 24 PLC meetings took place in the 4 schools that offered the Academic Consolidation program (Rosemere High School (RHS), Lake of Two Mountains High School (LTMHS), Laurentian Regional High School (LRHS) and Laval Junior Academy (LJA)).

These PLC meetings involved a total of 25 teachers, 4 administrators and 6 educational consultants.

One PD session was provided which allowed teachers to learn about literacy through a Literacy Centre 'fishbowl' workshop. This addressed an emergent pedagogical need that was identified at PLC meetings.

Four teachers received Professional development by attending a session provided by 'DEEN CARE' on 'Adaptations and Assistive Technology'

Reflections

In establishing these PLCs, Pedagogical Services emphasized the need for the in school administrators to assume full ownership and leadership of these groups.

It was stressed that educational consultants that would be there to support these principals/vice-principals in terms of planning for PLC meetings, attending them, and debriefing afterwards but it would require the administrators to be the 'prime mover' in making sure that these meetings take place and were successful.

This shift in attitude, away from a previous model in which educational consultants were 'in charge' of running/leading PLCs, appears to have been highly beneficial. In fact the school in which adopted this new direction most fully, appeared to be the most effective (causation inferred, if not proven!).

A correlation between the degree of ownership/leadership assumed by the in school administrator and the efficacy of that respective PLC was evident.

Consequently, as a department, we feel emboldened in our belief that the role of the administrator is pivotal in determining the success of the local evidence based practices and will continue to develop methods of supporting this model.

Naturally, there were differing degrees of success in this project but overall it was observed that there was a greater willingness for teachers to reflect on their own instructional practice and consequently, to experiment. Peer observation and teachers expressing a willingness to be video recorded were some obvious examples of this attitudinal shift.

Another example of a positive development arising from these PLCs was the increased ability of teachers to identify areas of weakness in their own practice and seek to remediate those weaknesses by seeking/obtaining the appropriate professional development. This resulted in teachers attending extra professional development in the areas of literacy and assistive technology.

The utilization of an 'in-house' developed PLC guide as well as the scaffolding provided by the 'PLC' tool in One Note were seen as helpful strategies. The latter was not universally embraced however and remains an area for further experimentation/improvement.

The ability of teachers to select, collect and present the most appropriate forms of student data/work at these meetings, remains the greatest challenge experienced in this project. Naturally, this will be the area that will require the most intervention in any continuation of this project.

This project also highlighted that which was already anticipated; i.e. that it is very difficult to measure the efficacy of these PLCs. The evidence has been largely qualitative and observational.

The involvement of the 'Lead Data Team' member from SWLSB (Vanessa Rayner) was a very positive move in attempting to gain some overall notion of the progress/efficacy of these groups. Having the same one individual observe all of these groups has afforded some degree of confidence in inter group observations and comparisons. An example of which can be seen in the table below.

	LRHS	RHS	LJA
Common understanding of the year's objectives, support for making curricular decisions and evaluation of student learning	May Not be Clear for all Teachers	Not Observed	✗
PLC has a Leader	✗ (Consultants)	No (designated Leader went on leave)	✗ (School Administrator)
PLC Leader receives Support for Facilitating and Planning Meetings	Planning is Discussed between Leaders and School Administrator	Planning and Support for the PLC is offered by Consultant	✗ (offered by Consultants during Planning Meetings)
Teacher willingness	✗	Mixed	✗ (All with the exception of 1 teacher. Note that this teacher was nevertheless observed to respectfully participate in the PLC meeting)
Previous experience with a PLC (teacher, consultant and administrator)	NA This is the first year the school is offering this option to students. Participation in other PLCs is unknown.	✗ Some teachers were involved in a PLC for teaching students in AC last year. Participation in other PLCs is unknown.	✗ Some teachers were involved in a PLC for teaching students in AC last year. Participation in other PLCs is unknown.
Teachers and PLC leader skilled in noticing noteworthy events, including student thinking	More so for the PLC Leaders than the Teachers.	Not Observed	✗

	Somewhat observed for some teachers only.		
Leader is skilled in facilitating discussions about teaching and learning	✘ Potential to observe and record frequency and type of Facilitation Moves.	Not Observed	✘ Potential to observe and record frequency and type of Facilitation Moves.

Reflections on areas of challenge

One unfortunate aspect of this phase of the project was that one of the four schools targeted (one of our schools offering an ‘AC’ course) did not embrace this process. Regular PLC meetings did not take place in this school . This is seen as being a consequence of an in school administrator not that did not prioritize this project/process, and the assignment of an educational consultant who lacked the skillset to push against this inertia.

Therefore, this highlights two areas that will need to be examined for subsequent phases of this project;

- A) How to deal with situations in which in-school administrators are reluctant to lead PLCs
- B) How to better equip and train all educational consultants to deal with these atypical but problematic circumstances

Another area that requires improvement is ensuring that educational consultants are more frequently in the classes alongside the teachers who are members of these PLCs. In this role, they would be acting as instructional coaches and co-teaching in order to try new evidence based approaches. This did happen during this phase of the project, but increasingly the frequency of

The efficacy of the PLC process in this phase of the project was largely assessed by means of observation and qualitative data. This has limited the certitude with which efficacy could be assayed.

Planning to generate, collect and analyse increasingly more quantitative metrics will be an important challenge for the next phase of this project.

Reflections on ‘what’s next?’

The next logical steps would be to continue this PLC project in the two schools that are continuing to offer the AC program next year but to add other high schools where PLCs can be used in an attempt to help ‘at risk’ students. These other high schools may not offer ‘Academic Consolidation’ programs but may still have cohorts or sections of cohorts that require intervention in order to keep them on a graduation path. In the next phase of this project the PLC methodology will be used to develop evidence-based approaches to support teachers in their attempt to address the needs of these vulnerable learners.

Additional comments and observations

Submitted by Michael Quinn, Assistant Director of PSD

Date 27/June/2018

2018-2019 PHASE 2 PROJECTS: INFORMAL SURVEY

We would like to know your general plan for next year. Please, identify which applies best to your situation. This is an informal survey and is not a commitment.

1. **We plan to continue the work next year, with only minor changes to the project(s) or budget(s)**
- ~~2. We are making major changes to our project~~
- ~~3. I don't know yet~~
- ~~4. The project is complete.~~