

**Board  
Report No. 19-099**

**22 October 2019**

**Evidence of Practice**

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**PURPOSE:**

1. To present information to the board of trustees on a school's experience in demonstrating evidence of practice in two areas of the Strategic Plan: Culture of Innovation and Culture of Social Responsibility.

**CONTEXT:**

2. Using inquiry as the basis for innovation in teaching, a combined English program grade 7/8 classroom at Hopewell Public School collaborated with community partners to create a design for a sustainable community located at the Natural Resources campus on Booth Street in Little Italy in Ottawa. The impetus was driven by "No. 9", an organization dedicated to promoting sustainable culture. The students were involved in innovating to solve a current and relevant problem about city land use.

Hopewell Public School with a population of 885 students is located within the Glebe community of Ottawa. It offers 7 intermediate classes in both English and French Immersion programs. One class of 27 students participated in this inquiry.

The initiative addressed a number of current realities within a diverse classroom such as:

- differentiating programming for all students within a mixed-grade/mixed-ability setting;
- improving engagement and student voice;
- enabling students to demonstrate learning of the OCDSB Exit Outcomes; and
- fostering student inquiry and integration of curriculum.

Student engagement with the project took place over a one week period during late March of 2019 and included the following elements:

- site visit with students, teacher, and community partners;
- targeted learning about the nine pillars of sustainability;
- student brainstorming about possible solutions and design features of a sustainable community;
- student action to build models; and
- presentation of ideas.

Student success was seen in the form of "total engagement on the part of all learners", improved communication skills, risk-taking, demonstration of initiative, self-regulation,

critical thinking, self-efficacy and resilience as well as positive peer to peer interactions and collaboration. Students became globally aware and socially conscious individuals who were empowered to act upon their creative and innovative solutions. Each student exhibited growth within individual levels of achievement.

Teacher practice shifted as a result of observing the impact on student outcomes. Staff reported being more likely to embrace a project-based approach to instruction.

The factors contributing to the success were:

- connections to real-life problem and purpose (The City of Ottawa was legitimately seeking input for re-development of the site.);
- student relevance (The topic was of interest to students in making a difference for their community.);
- student voice (Students' creative ideas were given expression and value.);
- positive and meaningful peer feedback. (Students shared ideas with each other and received constructive feedback for improvement.);
- authentic audience (Students presented their designs to an audience of city planners, developers, architects, students of architecture school board officials, media and parents.);
- interdisciplinary curriculum connections (e.g., language arts, geography, visual arts.)
- flexibility in teaching structures and scheduling (For the duration of the project, timetables were modified to support a concentration of effort and attention to the task.); and
- educator mindset.

Some of the challenges faced were temporary shifts in school timetable necessitating an adjustment in regular structures for a limited period of time.

Key educator learning from this experience was a reinforcement of the knowledge that a creative and open ended approach to learning, given the appropriate conditions, improves engagement and achievement for all students.

## **KEY CONSIDERATIONS:**

3. This initiative was successful in improving outcomes for students in a number of areas. In order to accomplish the desired outcomes, it necessitated reducing adult/student ratios for the duration of the activity, requiring staff collaboration and overall school flexibility. School administration was instrumental in clearing the path for this experience to occur. An existing community partner approached the school, thus facilitating the process of seeking out such a partnership.

How might the characteristics of this inquiry be a proxy for other student learning experiences? What supports or professional learning would be required?

## **RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:**

4. This initiative received financial support through the organization, No. 9, which covered material costs for the creation of the scaled model. The total cost was approximately \$3,000, however, it should be noted that the specific materials used are not required for a

project of this nature. There are many low cost and innovative ways in which school materials and recycled resources can be utilized to support student learning.

## **STRATEGIC LINKS:**

5. This initiative linked with our strategic objectives in the areas of Innovation and Social Responsibility. Additionally, many of the Exit Outcomes were demonstrated such as: Goal-oriented, Innovative/Creative, Collaborative, Globally Aware, Resilient, Ethical Decision-makers, Academically Diverse, Effective Communicators and Critical Thinkers.

## **SUBMITTED FOR DISCUSSION**

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Superintendent of Instruction

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Camille Williams-Taylor  
Director of Education and  
Secretary of the Board