

Queensborough Middle School Learning Plan

2020.2021

CONTEXT: WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT OUR LEARNERS

- QMS is a diverse and growing community of learners comprised of 350 students in grades 5 through 8 attending face-to-face instruction at QMS (312 students) and through the district online program (37 students). Our students and their families come from 19 different countries, including Canada, and account for at least 24 different home languages. Punjabi as a Second Language (PSL) is offered to our students with 44 students enrolled. At QMS, there are strong connections amongst staff, students, parents and the community. Most of our students come to us from Queen Elizabeth Elementary; both schools and the Queensborough Community Centre work closely together to provide opportunities for the students in the community.
- The 2020.2021 school year is unique in that we are learning amidst a global pandemic and we are working to position ourselves to maximize learning despite restrictions that been imposed, and to embrace opportunities that have been presented as a result. Our strong, positive school spirit and sense of community has been evident as staff and students have flexibly responded and adjusted to our new reality.
- Four years ago, we began a learning journey about growth mindset. We noticed that many of our students lacked confidence in their mathematical ability. Our hunch was that this belief system had an adverse impact on student achievement. This led us to focus our school learning plan on developing tools to enable students to have a growth mindset. Our hope was that once students learned about their brains (neuroplasticity) and how effort, perseverance, and strategy development positively impact success more than innate ability, we would see evidence of gains in student confidence and engagement, and ultimately achievement.
- After our first year learning the language and principles of growth mindset, our learning focus expanded to include “growth mindset assessment”, specifically how our assessment practices align with growth mindset and maximize student achievement. For subsequent years, we have focused on the role that feedback plays in student learning. In particular, ***we wondered what the impact would be on our students if we gave them timely and specific feedback, taught them strategies, and gave them multiple opportunities to apply those strategies to demonstrate what they know.***

GOAL: WHAT WE HOPE TO ACHIEVE

We believe that all students can achieve at high levels with effort, perseverance, resilience and the right set of strategies. We hope to continue to develop these skills in our students by ensuring that our classroom assessment practices:

- Provide specific and timely feedback to students (from teachers, peers and self-reflection/assessment)
- Provide students with opportunities to learn, develop and assess their strategies
- Give students multiple opportunities to show what they know in multiple formats

Additionally, for the 2020.2021 school year, we will work to develop student and staff’s capacity to engage in the feedback process using remote learning platforms such as Microsoft Teams and FreshGrade.

PLAN: THE STEPS WE WILL TAKE

Key Results

- Review of and reflection upon data from 2019.2020 school year (FSA results, Student Learning Survey, MDI, report cards), our current school needs in light of the COVID 19 pandemic to set a School Learning Focus for 2020.2021 school year.
- Review/explicit teaching of growth mindset concepts and language
- Surveys of students and parents around mindset and feedback administered, reviewed and action items identified
- Intentional learning opportunities provided for students to give and receive feedback, and improve their work over time
- Staff collaboration with colleagues around feedback including the use of technology in the feedback process (‘show and share’ during staff meetings, Professional Development Days, Book Clubs, ongoing Professional Development opportunities provided by the district, etc.)
- Year end reflection on successes, stretches, and next steps

Timeline

- December/January
- September and ongoing throughout the year
- Spring
- Ongoing
- Ongoing
- May/June

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SUCCESS INDICATORS: HOW WE WILL KNOW THAT OUR ACTIONS ARE HAVING THE DESIRED IMPACT

- Evidence of teachers trying new feedback strategies (teachers sharing examples: staff meetings, Pro D days, engagement in professional development opportunities) and regularly integrating technology as part of the feedback process
- Evidence of students using the feedback they are given to improve their understanding and quality of their work over time (portfolios documenting growth with respect to core and curricular competencies over time)
- Time for students to act upon feedback (learn and practice new strategies), and multiple opportunities for students to demonstrate competency (re-tests, re-submissions of assignments, revisiting of curricular and core competencies over the course of the year)
- Opportunities for students to show learning in different ways (UDL)
- Three Way Conference feedback (student self-reflection and goal setting) incorporated when communicating student learning
- Evidence of ongoing Core Competency development:
 - Goal setting and reflection will encourage students to take responsibility and ownership of their learning
 - Goal attainment will strengthen our students' sense of accomplishment and self-efficacy/confidence
 - Self and peer assessment will develop students' critical thinking skills as well as their ability to identify their strengths and challenges
 - Timely and effective feedback will encourage student reflection, help students to direct their efforts toward improvement and increase perseverance
 - Communication skills will be developed through regular opportunities for self-reflection, peer assessment, Three Way Conferences, etc.
- Feedback from parents and students pertaining to our objectives considered and incorporated into our implementation of the School Learning Plan throughout the year (surveys, Three Way Conferences, etc.)
- Evidence of student voice and engagement within the school such as student initiated and led activities (Terry Fox Run, Remembrance Day, Spirit Days, posters, Rainbow Alliance Club initiatives, etc.) and learning activities (passion projects, genius hour, classrooms where UDL is incorporated, etc.)

COMMUNICATION: HOW WE WILL SHARE OUR LEARNING JOURNEY WITH OUR COMMUNITY

- Announcements, class discussions, student leadership initiatives including assemblies, posters, TV in front hallway, school message on report cards, newsletters
- Three Way Conferences & Self-Assessment of Competencies focussed on "I can" statements (e.g. I can get better by using feedback, developing strategies, evaluating my strategies. I can help my peers get better by providing specific and descriptive feedback)
- Parent engagement through email, newsletters, school website, PAC meetings, surveys and FreshGrade
- Communicating student learning informally (Three Way conferences, email, telephone calls, MS Teams meetings, FreshGrade) and formally (report cards) in student and parent friendly language
- School Learning Focus visible in our school throughout common areas and classrooms
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