

Needs Assessment:

Commission Scolaire de Montréal (CSDM) Benevolent Behaviours Initiative

ETEC 650: Fundamentals of Instructional Design

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**Name and Title of the Sponsor:**

Commission scolaire de Montréal (CSDM) in partnership with the Peace Grantmakers Network

**Description of the Problem:**

Currently the CSDM is experiencing a growing prevalence of aggressive verbal behaviours between students and between students and staff. There are few (if any) guidelines from CSDM management regarding appropriate “positive and caring intervention approaches” (Peace Grantmakers Network, 2015) to address these events as they occur, even though research shows that “holistic and positive” consequences taking into account the “pros and cons of the specific consequence” (CSDM, 2015) are more effective than a haphazard punitive approach thoughtlessly involving suspensions and/or expulsions. Also, the absence of a research-based initiative to help students build positive relationships and caring attitudes is cause for concern as many of the ‘aggressive verbal behaviours’ detailed above could be prevented if such an initiative were implemented. At present the culture regarding student behaviour is based on “fear and compliance” (CSDM, 2015), rarely taking into account the nuances of the situations and the lives of those involved. This is a disservice to the staff as their days are likely more stressful than is necessary and to the students as the CSDM is failing to provide them the tools they need to succeed at school and later in their careers.

**Project Will Provide the Following Benefit to Sponsor:**

This project will provide the CSDM with a caring and supportive educational atmosphere for students to learn and grow, thereby reducing the incidence of bullying and verbal abuse. It will accomplish this task by providing all levels of staff with basic training outlining the vision of the CSDM in its effort to support students through benevolent, caring interactions by staff.

**Subject Matter Experts (SME) and Information Sources:**

Claude Martel, Professor, Concordia University, interviewed Sept. 24, 2015

SME as provided by CSDM – name and title to be determined, meeting

scheduled for Oct. 9, 2015

Peace Grantmakers Network – website containing supporting documents,

including presentations, research, and interviews with current CSDM staff.

**Supporting Documentation Provided:**

## Videos:

Caring Interventions in Special Education

Caring Interventions for Crossing Guards

Caring Interventions in Childcare Service

## Literature:

Management of Problematic Behaviors in Inclusive Classes

Focusing on Potential of Educational Staff

What is the ARASS Technique

Directives Defi SHARE 2015

## Website:

<http://www.peacegrantmakers.ca/project/share02/en/>

## Interviews:

Claude Martel, Sept 24, 2015

SME from CSDM, To be determined

**Specific Desired Performance:**

Train staff to be aware that the quality of their relationships with students is the most important factor in the management of a group or class by equipping support and teaching staff with the tools and intervention techniques to act as role models, thereby helping students to build positive relationships and demonstrate caring attitudes. Using a research based approach such as the one outlined by Boynton and Boynton (2009), the “teacher-student relationship” accounts for 40% of the influence in directing behaviours, “clear rules and expectations” account for 25%, “coaching skills” account for 25% and “consequences” account for the remaining 10%.

An example of this would be a classroom where the teacher knows all of his or her student’s names, is in regular contact with each and every student regardless of his or her performance. This teacher spends little time reprimanding students for their behaviours as the class as a whole understands the expectations of the teacher

and the school and are capable of making appropriate decisions, thereby eliminating or at least reducing the need for punishment. Outside of the classroom, all other CSDM staff from bus drivers to principals will also reinforce this positive, relationship-based attitude, thereby reducing the stress placed on students as they trust the adults in their life to act positively and with respect. This self-reinforcing, positive attitude will improve the working lives of staff and equip students with important life skills.

**Main Tasks in Specific Desired Performance:**

***1. Maintenance of Positive, High Quality Relationships with Students***

This can be accomplished by all staff actively being involved in the following: “smiling, greeting students, knowing the names of students, showing interest in them as people, feeling free to laugh and engage with students, being enthusiastic” and above all, modeling the behaviours they wish students to engage in (CSDM, 2015). The actions listed above are the basics of building positive, high quality relationships with anyone, whether it is a student, coworker or family member. These actions and their effectiveness in reducing aggression in class and in the schoolyard are supported by research (CSDM, 2015), which can not be said for interventions staff currently employ in an aggressive situation.

***2. Clear Rules and Expectations***

This sort of “management skill” is important in case there is a need for a consequence or a direct intervention. If all students are aware of how they are expected to comport themselves, instilling a consequence is much more simple as they will likely expect it. This can be achieved by giving students responsibilities, involving them in the school and having them become stakeholders themselves. In addition, staff must remain vigilant and ensure they are “visible to all” students equally by walking around the classroom, hallways and school yards and making eye contact with students to be sure they are aware of his or her presence. (CSDM, 2015)

### ***3. Supervisory and Coaching Skills***

Providing students with the tools and behaviours they can use instead of those they are currently using is very important and can be accomplished by using “four positive reinforcements for every negative reinforcement”. This requires staff engage in ‘willful ignorance’ when the situation allows for it so they can discreetly remind students of the rules and expectations instead of engaging in an immediate and disproportionate consequence. (CSDM, 2015)

### ***4. Consequences***

When necessary, consequences must remain “holistic and positive” and must take into account the “pros and cons of the specific consequence,” for example suspensions. These consequences must be proportional and in connection with the transgression. A week-long suspension for a minor offense such as wearing a baseball cap indoors is not appropriate. (CSDM, 2015)

#### **Current Performance:**

Today, roughly “80% of staff in primary and 82.5% of staff” in secondary schools lack any type of training in the reflecting this approach for using positive and caring intervention techniques. While “91% of staff in primary and 83% in secondary” schools believe they are capable of “successfully intervening” in a situation related to verbal abuse, many of the interventions currently used are not supported by research (Beaumont, 2014). These interventions include: “punishments, suspensions, expulsions, lack of teaching of alternative behaviours, stand-alone ad-hoc training without regular reinforcement, CCTV cameras, and zero tolerance policies.” These interventions frequently are not implemented in partnership with staff and students; rather these interventions are imposed from above without consultation. This tends to contribute very little to teaching and learning “prosocial behaviours” and does not take account of the “human and relationship components” involved. (CSDM, 2015)

#### **Performance Gap:**

It is the gap between the current performance which is not based on research and relies on the principle of “fear and compliance” versus the desired performance which is based on research and focused on the cultivation of “prosocial behaviours” (CSDM, 2015) that must be addressed. It is widely believed that relying on the principles of “fear and compliance” (CSDM, 2015) are not only ineffective, but are actually causing some of the aggressive behaviours, dragging students and staff into a downward spiral of fear, resistance, mistrust and aggression. However, cultivating “prosocial behaviours” (CSDM, 2015), incorporating a “holistic and positive” approach and regularly being in contact with students and their parents when possible can nip these aggressive acts in the bud and prevent the culture of fear from ever taking root.

**Learners:**

***Demographic Information:***

At CSDM there are roughly 6000 staff who will be expected to complete this training. As discussed above, over 80% of this staff lacks any type of training in this field (Beaumont, 2014). It can easily be assumed there will be different learning styles and backgrounds within this large group. It should also be noted that the requirements for training will differ as the elementary school staff will be more involved in the long term prevention of aggressive behaviours while the high school staff require tools that will be effective in the short term as well as the long term. See below for descriptions of three types of learners who are part of the CSDM group, and one group not currently expected to be part of this initiative. (C. Martel, personal communication, Sept, 24, 2015)

***Learners Requiring Extra Attention:***

Staff requiring extra attention within the CSDM employee group would likely be support staff such as bus drivers, crossing guards and lunch time supervisors. The support staff’s needs are different than those of the teaching staff. Individual members of the support staff are more likely to have a less advanced educational background but

are in regular, albeit short, contact with the student population. This group is likely to have had the least amount of formal training in promoting a benevolent atmosphere and the training package to be developed must reach this group as effectively as it reaches the teaching staff. It should be noted that this group, while the least involved with students overall are in a unique position because bus drivers, surveillance staff on site before and after school and some school crossing guards are in daily contact with parents at the elementary level. This provides a very special opportunity for this staff to build a relationship with the parent and student, providing a framework for teaching staff work within (C. Martel, personal communication, Sept, 24, 2015).

***Learners Requiring an Average Amount of Attention:***

Teaching staff with more extensive teaching experience are going to reside in this group. It was noted in the interview with Claude Martel that this group tend to be a bit older and are more likely to be resistant to the initiative. Senior teaching staff will have developed their own styles for classroom management, whether these methods are supported by research or not. If it can be shown to this group that this project will leave them with a net benefit, as long as their volume of work does not increase, then they are likely to be less resistant. It is very important this group is involved in the process, and it would be helpful for some of the key members of this group to be interviewed prior to development, if for no other reason than to integrate them as stakeholders as their resistance to implementation could prevent the endeavor from being successful (C. Martel, personal communication, Sept. 24, 2015)

***Learners Requiring Little Attention:***

It is assumed that newly trained teaching staff are the most likely to have been exposed to these theories and research and many will likely will have studied in their training as the research is fairly recent.

Special Education Technicians, star members of the teaching staff, those who are popular amongst the students, and the leaders of extra-curricular teams or groups are more likely to exhibit the desired behaviours whether they have been formally trained or possess the desired personality.

***Learners Not Involved in the Initiative:***

Administrative staff including secretaries, nurses, custodial staff, and principals are currently not a target audience for this initiative. Reasons provided by the CSDM relate to their lack of direct involvement in the day to day lives of students. However, if the intention is to create a positive and benevolent environment for students and staff alike, then having this group omitted from the initiative is a concern. Having this group trained will support those more directly involved in the lives of students, as this group will better understand how teaching and supervisory staff are expected to behave. Plus having more role models on site, regardless of their involvement in the lives of students will provide better support for the students.

**Issues Affecting Learning:**

***Work Environment:***

All CSDM staff are very busy and have a variety of skills, strengths and weaknesses. Many are overworked and are reluctant to take on new responsibilities. Also, opportunities to reach this large group of staff and train them are limited and will more than likely take place at different times and in different places. To ensure success, the tool required must be easy to use, easy to understand, be concise, and require a limited amount of training to use properly.

***Learners Requiring Extra Attention:***

Surveillance staff and bus drivers tend to work in a situation where there is a higher ratio of students to staff. Also, direct contact with students is minimal. Being visible to all students



and vigilant is highly important in this group as most aggressive behaviours will occur either on the bus or in the schoolyard. Crossing guards work at a smaller ratio of students to staff, which makes it easier to connect with students, but again, the length of interaction with students is very short.

***Learners Requiring Average Attention:***

Established teaching staff already operate with clear expectations from management and enforce these expectations in their classrooms. They tend to work in a 30 to 1 ratio of students to staff, but have regular and prolonged contact with groups of students. Benevolent behaviours are difficult to implement with a group, (C. Martel, personal communication, Sept 24, 2015). This group is busy and likely a little resistant to the initiative. They may feel like their way of doing things is working and they are being unfairly criticized with the implantation of this project. This must be addressed, as this group's needs, while different, are important to the success of the initiative.

***Learners Requiring Little Attention:***

Special Education Specialists have a very small ratio of students to staff, at 6 to 1. Their skills in benevolent behaviours are essential to their job. However, they are regularly involved in crisis situations. Newly trained and star-level teachers will likely need less training and are more likely to support the project. Both of these groups could be called upon to provide follow up support to other staff.

***Learners Not Involved in the Initiative:***

The absence of the administrative staff is an issue affecting the work environment. Having administrative staff exhibiting the behaviours expected of teaching staff and students increases

the likelihood of an overall positive atmosphere.

Administrative staff 'not in the know' will have their role as outsiders reinforced and there is a risk their lack of training could hinder the day to day practice of others. Principals and those in management positions must also be included in the training and implementation as they are the school leaders and must act as role models not only for students, but staff alike.

***Teaching and Learning Environment:***

The CSDM is an organization dedicated to teaching and learning. It can be assumed that most staff working in this organization have the best interests of the students in mind. The desire of this workforce to see students develop and essentially grow up can be leveraged to accomplish the implementation of this initiative.

***Learners Requiring Extra Attention:***

Surveillance staff, bus drivers and crossing guards are the least likely to have access to computers and smartphones, are the least likely to be available to come on site for training and are likely the least educated. This group will have a variety of skills so any tool offered must be quick and easy to use with minimal requirements for technical training.

***Learners Requiring Average Attention:***

The established teaching staff will have access to a computer at work and it can be assumed they will have one at home. Smartphones are most likely to be in the possession of this group so their ability to access the material is high. They may require some specific training to get the digital tool running, but the need for assistance should not be terribly high.

***Learners Requiring Little Attention:***

Newly trained teaching staff will be as connected as the established teaching staff if not more so. They will need the

smallest amount of training to use the tools. Special Education staff may need some assistance, but it won't be any more than the established teaching staff.

### ***Content and Material***

As discussed above, there are concerns with the content and material that may affect learning. These include the risk that the tool does not reflect reality, the risk that the content will force employees to do more work, the perception that the initiative lacks theoretical support, concerns regarding the tool's ease of use and a lack of platform to host this tool (CSDM, 2015).

### ***Learners Requiring Extra Attention:***

For this group, the material to be taught must be easily digestible and explained in terms that are accessible to all. The fact of this group's varied and potential cross-cultural background is a challenge that must be considered when producing the digital tool.

### ***Learners Requiring Average Attention:***

This group will require some convincing that the initiative is a worthy cause as their own way of doing things could be interpreted as coming under attack. Sound research and frequent reinforcement will be required to ensure retention with this group. As with the group mentioned above, the tool must be quick and efficient or the risk resistance will increase.

### ***Learners Requiring Little Attention:***

This group likely has been exposed to this material in their training, or already implements some of the behaviours. Their ability to retain the information should be high.

### ***Application of Learning:***

It must be noted no matter what form the tool eventually takes, reinforcement and support in this initiative is required to ensure success. This can not be a tool staff see once and forget about. It

should be used in conjunction with a larger initiative that integrates staff as stakeholders. Also, there is a risk that an unforeseen violent situation arises before the initiative is fully implemented and this could derail the process before it reaches its full potential. Integration of the experienced teaching staff and Special Education teaching staff as leaders in the project and providing ongoing support will improve the chance for the project to be successful.

**Product Constraints:**

The following requirements of the product must be met: use sound instructional strategies that are applicable both in classroom and non-classroom settings, support values of tolerance, cooperation, and diversity, use the best practices offered in the supporting material, consider the potential resistance that some individuals may have, the final product must be in French or bilingual, it must be usable in a 5 to 10 minute session, it must be viewable on different types of PCs (Mac or Windows) and on mobile platforms (IOS / Android), it must have a minimum of 1024 by 768 pixels resolution, due to the limited bandwidth of some of the potential targeted users, the final product must be viewable on a standard Internet connection, the project will be tested on 1,544+Mbps connections, and finally, all the material used in these projects must be original material, free of any copyright infringement (Peace Grantmakers Network, 2015).

The product must-meet deadline is January 30, 2016. As this is a challenge issued to students in the Educational Technology field, there is no budget, and there are no staff that must be included.

## References

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