

**Community
Learning Centre
Initiative**



**Sustaining Impact in CLC
Schools and Communities**

**Provincial Resource Team Report
2015 - 2016**

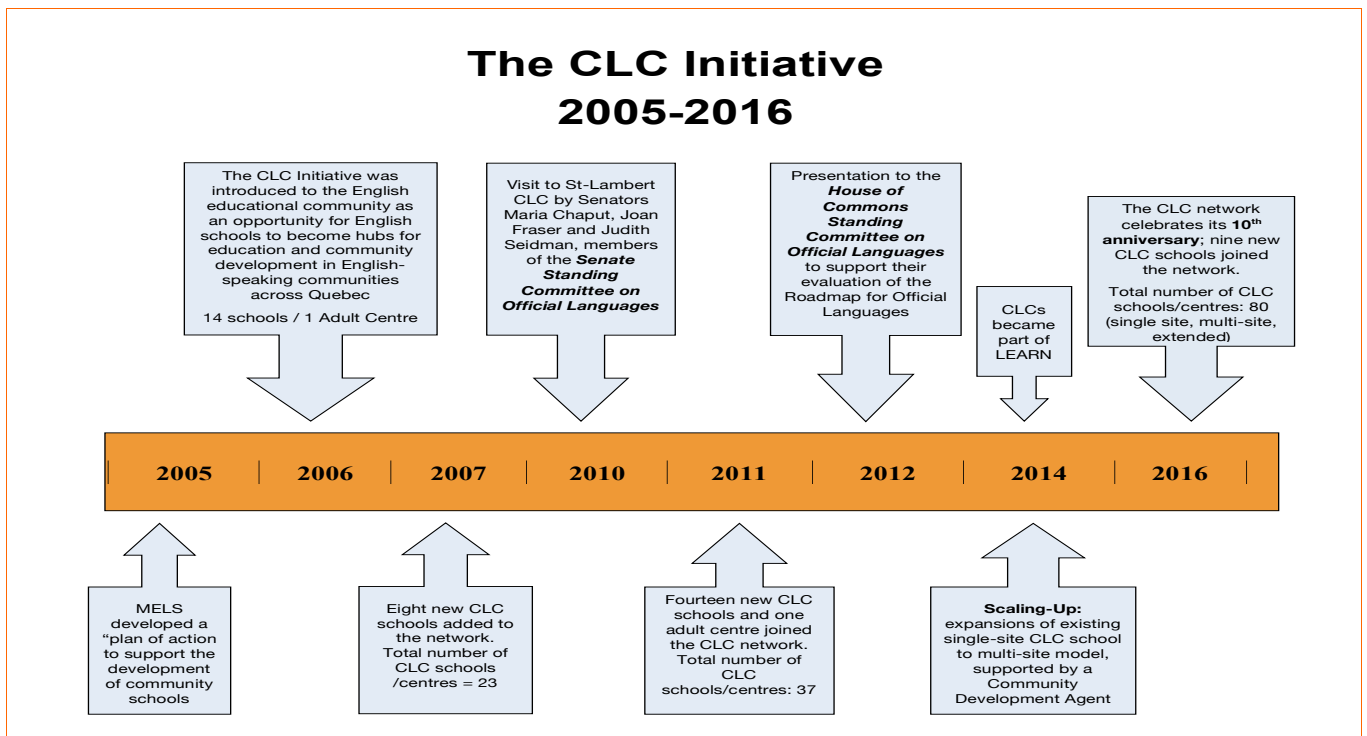


When Schools and Communities Work Together, They Impact the Lives of Students, Families, and the English-Speaking Community at Large

Over the last ten years, English schools in Quebec have increasingly embraced the dual role of supporting student perseverance and contributing to the vitality of their English-speaking communities. With more than 80 schools and adult education centres across the province now part of the Community Learning Centre (CLC) network, it is evident that School Boards are adopting a new way of thinking about school and community partnerships.

This “integrated focus on academics, services, supports and opportunities leads to improved student learning, stronger families and healthier communities. Schools become centers of the community”.¹

Here are some highlights from the past ten years in the development of the CLC Initiative in Quebec:



¹ <http://www.childrensaidsociety.org/community-schools/community-schools-new-york-city>

CLC schools/centres contribute significantly to the sustainability of the communities in which they are located by developing partnerships that align resources and offer services that engage and benefit students, families and the wider community. Each CLC School community has unique needs and challenges, but there are also many objectives that are consistent across the network:

- To support conditions that are key to student achievement including higher levels of engagement, increased sense of belonging, amplified student voice, and improved school climate.
- To develop and/or promote early childhood programs to help prepare preschoolers for the transition to school and decrease the isolation of families;
- To create intergenerational programming, enabling seniors to share their knowledge and experiences with students;
- To offer lifelong learning opportunities that connect the community to the CLC School.

CLC development at the local level is overseen by a CLC leadership team, comprised at its core of the school/centre principal and the community development agent, but over time including additional stakeholders such as CLC champions from within the school(s) and core partners.

CLC Network Strategic Goals 2015-2020

A provincial resource team (PRT) has supported the CLC Initiative since its inception. Now part of [LEARN](#), the PRT provides coaching/consulting, training and guidance to each CLC throughout its development and to the network at large. In addition, the PRT serves as a central coordinating body responsible for delivering professional development opportunities, developing relationships with province-wide partners, overseeing network level research and development, as well as advocating for the Initiative and the broader English-speaking community. The PRT reports to the CLC Steering Committee, which in turn reports on CLC progress to the LEARN Board of Directors and the Directors General table.

To support the network's ongoing development, the PRT developed a five-year strategic plan (2015-2020). Long-term outcomes include:

1. Students are active citizens in their community and experience greater academic success.
2. The CLC approach enables the school to contribute to the well-being of the community while also enabling the community to support the achievement of school goals.
3. The CLC approach is a viable and sustainable strategy adopted and adapted by all school boards.

This Annual Report of Activities looks at how we are progressing.

"...you can do the impossible if you put your mind to it"

"before, I didn't want to go to school, I wanted to drop out. This year it's been going great for me. I actually want to finish high school"

- James Lyng Students and participants in the Up Next Recording project

Honing the CLC Approach for Student Learning

The CLC approach has a **positive impact on educational outcomes**. Research conducted by Qu'Anglo Communications in 2015 specifically highlights:

- * Increased student engagement;
- * Improved school climate;
- * Improved attendance rates;
- * Greater participation in educational activities outside of the classroom, as well as the community's contribution to the school.²

In 2015, the PRT began conducting a series of case studies to learn more about how school-community partnerships contribute to student learning and CLC schools in urban contexts. Preliminary findings of these studies will be released in Fall 2016

Meanwhile, check out the articles below on Parkdale Elementary School and James Lyng High School for a sneak-peek on how some teachers and partners in an urban setting focus on enhancing student curriculum.

[The Partnership for 21st Century Learning](#) believes that making the connection between learning and the real world is imperative for student success. According to the Partnership, "the education system faces irrelevance unless we bridge the gap between how students live and how they learn".

Source: "[Community-Based Learning: Engaging Students for Success and Citizenship](#)" – Coalition for Community Schools, January 2006

Garden Grows Curriculum at Parkdale Elementary School

English Montreal School Board

Parkdale Elementary's garden is practically famous... among students and throughout Ville-St-Laurent, that is. In recent years, it has become one of the borough's largest producing gardens. In fact, even with a small 'army' of devoted students, teachers, families and partners, it can be hard to keep up (the garden produces about 200 kilograms of produce each year). "It actually produces too much for the volunteers to take, so we typically give to the food banks as well," explains Katherine Dimas, the Parkdale CLC Community Development Agent (CDA).

From the onset of the garden project, [VertCité](#), a local non-profit organization dedicated to sustainable development, has been heavily involved, assisting with ongoing maintenance needs and sharing expertise with teachers and students alike. This past year, the CLC CDA was additionally able to connect teachers with [Croquarium](#), an organization that seeks to promote gardening and nutrition programs for youth. Through Croquarium, interested staff members received a crash course on a pedagogical approach to gardening as well as accompanying resource

² CLC Evaluation: The Quest for Sustainability & Best Practices, 2015



materials (about five binders worth!), all grounded in the Quebec Education Plan.

The more teachers and students learn about gardening practices from partners, the more they are taking on in the classroom. “Whereas before we had the gardening experts who would take care of [the seedlings] and bring them when ready, this year we had the kids plant the seedlings in the classroom and that was an interesting science experiment,” explains Katherine.

When it comes to designing active learning strategies, teachers recognize that gardening partners can help drive engagement and depth. The partners “come in with so much expertise that they’re able to delve far more deeply into whatever they’re working on with the kids, which just makes it far more exciting and a richer experience for everybody,” explained one teacher.

Embracing Urban Arts at James Lyng High School

English Montreal School Board

James Lyng High School recently transformed itself into an [Urban Arts School](#), but why did they do it? And how?

The why is fairly straightforward – staff noted a high level of student interest and engagement in urban arts activities offered as extracurricular activities and wanted to see if there was a way to harness this interest by integrating urban arts within the school’s curriculum.

As for the how, Mikaella Goldsmith, the school’s CDA, credits the CLC approach – that is, the constant (and facilitated) collaboration between school staff, namely teachers, and community partners, particularly local artists & McGill University’s Department of Integrated Studies in Education.

“I don’t think we would be able to be an urban arts school without the partnerships [we’ve developed],” she explains. To develop teaching units that draw on the arts while remaining aligned with subject-specific competencies outlined in the QEP, teachers are paired with local artists



identified by the CDA. “[My role] is vital because no one on staff has the time to harness these relationships, and so it gives us that accessibility,” explains Mikaela.

For students at James Lyng, partnerships among teachers and local artists have led to innovative learning units (literacy through hip hop, math through dance, etc), greater access to positive role models, greater incentive to come to school and with some projects, visibly higher levels of academic engagement and success.

Cross-Boundary Leadership

Creating and sustaining community schools requires leaders from schools, businesses, government, and local not-for-profit organizations to work together to achieve shared goals. The *“understanding that preparing young people to succeed means connecting children and families to sources of opportunity and support in their own communities”*.³ This necessitates a shift from traditional leadership falling primarily on the school principal, to a shared or cross-boundary leadership approach.

The PRT promotes cross-boundary leadership by making a variety of tools and resources available to CLC teams. These resources contribute to the successful integration of the CLC approach in schools/centres and communities. In 2015-2016, professional development opportunities included:

Principal leadership webinars – Peer Learning. Three webinars were developed and delivered by experienced CLC principals to their peers, with support from the PRT. The sessions have been archived to ensure they are available to all new principals joining the CLC network. It is anticipated that more webinars will be added in the coming months. Topics of discussion included:

- * **Role of the CLC Principal** – Beryl Boyle, ESSB CLC Principal
- * **Sharing Leadership with my CLC CDA** – Warren Thomson, QCSB CLC Principal

Teacher Nathan Gage says that “through community partners and our partnership with McGill’s Department of Integrated Studies in Education, my students have developed working relationships with amazing and inspiring adults. I have seen my students benefit greatly from these interactions.” To learn more about what’s going on at James Lyng High School, check out their [website](#) or the [CLC Blog](#) post on the school’s record label, ‘Up Next Recordings.’

- * **Planting the Seeds for a Successful CLC** – David McFall, WQSB CLC Principal

Webinars on the Quebec Education Plan (QEP) for CLC Community Development Agents so they are better able to work with teachers to develop school-community partnerships that align with curriculum goals and the school Management Educational Success Agreement (MESA).

Comments from participants who attended the 2016 CLC Network Conference

- * *“I very much appreciate being part of this community. Coming together and learning from each other is key. Though we know there is a hierarchy, everyone is approachable and available and willing to share their knowledge and experience. Thank you.”*
- * *“Best thing was “being able to exchange resources, project ideas, and especially TECHNICALS.”*
- * *“Learning is always great, but being able to learn with colleagues and from colleagues is often so rich an experience.”*

³ [The Role of Cross-Boundary Leadership](#) - April 2006: Coalition for Community Schools

CLC Network Professional Development Conference – The PRT offers the **only community school focused professional development in Quebec**. The conference program is relevant, innovative, and aims to help the CLC teams acquire the knowledge and strategies necessary to develop and expand the CLC approach in their school(s). Networking and sharing of best practices is a critical component of this conference.

A network leadership-training plan has been developed to ensure ongoing training opportunities are available for CLC Principals, CDAs, teachers, and school board representatives. A particular effort has been made to ensure people new to the network each year have access to timely and relevant training as quickly as possible.

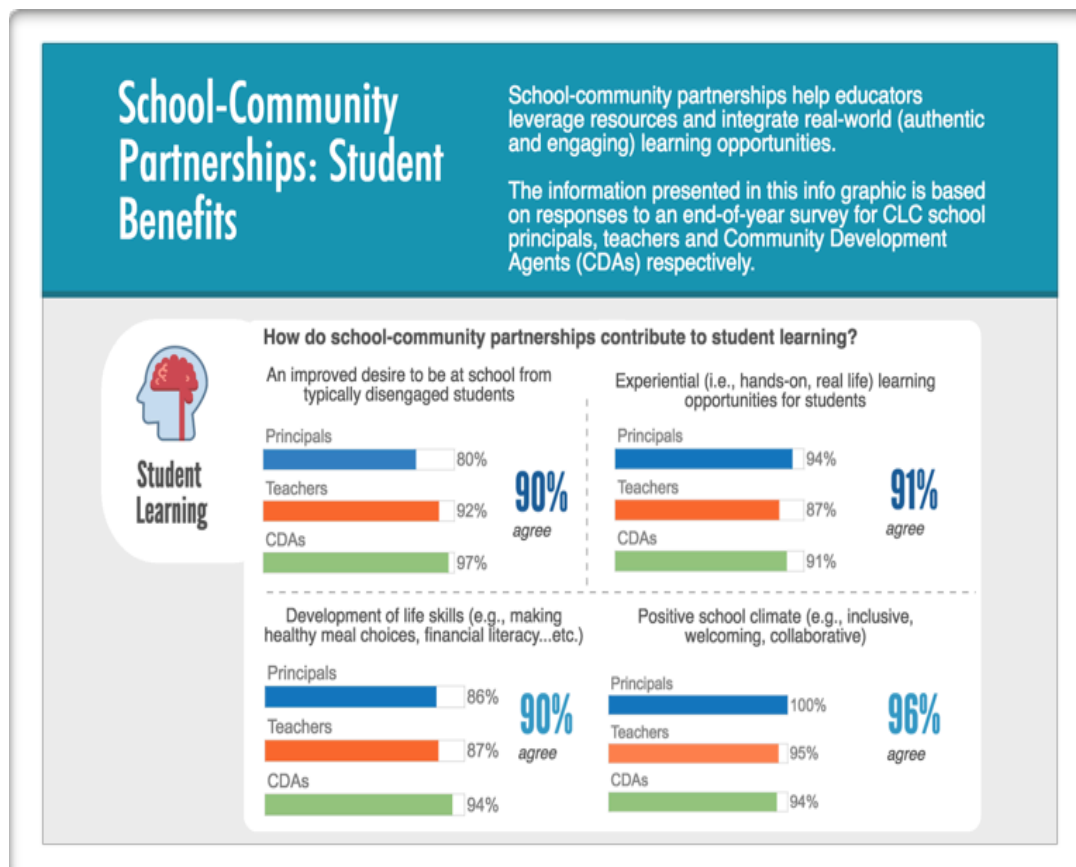
Teacher Engagement with the CLC Approach

Community schools foster a learning environment that extends far beyond the classroom walls and teachers are at the heart of CLC teams. While labour relations presented some challenges this past year, there was still a significant level of teacher engagement in CLC activities.

Every year the PRT surveys teachers in the CLC network about how students benefit from school-community

partnerships. This year more than 50 teachers responded and the feedback we received included:

- * It gives them an opportunity to get involved;
- * It helps them to see school as more than just a place to do school work;
- * They got real life experience;
- * It enhances their learning.



Community-Based Service Learning (CBSL) is one of the strategies that CDAs use to engage teachers and students in the CLC approach. Projects rooted in an authentic community needs motivates students, while at the same time strengthening the relationship between schools and communities.

CDAs have access to an extensive database of CBSL projects dating back to 2013 on the [CLC Presents blog](#), that the PRT maintains. CLC teams are also advised of grant opportunities to support their activities/programming, and have access to individualized project support.

“Schools use opportunities to incorporate experiential learning to increase the relevance of the curriculum for students. The Special Needs Activities (SNACS) program, combining cooking classes, a small catering business, and social activities for students with special needs and their caregivers, is a collaboration of Quebec High School, Jeffery Hale Community Partners, the CLC and the MSSS. The student coffee shop enables young teens with learning disabilities or behaviour problems to take part in a job-market training program in a genuine workplace. The students gain hands-on experience and put into practice the concepts learned in class.”

Source: June 2015 Advisory Board on English Education Report – “We are Accountable to the Students: Success and Retention in English-Language Schools”

Beyond the Traditional Classroom Experience

Pierre Elliott Trudeau CLC – Western Quebec School Board

Throughout the province, the CLC Approach is helping teachers create learning opportunities that go well beyond the traditional classroom experience. Through partnerships, teachers can more easily develop memorable and comprehensive learning experiences that engage the minds, hearts and hands of their students.

Here is an example of one such learning endeavour from Pierre Elliott Trudeau Elementary School (PETES) in the Western Quebec School Board.

In response to learning about Canada’s Residential School history and calls to action by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report on Canada’s Residential Schools, the students at PETES felt a responsibility to learn more about this aspect of Canadian History. Activities/projects included:

- * Bringing Aboriginal elders in the classrooms
- * Participation in *Project of Heart* activities
- * Student leadership in the Blanket Exercise
- * Shannen’s Dream Club

- * *Our Dreams Matter Too* and *Have a Heart* walks to Parliament Hill
- * Publication of a collection of letters to Parliament called “Kids Have Power Too”

This engagement manifested itself in two extraordinary partnerships that amplified the voice of PETES students around their commitment to raising awareness and celebrating a culture that makes up 20% of their school population.

In the summer of 2015, PETES students in grade 4-6 partnered with David Hodges, a member of N’we Jinan, an Indigenous music collective. Together an extraordinary song and video - [“Important to Us”](#) - was created celebrating the diverse PETES community. As Principal David McFall explained, “the goal of the project was to engage our students and give them an opportunity to tell the world their story – they exceeded all expectations with this truly inspirational and astonishing song.”

In May 2016, PETES hosted a Pow Wow with the theme “Reconciliation and Innovation in Education for Future

Generations”. Over 40 adult and 20 youth traditional dancers attended in full regalia. The event drew amazing numbers of families and wider community to the school - between 300 and 400 people both days. The event was sparked from a desire to host a huge celebration and sharing of the school’s cultural richness. And, it was a beautiful culmination of many initiatives and partnerships built over the past few years.



Education for Reconciliation

As a network, CLC schools have been learning, sharing and discussing historical and contemporary issues facing Aboriginal students and their families. The ultimate goal is to increase our own knowledge as school-community leaders so that we can better support Aboriginal students, be more inclusive of Aboriginal and Indigenous history in our schools, and foster greater bonds between non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal communities throughout Quebec.

This year, students in CLC schools engaged in a wide range of projects focusing on:

- Student voice and art on issues concerning them;
- Curriculum activities for citizenship, history, English Language Arts, math etc;
- Elders coming to the school;
- Field trips to cultural sites / communities;
- Students acting as role models and promoting projects to enhance community peace.

[KAIROS Canada](#), an organization that advocates for social change, developed the Winds of Change report card to assess progress in achieving reconciliation through education in schools across Canada. They conclude that the “*curriculum in Quebec includes very little content on*

Indigenous peoples. A notable exception is within the network of

Community Learning Centre (CLC) schools. In CLC Schools there is active and rapidly increasing use of resources such as: Project of Heart, Legacy of Hope Foundation 100 Years of Loss Kit, the KAIROS Blanket Exercise and participation in First Nation Child & Family Caring Society campaigns”⁴.

Additionally, this past year the CLC network made a significant contribution to two **important educational resources for Quebec teachers:**

[KAIROS Blanket Exercise Education Resource Kit \(Edu-Kit\)](#): a resource for teachers produced in partnership between KAIROS and the CLC Initiative, with visioning and on-going guidance provided by many Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators, community leaders and Elders.

[Project of Heart – Quebec Webpage](#): Content for this provincial page of the national website is being created and maintained as a collaboration between the CLC Initiative/ LEARN and Avril Aitkin and Lisa Taylor, Professors in the Faculty of Education at Bishop’s University.

⁴<http://www.kairoscanada.org/what-we-do/indigenous-rights/windsofchange-report-cards>

The CLC Approach - School And Community Working Together to Support Mutually Beneficial Goals

CLCs used to be known as a place within a school - the room with the videoconferencing equipment. Over the years however it has evolved to become an approach to community and school improvement based on the establishment of mutually reinforcing partnerships. The CDAs within LEARN's network of Community Schools (CLCs) facilitate the development of school-community partnerships, which help educators leverage community-based resources and integrate real-world, authentic and engaging learning opportunities for students. In turn, the school/centre becomes an access point for services/resources and can collaborate on projects with matching outcomes.

In a community school, learning includes the development of cognitive, social-emotional, civic, and ethical competencies through partnerships. Quality learning happens more frequently and effectively if barriers to learning are addressed, when families and communities are engaged in ways that support learning, and when partners work with educators to expand and enhance learning opportunities.

Source: [A Framework for More & Better Learning through Community School Partnerships](#) September 2015, Coalition for Community Schools.

Mutually Beneficial Collaborations

Studies show that getting our young people moving before the school day could translate into better academic performance during the school day. Research shows that exercise can improve behaviour and academic performance via the release of the hormone serotonin (influences mood, impulsivity, anger and aggressiveness) and dopamine (influences learning, attention and movement). This is the impetus behind the **highly successful collaboration between the CLC Initiative and BOKS Canada**. BOKS is committed to provide opportunities for children to have healthy bodies and minds, which could also help them find success in the classroom.

BOKS (Build Our Kids' Success) is a free morning physical activity program designed for elementary school age children. BOKS aims to make physical activity a priority in the morning to help mentally prepare children for a day of productive learning.

There are approximately 20 CLC schools participating in this volunteer-driven free program, with more joining every year.

Research is currently underway at the University of Waterloo (The Propel Centre for Population Health Impact) with select schools to obtain further evidence on the positive impact of physical activity on a child's mind.

Increased Collaboration with the Francophone Community

CLC CDAs sit on an average of four to six local/regional partnership tables (*tables de concertation*) and they are often the sole English-speaking voice on these tables.

The benefits for schools and the English school boards are significant:

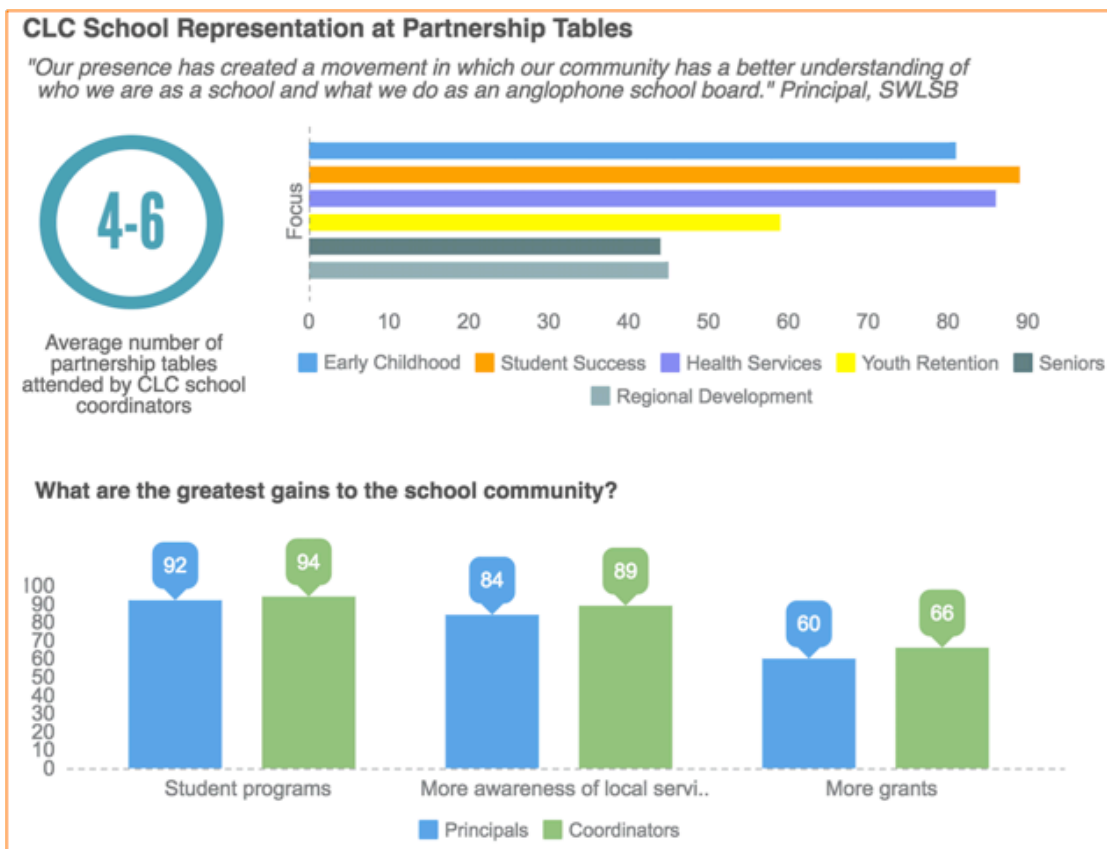
- * Improved collaboration and cooperation with local French service providers – changes the way resources are channelled to our schools and communities.
- * Increased visibility of English school boards.
- * CLC schools have access to funding, programming and resources that is available to communities but not always accessed by the English-speaking community.

“My presence [on these tables] has made a very significant difference - service providers offer more direct support to the school(s) community than before (e.g., we have greater access to resources, funding opportunities, our needs are reflected in partner’s work plans).”

CLC Community Development Agent, Riverside School Board

“As the only Anglophone at most of the tables, it is a great opportunity for me to take advantage of the organizations who want to offer services to the English-speaking community.” CLC Community Development Agent, Eastern Townships School Board

Source: CLC Community Development Agent Survey May 2016



Early Childhood Education Initiatives

Reaching out to families with children aged 0-5 years old can influence student success not only in kindergarten but also throughout the child's school life. Early childhood programs and services offered in CLC schools to parents and children use evidence-based strategies for developing language and social skills that improve school readiness. Students and parents who are comfortable being in the school before a child transitions to kindergarten have an easier time when their child starts school, not to mention the positive effect this programming has on parents' perception of the school and ultimately school enrolment.

2015-2016 early childhood programming included:

- [Mother Goose](#) programs available in many CLC schools; a 'train the trainer' coaching workshop

was provided to CLCs and partner organizations this year in partnership with the Montreal Children's Library.

- Intergenerational reading programs to encourage literacy and encourage a love of reading at an early age
- Distribution of 'book bags' to families with young children
- [Avenir d'Enfants](#) programs targeting a child's overall development and enhancing school readiness.
- [Croc Livres](#)/Book Muncher book exchange
- Mom's & Tot's programming to decrease isolation of young families and increase socialization skills

Lifelong Learning Initiatives

Many CLCs offer lifelong learning opportunities to local community members, and in 2015 the CLC initiative partnered with the Personal and Cultural Enrichment (PACE) department at McGill University to conduct a study of the CLC network's interests and needs around lifelong

learning. High participation from the Eastern Townships and Montérégie regions has yielded valuable insights for a number of school boards (ETSB, NFSB, RSB) that will be distributed to the network in Fall 2016.



Source: Night School at Princess Elizabeth CLC

The CLC Approach is a Strategy Adopted and Supported by All English School Boards

The PRT helps CLC schools to align their Theory of Change/action plans with their school board strategic plan as well as with the individual school Management Educational Success Agreements (MESA).

School board and community support is aligned with CLC global outcomes:

- * Three meetings of the school board representative committee (one representative from each school board)
- * Four CLC steering committee meetings (PRT, DGs, MELS)
- * Two CLC advisory board meetings. Their role is to assist and advise the PRT. Membership includes school board, school, and community representatives.

- * Four CLC update presentations to the LEARN Board of Directors and the Association of Directors General of English School Boards of Québec (ADGESBQ), who have recognized the value and supported development of the CLC initiative since its inception.

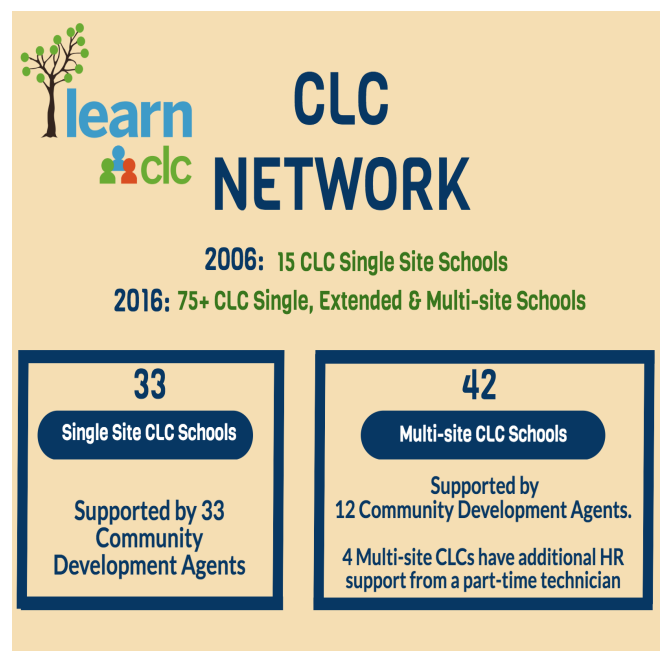
A picture may be worth a thousand words but information speaks volumes. With the appropriate analysis and interpretation of data, CLC schools and the PRT make informed decisions around programming and resource allocation that positively affects student and community outcomes. Regular monitoring helps identify areas for improvement as well as the effectiveness of programs/services.

Building Momentum: CLC Expansion

To address concerns about equity and the sustainability of the CLC Initiative, in 2015 the PRT implemented a formal process of extending the CLC model to include multiple schools supported by one CDA. The aim was to impact more schools and communities and positively affect the long-term sustainability of the CLC approach. Additionally, by reaching more students, the perception of the school/school board in the community will also increase.

To ensure viability of the extension, the schools must have common partners/network and similar challenges to be addressed through the mobilization of community and partner resources.

Emergent results after 1st year of implementation of extended model CLCs:



- School Board representatives are very engaged/supportive;
- Originating site principals have **deepened their conceptualization** of and engagement in the CLC approach through the process;
- **Resilience and sustainability** during times of principal transition. Momentum is not lost if one of the principals leaves, because all principals involved in the

extension develop their CLC leadership capacity together;

- **Development of extension teams is best practice:** 3-5 team meetings a year of the CLC school leaders; this includes the school board representative, principals, and CDA(s). Relationships between/among the schools is strengthened and effective practices and partnerships opportunities are shared.

Supporting Community and Institutional Vitality

Excerpt from: “The Community Learning Center Approach and Community Vitality: Ten Years Down the Road of Implementation”

By Patricia Lamarre, Université de Montréal, September 2016

After ten years, CLC schools have continued to play an important structuring role at the local level, but what has also emerged is a province-wide network, province-wide dialogue, a stronger and more coordinated voice for English Quebec.

The CLC approach will continue to evolve in the context of declining school populations and resources, in a climate of fiscal austerity and the uncertain future for school boards. Constitutional clauses may protect the existence of Official Language Minority (OLM) school boards and a point may be argued that having a double mandate - community vitality and OLM schooling – strengthens the case that school boards are necessary.

Many of the factors affecting OLM schools are not likely to go away: meeting the needs of a very diverse student population, growing socioeconomic disparities within the OLM community, outmigration of youth, shifting economies. These large trends are not something that can be countered only by schools but one thing is sure: schools will be called on to play a role in supporting OLM communities in the years to come and will continue to do what they can to prepare our youth for the future. CLC schools, only ten years old, are a strong and viable tool to help schools in this task.

International and Local Recognition of the CLC Initiative Network

- * **“Community Learning Centres in Quebec: Changing Lives, Changing Communities”**, a chapter written by Paule Langevin and Dr. Patricia Lamarre in the book *Developing Community Schools, Community Learning Centres, Extended-service Schools and Multi-service Schools: International Exemplars for Practice, Policy and Research* (2016).
- * In 2016, Marylene Perron, Principal at Parkdale CLC School was recognized as one of [Canada’s Outstanding Principals](#).
- * The [Winds of Change Report Card](#) was prepared by KAIROS as a baseline to assess progress in achieving reconciliation through education in schools across

Canada. The CLC Initiative was recognized as making significant progress and use of relevant resources.

- * [2015 CHSSN-CROP Survey on Community Vitality](#) – questions pertaining to the CLC Initiative were included in both the 2010 as well as the recently released 2015 survey.
- * Three presentations at the **Coalition for Community Schools 2016 National Forum** – Albuquerque, New Mexico, April 2016

For more information on the CLC Initiative please visit our website: www.learnquebec.ca/clc or contact the Provincial Resource Team – 450-622-2212.