

# Community Learning Centre making an impact, NPI Partners told

Based at Laval Senior Academy, CLC encourages 'holistic' approach

MARTIN C. BARRY

During Agape NPI Partners' meeting Oct. 17 in the Cité de Santé auditorium, Katrina Driver, a development agent at the Community Learning Centre at Laval Senior Academy, gave a presentation on how the CLC is supporting student success while contributing to the vitality of English-speaking communities.

## Sharing strategies

Agape NPI Partners, which was founded by Agape, gathers together organizations in Laval active in the health and social services sector for meetings during which they share strategies and trade information with an eye to serving a common purpose.

According to Driver, Laval Senior Academy adopted the CLC approach in 2016. The CLC initiative started in 2006 with a group of 15 schools which received funding from the federal Heritage Canada department. There are now 88 in the network which spans the province of Quebec.

## The CLC approach

"The CLC is not a place, but a holistic approach to community and school improvement that targets student learning, family engagement, school effectiveness and community vitality," said Driver.

A pictogram she displayed, consisting of circles, showed graphically the various partners



Agape NPI Partners met in the auditorium at Cité de la Santé on Oct. 17.

involved in the CLC, including the principal, staff and students from the school, community players such as organizations, groups, businesses and individuals, and the community

development agent bringing them all together.

Driver said the programs offered by the CLC include some for early childhood to help prepare pre-schoolers for kindergarten, others which are intergenerational and connect senior citizens with students, and programs offering lifelong learning opportunities to the community and individuals for personal development.

## Benefits of CLC

She said the benefits to school students from the CLC approach include a higher level of engagement in classrooms, an increased sense of belonging, and the student voice being amplified in the school environment. "School attendance is more regular and the school environment is generally more improved," she added.

As for the benefits to families, Driver said, "More than half our parents and families report feeling more welcome in the CLC school with new opportunities to participate in school life. They also report an improved awareness of community resources, services and experts available in English in their communities."

## Dropout reduction help

Driver's segment was followed by a presentation made by her and Agape executive-director Kevin McLeod on an Academic Performance and Dropout Reduction Initiatives program undertaken at Laval Senior Academy. Agape and the CLC worked together to create the project, which was made possible by a subsidy provided by the Quebec Education Ministry.

According to McLeod, a series of ten Lunch and Learn workshops were organized, focusing on the exploration of vocational and educational paths, as well as motivating and inspiring students. The workshops ran on Wednesdays from April 5 to June 7 and included guest

speakers.

## For at-risk students

The series was intended to encourage open dialogue and exchange of information about interests, talents, job opportunities, support resources and planning strategies. The workshops also included catered lunches for participating students and staff. The majority of students who regularly attended the workshops were considered at-risk and were participating at the same time in alternative learning pathways.

At least one of the speakers was a person who struggles with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) but has pursued higher education and also managed to achieve happiness and success. Another speaker was a person with Down Syndrome who shared her story about discovering her talents and overcoming adversity to pursue her dreams.

## Survey measured success

The project concluded with field trips, the first being to Rosemount Technology Centre as well as the Pearson Adult and Career Centre. A second field trip took the students to École Filion to attend the premier of a play written and produced by students at the school with special needs.

The impact of the Academic Performance and Dropout Reduction Initiatives program was measured by a survey conducted among the participating students. According to the survey, 50 per cent rated the sessions excellent, 10 per cent said very good, 20 per cent said good, and nearly 90 per cent rated the guest speakers as excellent, very good or good. In all, 55.5 per cent of respondents said they would be extremely likely, or very likely to attend a similar series in the future.



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