

## DISE's Allison Gonsalves, Dawn Wiseman present "Teaching Science in Homework Zone" pilot project at local schools

### News

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Allison Gonsalves and Dawn Wiseman, of our Department of Integrated Studies in Education, presented their Teaching Science in Homework Zone pilot project at two Montreal-area

schools this year. These workshops, presented to elementary school students in an after-school setting, have the goal of showing science-based materials in an engaging and accessible fashion. The project recruited 14 volunteer students from Science Education with DISE and from the Faculty of Science to work together and design three workshops, each about 45 minutes in length. The schools involved in the pilot project were Riverview Elementary, in Verdun, and Gerald McShane Elementary in Montreal-Nord. The workshops were presented in March of this year.

"This project is unique because it brings science majors together with pre-service teachers to co-teach lessons," explained Professor Gonsalves. "Both co-teachers participate in mandatory workshops that teach them about high leverage practices in science education, and give them opportunities to rehearse instruction. These kinds of teaching experiences are critical to pre-service elementary teachers because they often have few opportunities to teach science, especially using these high leverage practices, when they are out on their field experiences. Through the Teaching Science in Homework Zone project pre-service teachers also have opportunities to learn more about young people's lives outside of the classroom. These teaching opportunities are also important for science majors who often engage in a lot of "science outreach", but don't have a lot of experience learning effective pedagogical practices."

The **Homework Zone** ([https://www.mcgill.ca/equity\\_diversity/community-engagement/schools-outreach-programs/hz](https://www.mcgill.ca/equity_diversity/community-engagement/schools-outreach-programs/hz)) program has been offered by the McGill's Social Equity and Diversity Education Office (SEDE) for eight years. Homework Zone is an after-school mentoring program connecting McGill University student volunteers with elementary school students in under-served neighbourhoods of Montreal. McGill students volunteer in schools from the Lester B. Pearson and English Montreal school boards.

The "Teaching Science in Homework Zone" project was developed as a collaboration between [Allison Gonsalves](https://www.mcgill.ca/dise/allison-gonsalves) (<https://www.mcgill.ca/dise/allison-gonsalves>), Assistant Professor in DISE, and [Dawn Wiseman](https://www.mcgill.ca/dise/dawn-wiseman) (<https://www.mcgill.ca/dise/dawn-wiseman>), Faculty Lecturer in DISE, both of whom specialize in the area of Science Education. Research Assistant Alexandre Soares Cavalcante, PhD student in DISE, was also instrumental to the pilot semester. The lessons used in the project were conceived through a service learning assignment offered in Wiseman's 2017 Elementary Science Methods class, EDEE 273.

"We approached this semester as a pilot program, explains Gonsalves, "to see if we could actually take those lessons and put them into action in an after-school context. So far, it is working out really well, and there has been a lot of interest from students. As a result, next year we will be offering a new set of lessons (also developed by students in the EDEE 273 2018 class), and we hope to scale up the offering to reach more schools in the Homework Zone program. This project is happening as part of my FRQSC-funded research that seeks to engage pre-service teachers, undergraduate science majors and youth in transformative science learning encounters. We hope that the insights we gain from this study will help us to learn more about effective strategies to engage youth in informal science learning, and to foster greater identification with science and science teaching among pre-service teachers and undergraduate science majors."

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