

The Community Learning Centre at Laurentian Regional High School

Evaluation Report June 2013

Health Students
Innovation Education Partners
Relationships Recreation Social
Programs Impacts
Fun Teamwork Technology
Community Seniors
Partners Teachers

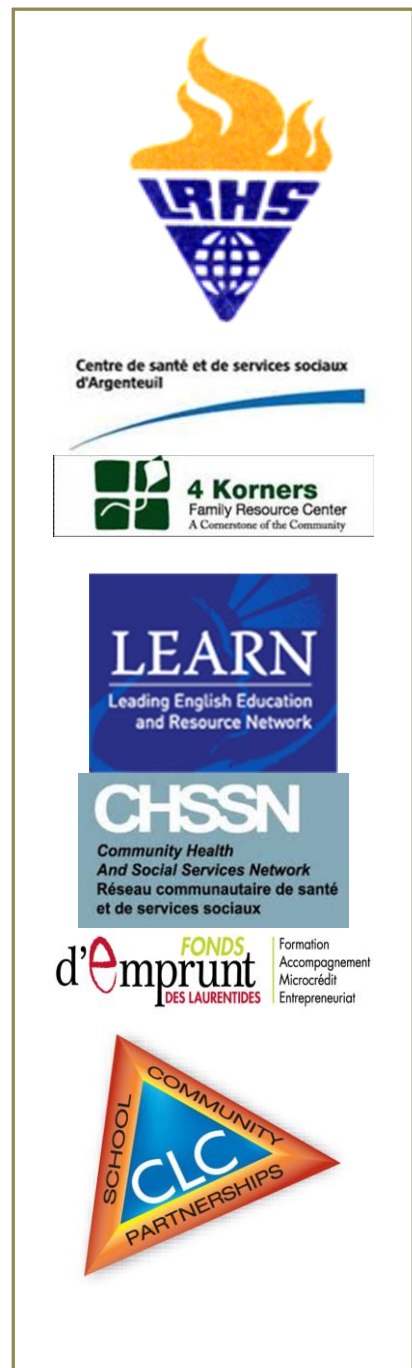


In 2011, a three year evaluation of the CLC at LRHS concluded that its implementation was “at the beginning of the end.” It may have been slow and steady but, two years later, we find the CLC as an active, contributing entity within both the high school and the feeder schools .

Introduction

The Community Learning Centre at LRHS (CLC Lachute) opened its doors in the fall of 2008. It is one of three CLCs within the Sir Wilfrid Laurier School Board. The coordinator, Tim Foreman, has been with the centre since its inception.

The key to a successful CLC lies in its partnerships and CLC Lachute has developed close relationships with a number of local organizations (see sidebar.) These organizations share a mandate with the CLC, in whole or in part, to work towards expanding educational, community development, recreational, health and social services to the Anglophone community in the Laurentians. As of 2013 the key partners¹ of CLC Lachute include CSSS Argenteuil, 4 Korner's Family Resource Centre, the Fonds d'Emprunt des Laurentides and the CHSSN. The area served by CLC Lachute is delineated by the boundaries of Laurentian Regional High School's catchment. (Figure 1). Though based in Laurentian Regional High School, the CLC's mandate includes working with teachers and students in the elementary feeder schools. This area has an



¹ Key partners are defined here as organizations that have regularly worked with the CLC over the past two years.

Anglophone population that tends to be clustered in small towns scattered throughout the lower Laurentians. The result is that this is truly a regional school where just about every student is bussed in. Some students have a bus ride of over ninety minutes one-way.



Figure 1: LRHS Catchment

From a socioeconomic standpoint, LRHS ranks in the middle of the poverty index (12.97) and also in the middle on the socioeconomic environment index (114.6) with regards to MELS measures of disadvantaged areas. LRHS's socioeconomic environment decile is seven². This puts it out of reach of NANS funding.

LRHS's enrollment has decreased over the past few years. The school is projecting 650 students for the 2013-2014 school year, down from 886 in 2005.

Conversely, while the youth population is in decline, there is a higher than average population of Anglophone seniors in the area.³

² Dr. Joanne Pocock, *Profiles of the English-Language Communities and Schools of Quebec's Community Learning Centres* (Qu'anglo Communications & Consulting, 2012)

³ Ibid

Theory of Change

CLC Lachute has created a theory of change document that serves as its operational guideline (Appendix A). Programs and activities initiated and/or supported by the CLC fall into one or more of the four results areas: Quality Education, Youth Development, Health & Social Services and Community Development.

Our Mission Statement

At Laurentian Regional High School our mission is to provide a safe environment which promotes respect and motivates students to learn, participate in school life, and to act responsibly. We believe in the importance of lifelong learning, and that education is the shared responsibility of the student, home, school and community.

This evaluation focuses on the efforts made in two specific areas:

Quality Education: Over the past few years, one of the significant programs the CLC has been involved in is the integration of videoconference technology into the classroom. The desired outcome is that the technology is fully integrated into the classroom, with teachers using it to enhance program delivery and collaborate with each other.

Youth Development: Another results area from the Theory of Change is the promotion of “a positive learning environment for all students at LRHS. To create a sense of ownership and belonging.”⁴

Results from the Tell Them From Me Surveys of the past couple of years indicate that there is an issue in sense of ownership and belonging. Though it is unfair to say that the overall atmosphere in LRHS is negative, there is certainly room for improvement.

The following section will outline the steps taken to evaluate the results achieved thus far as listed above. It will describe the methodology and provide a detailed look at the results.

⁴ Tied to LRHS MESA Objective 4.1.1. *Promote a positive learning environment for all students*

Outcome Area 1: Impacting Student Success via the Integration of VC Technology in the Classroom

This portion of the evaluation examines how the usage of **VC in the Classrooms** has achieved its desired outcomes, guided by two evaluation questions:

1. To what extent has the use of VC technology in the classroom impacted student engagement?
2. Are the Cycle III students who will be attending LRHS in the fall better prepared to enter high school?

Since the 2008-2009 school years, the CLC has been working with teachers in its feeder schools as well as LRHS to integrate VC technology into the classroom. The program has been very popular with teachers and, as a result, three of the schools (Grenville Elementary, Laurentian Elementary and Arundel Elementary) have all purchased their own units. Morin Heights Elementary borrows the board's portable unit on average four weeks per year.

One of the initiatives that grew out of this usage was "What Do You Want To Know About High School?" In this program, Grade 6 students from each of the feeder schools have a discussion via VC with students who left their school the year before. They are invited to ask any question they want about high school, with a focus on things that might worry them. The goal is to alleviate the students concerns and ease the transition from elementary to secondary school. (See sidebar, Page 7.)

Indicators for the evaluation:

- Levels of teacher satisfaction with VC use
- Number of teachers using VC
- Number of repeat uses.
- Types of collaborations.
- Number of exchanges between schools.



Educator from the Granby Zoo videoconferencing with the Kindergarten class at GES

Methodology

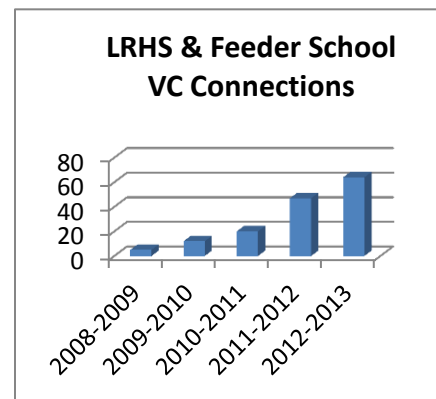
Data gathered for this evaluation include the following:

- Usage Statistics (for videoconferences arranged for the schools by the CLC Coordinator)
- Teacher satisfaction surveys
- Teacher interviews
- Student Evaluations

Findings

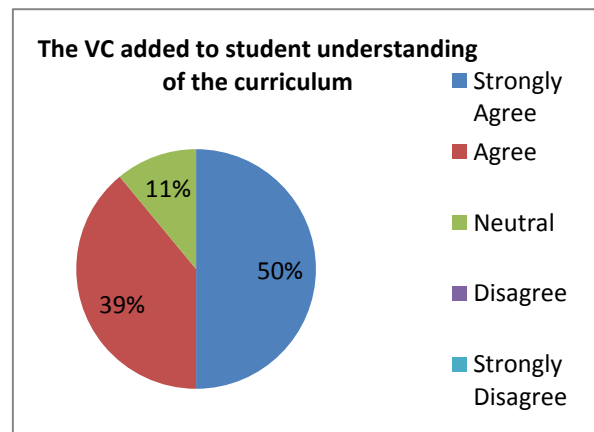
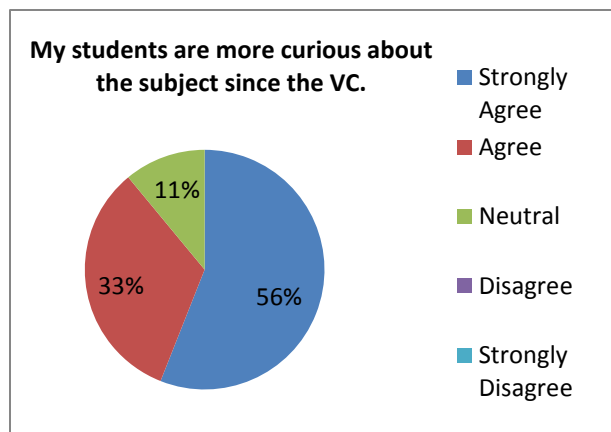
VC usage has increased in every year since the first units were installed.

Schools are using the units for two primary purposes: virtual visits and class to class visits and collaboration. On occasion, they are also used for staff meetings and professional development opportunities.



Teacher Opinion

A survey of eighteen teachers who participated in one or more videoconference sessions during the past year shows that VC technology can make a very positive impact on program delivery. The majority felt that a VC session tended to enhance or emphasize what was being taught (89% agree or strongly agree). A number of teachers stated that their students viewed a VC presenter as someone who was speaking from a position of authority, lending credibility to what was being presented in class.



Teachers feel that the technology is now at a level where it is more than just a novelty. They are realizing that this kind of technology can offer a wide range of resources that were not easily accessible to them in the past.

Percentage of teachers who either Strongly Agreed or Agreed with the following statements:

- Students were engaged during the VC– 94%
- The content complemented what I had already been teaching – 100%
- I think that the videoconferencing has a positive impact on learning – 100%
- Students appreciated my class/subject more since the VC – 89%
- Students were more talkative since the VC event (asked more questions, interacted more) – 89%

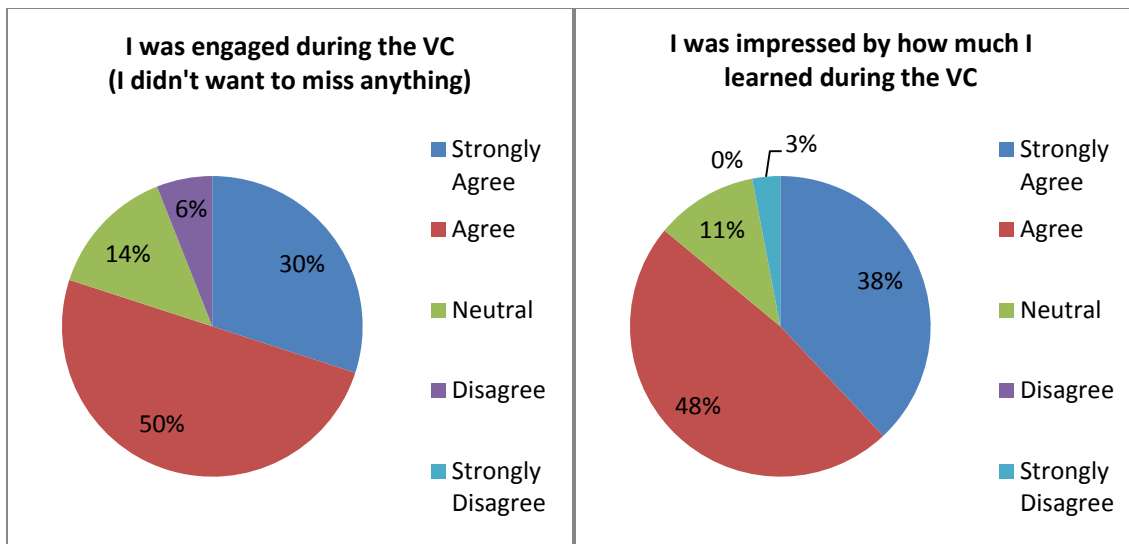
Students are realizing the world, in spite of its size, is really a small place. Their impact on the environment is better understood through this experience. We really do share the same planet and they get this now
 - Theresa Dunphy, Cycle 2 Teacher



Every teacher in LRHS's feeder schools who used VC in their classroom during the 2011-2012 school year used it again at least once in 2013.

Student Opinion

Post VC session surveys show that students are very strongly in favour of using VC technology in the classroom. The following data is from 7 post-session surveys of students in 5 Cycle III classes, one Sec I class and one Sec III class.



Percentage of Students who also strongly agreed or agreed with the following statements:

- The VC added to my understanding of the subject – 86%
- I am more curious about the subject since the VC – 63%
- I would like to participate in more VC events – 100%
- I told my family about the VC I participated in – 85%⁵

Challenges

Teachers who used videoconferencing in their classrooms almost unanimously agree that it adds value to their program delivery. However, challenges have been noted as well.

- Cost of paid programming
- Technical issues, i.e. bad connections
- Programs not available at convenient times.
- Programs not always what was expected

Though the first three points are valid concerns, it is the fourth that has caused the greatest issues. In previous years, the most often heard complaint from teachers was “the kids enjoyed it, but I could have done it myself.”

The CLC has made a strong effort to move away from using VC as a special event. Rather, before a session is booked, the coordinator will work with the teacher to ensure that he understands his/her specific needs, in order to make sure that the session fits in to the curriculum being taught.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Videoconferencing has moved from a novelty to a useful tool in schools where the classes have access to a VC unit on a regular basis. Teachers agree that

What Do You Want to Know About High School?

During the spring of 2013, students in four grade six classes (two from LES, and one each from MHES and AES) had the opportunity to do a one-hour VC with grade seven students who had left their school the year before. The grade six students were invited to ask any questions they may have about life in high school. The goal was to alleviate stress and help them prepare for the transition from primary to secondary.

The program was a big success: 78 students took part, out of 110 expected to attend next year.

80% of the students who attended the session strongly agreed or agreed with the statement “I am less nervous/worried about going to high school since I participated in the VC.”

The most common concern? Forgetting a locker combination!

⁵ Interestingly, the number of students who strongly agreed or agreed with the statement “I generally talk to my family about what I’ve learned” was only 63%. This may imply a heightened level of interest in the subject matter when videoconferencing is used.

there is a definite impact on student engagement. They feel that it helps develop an appreciation for learning. They appreciate the way it opens up the world to their students and they enjoy being able to offer opportunities to their students to virtually visit places they otherwise would never get to.

Programs such as *What Do You Want to Know about High School* leverage the use of the technology to support the schools as they prepare their students to transition from elementary to secondary school.

The obvious recommendation would be that all schools acquire at least one unit that their staff could share, but even portable VC units are extremely expensive. Skype is an option, but it is a closed system that does not allow calls from external IP sources.

The good news is, less expensive alternatives are on the way in the form of programs like Cisco Jabber, which will allow a user to turn a laptop and web camera into a videoconference unit.



VC with the Royal Tyrell Museum of Paleontology

Effective VC use in the classroom requires planning and forethought. There are hundreds, if not thousands of content providers offering classroom programs. The most successful teachers are those who use the technology to enhance their program, not as a special event.

My students are mostly visual and kinesthetic learners. Videoconferencing technology has allowed my students to go past looking at pictures and past the idea of "because my teacher is telling me it's like this." They had the opportunity to not just see but to engage with someone and ask questions and also try some hands on activities. – Diana A., Cycle III Teacher

Outcome Area 2: Youth Development

This section of the evaluation will focus on an outcome that speaks specifically to the staff and students of LRHS. While the CLC's activities in the area of quality education as listed above were in a number of schools, the programs and activities discussed below were designed specifically for LRHS.

Data from the 2012 TTFM surveys indicated that school spirit / student involvement remains a challenge at LRHS. There is a lower percentage of students in Laurentian Regional HS that are socially engaged compared with national norms.⁶ For the purpose of this evaluation, we looked at four different activities/programs that ran at the school during the 2012-2013 school year to gauge their impact on student involvement.

1. National Entrepreneurship Week Dragon's Den Challenge
2. Healthy Snack of the Day during Health Week
3. Media Club
4. Streaming of School Events

The inquiry questions are:

- To what extent are students participating in the various activities offered?
- To what extent are the activities making an impact on school life?

Indicators for the Evaluation

- Participation rates
- Student satisfaction with events/activities
- Staff satisfaction with events / activities
- Student and staff awareness of CLC involvement

Methodology

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------|
| • Program evaluations | • Surveys |
| • Personal interviews. | • TTFM |

⁶ The Learning Bar, *Students in Laurentian Regional HS "Tell Them From Me" about Student Engagement (2012-13)*

Program/Activity Descriptions

National Entrepreneurship Day

Students from the Sec III POP class took part in the Entrepreneurship Week Dragon's Den Challenge. Partnering with the Fonds d'Emprunt d'Argenteuil, the CLC provided support to the teacher, hosted the class competition and worked with the winning team to enter the provincial challenge. LRHS's team won Second Place in the provincial challenge, and the students' project "Community Compassion" raised over \$750 to buy school supplies for needy families.

Healthy Snack of the Day

The CLC received a grant from the Provincial Resource Team to run a program during March's National Health Week. Over five days in late March, student volunteers handed out healthy snack samples to students at the school, along with information on how to create their own easy-to-make, tasty snacks.

Media Club

The CLC Coordinator hosted a media club for students who wished to experiment with audio and video projects during the year. The club ran after school on "late bus" days from late September to early April.

Web Streaming

The CLC Coordinator worked with the media teacher to stream live audio and video of two major school activities, the Variety Show and the Drama Club's production of Dracula.

Findings

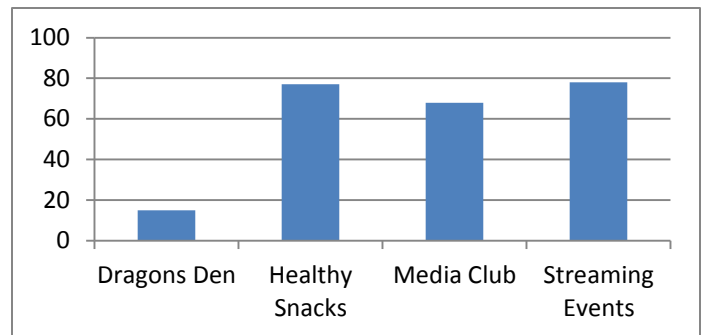
The CLC conducted a student survey over two days in May. We had 110 responses. The survey asked four main questions:

1. Were you aware that the following activities (those listed above) were initiated by the Community learning Centre?

2. Do you feel these activities made an impact on student life/school spirit this year at LRHS?
3. How would you rate the atmosphere (school spirit) in LRHS this year?
4. Compared to last year, how would you rate the sense of school spirit?

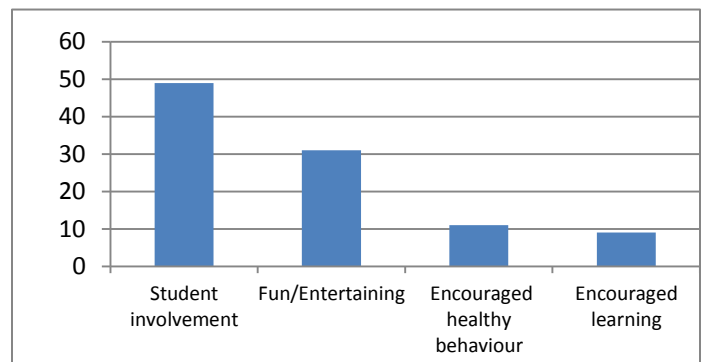
Question number one could be considered a survey of the brand recognition of the CLC:

The majority of students claimed to know that the CLC had initiated three out of the four activities. In the case of the Dragon's Den, the limited result is explained by the fact that this activity only applied to one class.



Percentage of students who were aware of the CLC's involvement in these activities.

84% of respondents answered yes to question two. When they were asked to elaborate as to where they think the impact was felt, their answers fell into four categories: Student involvement, providing fun/entertaining activities to the school, encouraging healthy behavior and encouraging learning.



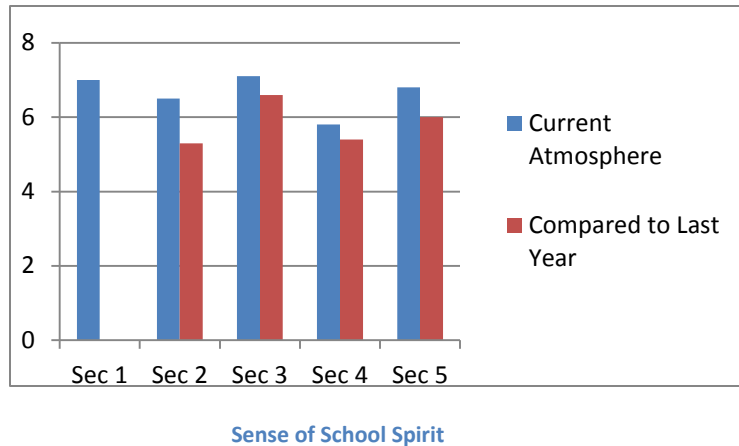
Percentage of students who felt an impact was made in a specific area.

The result for encouraging healthy behavior was something of a disappointment because of the sheer overwhelming response to the Healthy Snack initiative. Over five-hundred fifty snacks were handed out during five days in March. It is felt that though a large number of students participated, they viewed it as more of a social event, rather than one that promoted healthy lifestyles.

Events like this allow students to be more involved in school life. It challenges us and gets us out of our comfort zone.

—Sec III Participant in Dragon's Den Competition

Question 3 asked for the students' opinion of school spirit within LRHS. They were asked to rate the atmosphere in the school from a scale of one to 10, with 10 being the highest.



Sec II-V students were also posed a fourth question where they were asked to rate the sense of school spirit this year compared to last. Overall, the consensus was that the atmosphere in the school was slightly more positive than last year with all four grades reporting 4-8 % difference.

Quotes from the survey:

- I believe that streaming events and interacting with elementary schools help them and us understand and gain experiences together.
- The web streaming allows people who have graduated to keep up with the goings-on.
- You are giving people activities to look forward to.
- (These activities) get people excited and involved.
- They bring more people together.
- Streaming the variety show was a great way to show the talent this school has.
- Media club gets people involved and makes them more confident.



Nick offers a sample of his inside out sandwich

Healthy Snack of the Day Menu

Monday

Inside Out Sandwich (Turkey slice rolled around a breadstick)

Tuesday

Orange & Yogurt Parfait

Wednesday

Banana & Strawberry Waffle Cone

Thursday

Ham & Cheese Tortilla Roll-up

Friday

Grapes and cheese skewered on a pretzel

Twelve staff members (eight teachers, four administrators) were also interviewed.

- Nine of the twelve stated that they were aware that the activities in the same list shown to the students were initiated by the CLC
- Ten of the twelve found that the activities made a positive impact on school spirit.
- Seven of the staff members felt there was a slightly to moderately more positive atmosphere in the school this year. The other five found it to be the same as last year.

The CLC has brought many fun, healthy and rewarding new experiences to LRHS that are helping to build positive school spirit. Two thumbs up!
- Kathy L.
School Administrator

- Those who felt it was more positive attributed it to the efforts of the leadership team, the sports programs and the CLC.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The efforts of the CLC to “promote a positive learning environment for all students at LRHS” and to “create a sense of ownership and belonging” are getting noticed.

Students and staff are clearly aware of the CLC presence within the school, and the fact that we have been much more visible throughout the 2012-2013 school year is making a difference. Something as simple as handing out snacks to students at break for one week created visibility and buzz that lasted the rest of the year.

By offering new and unique services to the school, such as the web streaming of events, the CLC helps to show the broader community the positive side of life at LRHS.

Recommendations for the future:

- Maintain a presence within the school by partnering with Leadership team to help promote and support school events.
- Leverage the positive buzz created by large scale activities like health week. (Perhaps offer a healthy snack once a week.)
- Continue to stream school events. Ensure that they are advertised well in advance.

A Few Words from our Partners

“4 Korner’s expansion into Lachute has been made possible by the partnership with the CLC. Working with Tim has allowed us to better understand and then meet the needs of the English-speaking communities of Argenteuil. The technological opportunities provided by the CLC and specifically Tim’s expertise and vision has contributed to a better informed, more satisfied community.”

- Rola Helo, Executive Director, 4 Korner’s Family Resource Centre

“Learning that they can create their own employment is a tremendously empowering tool for the youth of Argenteuil. Too often, our younger generations leave the region in search of work. The Fonds d’Emprunt des Laurentides believes strongly in the importance of developing the entrepreneurial spirit of the youth of Argenteuil. Our partnership with our local CLC has opened doors and allowed us to work in collaboration with LRHS and its students. I believe that we are building a solid partnership which may lead to a more hopeful future for the youth of Argenteuil.”

- Lorraine Bureau, Executive Director, Fonds d’Emprunt des Laurentides

Overall Recommendations & Conclusion

The conclusion to CLC's 2010-2011 evaluation states "we are at the end of beginning. The implementation of the Community Learning Centre at LRHS has been slow but steady." Two years later, the CLC is in full operation.

One of the main challenges noted in the previous evaluation was the lack of an effective steering committee. After years of struggling with this issue, the CLC now finds itself in the position of having a strong and diversely represented partnership table.

Though not covered in this evaluation, the CLC is also active in the broader community. We continue to offer health session to seniors, as well as life-long learning opportunities.

Challenges still exist. Until a mechanism can be put in place to ensure stable funding, the CLC coordinator position will always remain part-time. This is especially unfortunate when it comes to working with teachers in the feeder schools. Imagine what could be accomplished with a province-wide collection of CLCs with full time coordinators!

Though more integrated into LRHS than ever before, there is still work to be done. The onus will be on the coordinator to work with staff members to make sure they are aware of what the CLC can offer.

In terms of the CLC action plan, there has been a tendency over the past few years to try and be "everything to everyone." This cannot continue as the coordinator gets spread too thin. A review of the Theory of Change is suggested. The CLC should focus its efforts on a maximum of two or three results areas. This will give a better chance of making a more significant impact.

The Final Word

"It makes you feel that the school loves its students."

- Sec IV student responding to the question "How have these activities made an impact on school life at LRHS this year."