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Reflection on the Action Research Journey

Our experience in undertaking the action research project was one that involved a good deal of hard work, but was also particularly rewarding. Part of our teaching role is to help all of Crescent's Grade 9 students learn more about Microsoft Word, Microsoft Excel and Digital Literacies in the form of Internet Research. More generally, the objective is to make them more efficient and more effective users of the basic computer skills that they will need in order to be successful in their time in the Upper School and beyond.

Implementing our action research project as part of our coursework required considerable effort. We wanted to use class time to enable us to monitor the work being done and try to gather not just words and videos from the boys about their experiences, but also to give us that 'gut feeling' that only comes from being there while a project is happening.

Our challenge was to create an environment where the application of the peer- and self-evaluation practices was meaningful for the boys, but also sustainable in terms of curriculum requirements, boy attention span, and teacher monitoring. We found this balance hard to achieve, especially in our first few attempts, but we were able to streamline the process and make it more worthwhile with each iteration - sort of like our own Maker Project with its own iterations, peer- and self-evaluations!

Our rewards were tremendous, but can be stated pretty succinctly. Simply put, the boys themselves, almost to a student, really felt that the peer-evaluations were extremely worthwhile. They felt that they gained from the interactions and they wanted to see the practice continue. They were not quite as enthusiastic about the self-evaluations, but we feel that if we adjust the way in which those practices are framed and presented, then they too may be valued by the students. This is something we will continue to work on.

In short, it has been well worth the effort to make peer-evaluations a formal part of our teaching. It still is, and perhaps always will be, a work in progress, but we feel very strongly that it has added tremendous value to the course experience and overall learning for the boys. In addition, it has changed our teaching practice for the better.

None of this could have happened without the support of several people and organizations. The organizations who deserve our appreciation are the IBSC and Crescent School: this sort of opportunity exists because of them and their systemic support of boys' education. The individuals who contributed to this effort are in some ways less obvious, but no less noteworthy: Margot Long and Di Laycock, our IBSC mentors, as well as Crescent staff members David Grant, David Young, Trish Cislak, Lisa Elchuck, and the Crescent School Headmaster,

Michael Fellin. They were all key in helping keep us energized and on track. Finally, the support from home is what really kept this project moving, as without their understanding and patience we would never have been able to follow through on this commitment to our students and our community, near and far. To all of these people we are truly grateful and we hope that they can feel the impact they have had on our new approach to helping boys learn.