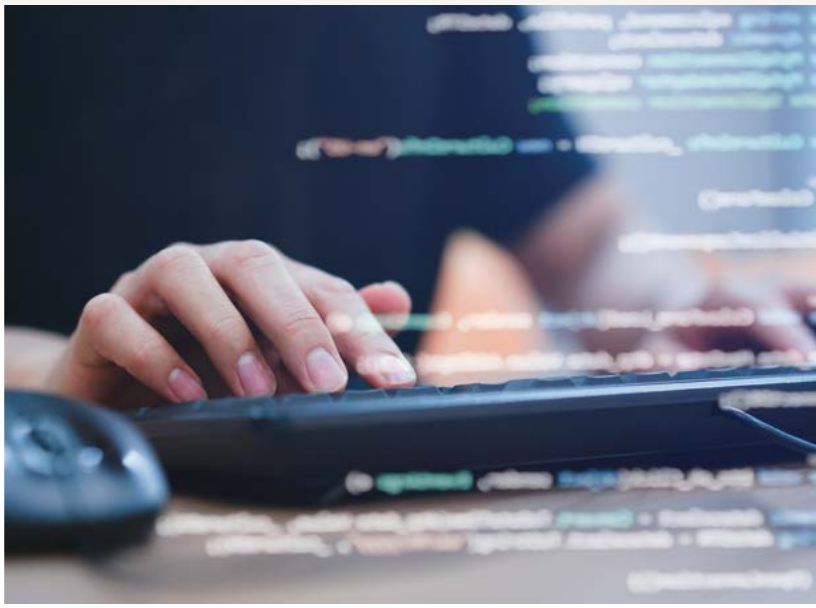
Building Capacity in Computational Thinking and Coding at Renfrew County Catholic District School Board

Team Members:
Tyson Holly and Tina Noel

School District: Renfrew County Catholic DSB



What We Did

At RCCDSB, we had established a Makerspace/Coding Continuum model for implementing training and resources for all schools. When we were successful with receiving approval for the Lynx OTF Coding Project, we knew that the model for this new Lynx Coding Project had to fit into the same model. The two leads, Tyson Holly and Tina Noel, worked with eight teachers who indicated interest in adding this new coding language to their learning and then ultimately their students' learning. The main project activities included:

- Two half-days in June 2020 of professional learning on Lynx Coding with Andrew MacDonald via Google Meets. The second of these PD sessions included a discussion re next steps for Lynx Lesson Generation and how to prepare for the Coding Meeting scheduled in August for presentations and sharing.
- One half-day between early July and late August 2020 for teachers to continue learning Lynx and to produce a lesson to be shared with colleagues involved in the project.
- One half-day in late August 2020 for teachers to present their Lynx Coding Lessons to the group and share to the RCCDSB Makerspace Teacher Google Classroom for easy sharing and access for ALL RCCDSB teachers.

What We Learned

We knew from the outset that the project had to be practical and teacher-friendly. The only way new learning gets used in the classroom by teachers if there is a sense of ownership with resources/lessons that can be used and accessed. With COVID19 creating a very stressful and busy school start-up, we had to have LYNX lessons ready to go for September and this project finished before the beginning of the 2020/21 school year. There is no way teachers could take on anything else for this school year. The timeline was set, the teachers very quickly agreed, the Instructor was hired and the learning started. Our greatest learning in all this was our amazement regarding the quality of the lessons produced after only five hours of training with a new coding language.

As we reflect back on the OTF coding project we think about all of the dedication and hard work that our teachers do on a daily basis. The amount of professionalism and can-do attitude in our team is inspiring. We have a wide variety of experience with coding and it was very impressive to see how eager and excited all were to try something new like Lynx coding.

What We Learned (continued)

Our board has been on a journey for the last three years in terms of introducing computational thinking and coding into our practice. We have noticed a high level of engagement and interest from students working on different projects including Scratch Junior, Scratch, Micro bits, and other coding platforms. Lynx was a natural next step for our system, it challenges us to move past the initial block coding stage and get into a more script or text-based program like Lynx. It did not come without its challenges, of course, but as a team we worked together and solved most problems and used them as learning experiences. While this project focussed mostly on the teacher experience, what we have found is that if, as teachers, we are more comfortable with coding, we are more likely to use that in the classroom with our students.

How We Shared Our Learning With Others

We were so very pleased to add all the excellent created lessons to our RCCDSB Makerspace Google Teacher Classroom to be accessed and used by all RCCDSB Teachers.