

## **Our Living Plan: A Professional Development Plan for the Educational Developers Caucus**

Alice Cassidy, Vice-chair, Professional Development, January, 2010

**Prologue:** Parts of this document are based on the professional development portion of the EDC General Meeting, held on February 25, 2009 at Durham College; see PowerPoint in the AGM/GM Pro-d Summary Notes subsection of Documents: <http://www.stlhe.ca/en/stlhe/constituencies/edc/documents.php>

### **Overview:**

How does Our Living Plan relate to the 5-year plan (2005-2009) and what is in these documents?

How and why are we changing the format of the plan?

Who makes the suggested activities in the plan happen? YOU

Where might we use the plan in our work?

*How does Our Living Plan relate to the 5-year plan (2005-2009) and what is in these documents?*

Let's start with the 5-year plan. It began in February, 2005, during a meeting of EDC at Queen's University, in conversations led by Lynn Taylor, then Vice-chair, Professional Development. Topics, specific content and format were identified for our professional development needs over the ensuing several years (2005-2009).

See the 5-year plan chart and associated overview document explaining the process and the plan in the EDC Professional Development Plan subsection of Documents: <http://www.stlhe.ca/en/stlhe/constituencies/edc/documents.php>

*How and why are we changing the format of the plan?*

### **Introducing Our Living Plan**

Our Living Plan was introduced in February, 2009 at the General Meeting of the EDC conference (see very top of this document); led by Alice Cassidy, then Vice-chair, Professional Development:

We were nearing the end of the original '5 years' laid out initially  
We have done a lot, but not all of it!! And, there is always more to add.

How/what have we done so far?

What can we do in the future?

- For existing theme, career stages

- What themes or career stages to add?
- What else to add or make note of?

**Specific changes to create Our Living Plan:**

- We have shifted from a yearly chart to a more holistic (and realistic?) format, because our experience the past four years tells us that what we may have thought could be done in particular years (Year 1, Year 2, *etc.*, or in a particular order (one project or area following chronologically after another) is not feasible or realistic. In reality, there is all kinds of work being done throughout the year that stem from and/or speak to the plan: at the annual STLHE and EDC conferences, through the EDC grant program, the online resource sharing, through listserv communications, through the work of EDC members in other arenas, and much more.
- We want the document to also be a resource to showcase your work, including examples in the above bullet (see more on this below; it is a work in progress)
- We have changed the format to an excel spreadsheet with, so far, the following four columns or fields: Theme, Stage in Career, Detail/Example, Achieved/achieving (when/how).

There were 10 themes in the original 5-year plan and we have added two more (to have a better 'theme heading' to include two EDC conference themes), for a total of 12 themes. We will most likely add more themes as we continue this work, and at some point we may change wording, or re-organize themes to best organize the plan, make sense of it, and most of all, to use Our Living Plan.

*Who makes the suggested activities in the plan happen? YOU*

During the pro-d portion of the 2009 EDC GM at Durham, we gave out four different colour-coded stages in an educational developer's career: (one per person)

- New
- Early-mid career
- Mid-late career
- Across career span

We conducted the following activity using these slips of paper:

For the career stage you have on your slip of paper, what is one activity/resource/event that:

- Has already happened within EDC
- Could happen in the future?

Think (+ write)-pair-share (collected and added by Alice Cassidy; 42 contributions in total; thanks everyone!). You can see from the photos how the colour-coding worked, and what it all looked like once pooled, on my desk! (photo credits: Alice Cassidy)



Each of your contributions was then added to the excel chart. Many of you did *not* specify if your example had already taken place, or was suggested for the future, so I used my best judgment. See *What is next?* section for more on this.

So that we can see how far we can come from the original 5-year plan, devised in 2005, to now (January, 2010) in Our Living Plan, *everything* that has been added to the chart is noted in blue.

*Where might we use the plan in our work?*

What is next? We want the document to also be a resource to showcase your work:

- It will be easy to see and use on the EDC website
- We are working on having each item in the Achieved/achieving column hot-link to its specifics - a website, an online resource, contact info, or whatever else is relevant
- You will be able add examples and links - the mechanics of this are under development
- You can use it to identify people, topics, resources for your ED work
- It is hoped it will also inspire to conduct particular kinds of scholarly work through EDC grants, sharing at EDC and STLHE conferences, etc. by identifying gaps in what we say we want for EDC, but has not yet been done.

**What can you do now?**

Look over Our Living Plan, and if you are interested, compare it to the original 5-year plan. Get a feel for how it is organized.

If you were at the February, 2009 General Meeting and contributed during the pro-d activity, see where your item appears; they are all there. If your contribution is not as fully entered as it could be (especially in terms of if it has already been done but is not noted thusly) let the Vice-chair, Professional Development and/or the Vice-chair, Communications know so it can be amended.

**Tell us more examples;** we know there are lots. It could be a specific session you led at any year's EDC or STLHE conference, or at any other conference where you presented on something related to educational development. It could be something you attended that is a perfect fit to something in the chart (or you can suggest additional rows if that helps.) It could be a book, journal article or other written piece you wrote. Or something you read that you think should be added.

**Criteria for inclusion in Our Living Plan:**

That it relates specifically to educational development (see one definition below), and was completed or suggested by EDC members, through their work at EDC, STLHE, through their own institution or entity, and/or with other associations or organizations. Also see *Tell us more examples* immediately above.

**Educational development** (also known as academic and staff development) is a scholarly field of study and practice that has evolved over the last 40 plus years from an informal set of instructional improvement activities aimed at individuals, to a broad set of services, programs, and initiatives oriented toward a diverse client base at the individual, departmental, and institutional level. At the core of these activities is the shared value of enhancing teaching and learning, and, ultimately, the educational experience of students (Wright, 2002). The programs and practices geared toward achieving these goals are as diverse as the approaches and orientations to practice (Land, 2001, 2004) engaged in by educational developers (also known as faculty or academic developers) themselves. Likewise, the range of centre structures, mandates, and staffing in which these activities take place are varied reflecting the institutional culture and values in which they are embedded (Sorcinelli, Austin, Eddy, & Beach, 2006; Wright, 2002).

Stockley, D.; McDonald, J., & Hoessler, C. (under review). Nudges, Pulls, and Serendipity: Multiple Pathways to Educational Development. *To Improve the Academy*, Volume 29.

A few more notes about the new format to help you navigate it:

The column/field called **Stage** is currently divided into the four originally devised stages in the career of an educational developer. When one has decided they are no longer a new EDer but now an early-mid career EDer and so on is a matter of personal reflection and decision! I also note that for the inclusion of several entries specific to ED for or about graduate students and/or Teaching Assistants (TAs), I placed it where it made the most

sense to me, but it does not always tell the full story; some graduate students are more experienced EDers than faculty, staff or others. And some activities that are noted as being especially useful to grad students or TA could be equally helpful to anyone in any stage or role. Not only that, but it could be argued that many examples noted for one career stage are equally applicable and useful for others.

If something has been suggested but it has not happened yet, it is listed in the column/field called **Detail/example**. If it has already taken place, it is in the column/field called **Achieved/achieving (how/when)**. In some cases where there are multiple related ideas in the Detail/example column, and only part of them have been achieved, an attempt to note this was made in the Achieved/achieving column; it is far from complete.

Of course glancing through the chart in its new format is not quite as visually stunning as the original 5-year chart was. It is hoped though, that the excel format is, in the long-term, a more useful way to organize, be able to sort, and to be able to use the information.

It is not always straightforward what should go where. You will notice some or much overlap, and you may not agree with what goes where. There could be a little or a lot of revamping depending on how one views categories, organization of these kinds of data and the whole philosophy and pragmatism of 'lumping' vs. 'splitting' (this spoken by a field biologist with a fair bit of experience in the many views and controversies on this topic alone!). You will note that some themes appear many times while others appear few times. Related to the lumping/splitting philosophy, and most likely informed by published work in the ED fields, we might decide to move some themes to be subheadings of other themes, or any other number of ways to re-organize the information.

Finally, you may see some details/examples that either have question marks (because the person who suggested it did so, usually). I want to make the point that not everything in Our Living Plan has been fully decided that it ought to be done. So, think of many of the items in the chart as starting points to discussion. The original 5-year plan for 2005-2009 and now Our Living Plan for 2010 on was created by you and it is for you.

These kinds of discussions are welcomed and can be part of future EDC listserv communications, GM and AGM pro-d sessions, conference sessions, and during other events. Our Living Plan, as it stands as of January, 2010, is but one more phase in its evolution. It awaits the ideas and actions of EDC members to realize its full potential.

*Tu'um est.*