A Guide to the Essential Conditions to Support Implementation

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“How do we know if professional development support enhances and contributes to improved practice and implementation?”

When you think about it, the question does raise a wide range of issues and considerations. As a result of Alberta Education posing the question to Alberta Regional Professional Development Consortia (ARPDC) a year and a half ago, a working group of education stakeholders was constituted to craft a response, which led to the development of the document A Guide to the Essential Conditions to Support Implementation.

The working group was unanimous that successful implementation of education policies, priorities, programs, curriculum and initiatives requires the combined and collaborative efforts of all education partners working towards a shared vision of teaching quality practices for students’ learning success.

The group also recognized that there was a lack of understanding of the complexities and challenges of measuring successful implementation.

A decision was made to develop a framework or guide that would

• identify the characteristics of successful implementation of education policies, curricula, priorities, programs and initiatives;
• describe the complexity of the work involved in successful implementation;
• identify the conditions deemed essential for successful implementation—shared vision, leadership, research and evidence, resources, teacher professional growth, time, and community engagement; and
• describe the environment within which these essential conditions are most effectively addressed—an environment where education stakeholders share the responsibility for addressing essential conditions within a culture of learning that fosters inquiry, risk-taking, sharing and collaboration.

This guide will support collaborative implementation planning by educational leaders at all levels across the kindergarten to Grade 12 system and will serve as an excellent companion document to the Guide to Comprehensive Professional Development Planning, also developed collaboratively with education partners.
The “Net Generation” has arrived. You have probably seen children and young adults doing five things at once: texting, downloading videos, using social media, listening to streaming music and e-mailing. They are the first generation to have literally grown up digital and they are part of a global cultural phenomenon that is here to stay. Tapscott’s book is a “field guide” based on a research study that included surveying more than 11,000 young people.

Carefully outlining the characteristics of the Net Gen, Tapscott details their realities, including their changing brains. They watch much less television than their parents, but spend a great deal of time online. Technology has been completely transparent to the Net Gen. It’s like the fridge to them. They don’t care about how it works—it is just a part of their lives. The Net Gen believes it should be able to customize and contribute its own content and thinks that e-mail is so yesterday.

Following are excerpts from Tapscott’s tips for educators (p 148):

1. Don't throw technology into the classroom and hope for good things. Focus on the change in pedagogy, not the technology.
2. Cut back on lecturing—broadcast learning doesn't work for this generation. Let them cocreate a learning experience with you.
3. Empower students to collaborate. Encourage them to work with each other and show them how to access the world of subject-matter experts available on the web.
4. Focus on lifelong learning, not teaching to the test. Focus on how to learn—not what to know.
5. Use technology to get to know each student. Build self-paced, customized learning programs for them.
6. Design educational programs according to the norms of the Net Gen. There should be choice, customization, transparency, integrity, collaboration, fun, speed and innovation in their learning experiences.
7. Reinvent yourself as a teacher. You, too, can say, “Now I can hardly wait to get up in the morning to go to work!”

On a hopeful note, Tapscott concludes that because of the collaboration and creativity young people expect and demand, the world will not only be transformed, but will ultimately be a better place.
Beyond Good Intentions: Partnering with Schools in Developing Countries

The emphasis on global citizenship in Alberta schools has opened the eyes of students to global inequity, compelling many to want to help those in developing countries. It is not uncommon for Alberta classrooms or schools to sponsor a child, or to fundraise to build a water well or send educational supplies to underresourced schools abroad.

Beyond Good Intentions is a workshop for educators who are engaged in or are interested in initiating a partnership or project with a school or community in the developing world. It encourages participants to reflect upon their assumptions about developing countries and consider how these assumptions shape international partnerships and projects. The workshop highlights principles that, when applied, can maximize the positive impact of international partnerships and projects. It also gives teachers time to consider how they can move partnerships or projects beyond acts of charity to being transformative, curriculum-based learning experiences. Contact Debra Augustyn at debra.augustyn@ata.ab.ca to book a workshop.
Creating a Paradigm Shift—From Parent Involvement to Parent Engagement

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Is there a difference between parent involvement and parent engagement? Does parent engagement really impact student learning and achievement? If so, how do educators go about creating this paradigm shift?

The Alberta Initiative for School Improvement (AISI) team for Aspen View Regional Division 19 embarked on a quest to seek answers to these questions by implementing a variety of different strategies in its schools. Each of the AISI coaches attended school council meetings to inform parents about AISI and the district’s goal for Cycle 3, Assessment for Learning. Learning workshops were developed and presented at the meetings to help familiarize parents with the assessment language that their children were using at school.

Newsletters in school newspapers were sent home that provided information on important assessment topics, such as the need for feedback, the difference between formative and summative assessment, and the fundamental underpinnings that support good assessment practices that are fair and about learning. The Aspen View AISI team also created a division calendar with the theme “It Takes a Whole Community to Educate Us,” that features student artwork and parent and community involvement at each of the 12 schools across the division.

Parents were asked to give 10 reasons why they should attend school council meetings. Based on the results, four parents from different areas of the school division were invited to attend the 2009 “Leading and Learning—Celebrating the Great Journey” AISI conference in Calgary. The remarkable impact this single strategy had on moving parents from being involved to being engaged was summed up in the words of a parent who stated, “Personally, the invitation to the AISI conference opened up a whole new world to me! It would be great if other parents had the opportunity to share that experience.” Since the conference, the four parents have delivered presentations with teachers at the Aspen View systemwide PD day, the Alberta Assessment Consortium conference and their own school council meetings.

At the 2010 “Engaging Minds: Celebrating a Decade of AISI” conference, in Edmonton, two parents made presentations with teachers on the topic “So You Want Engaged Parents?” and two parents and the chair of the Council of School Councils for Aspen View discussed the Gallery Walk display that featured “Six Key Ways to Improve Parental Engagement.” Yet another activity to promote parental engagement occurred in September, 2009, when the parents from the Whispering Hills Primary School, in Athabasca, decided to hold a Welcome Fair, rather than a Meet the Teacher Night. This fun-filled event attracted more than 300 parents whose kids brought them to school. Kids are the driving force behind parental engagement—they communicate with their parents and they bring them into the schools.

The child pulls parents and teachers together, but without the help of one another, parents and teachers pull the child apart.

—Tinnin

Research studies illustrate that when parents are engaged, students have higher grades, test scores and graduation rates; better attendance; increased motivation
and self-esteem; lower rates of suspension; and fewer instances of violent behaviour (Epstein et al 2002; Fan and Chen 2001). Larry Ferlazzo (2009), in an article entitled “Parent Involvement or Parent Engagement?” argues that both parent involvement and parent engagement are good; however, “parent engagement is better, and offers opportunities for transformational beneficial change—for the school, for the community, for the family and for the student.”

Aspen View School Division 19 has embraced this concept wholeheartedly as the district works to transform the role of traditional parent volunteer to one of fully engaged parent—one step at a time.

References


Tinnin, D. Quoted in Fresno County Office of Education 2010.

Outreach Education Council

Want to get the most out of your conference dollars? Attend the conference that covers all subject areas and disciplines!

2010 conference planning for the Outreach Education Council is now underway. We will be meeting at the Marriott Hotel at River Cree Resort in Edmonton, Alberta, on September 30 and October 1 and 2, 2010.

Keynote speakers are Martha Kaufeldt (check out her website at www.beginwiththebrain.com/contact.php) and Chris Vining, principal of an outreach school in Cold Lake, who is currently taking his master's focusing on outreach education.

What are the benefits of becoming a member?

OEC members
• receive a quarterly newsletter to which they are invited to contribute,
• have access to the members-only section of the OEC website,
• have access to regional and provincial professional development opportunities,
• enhance outreach education in Alberta and
• gain valuable regional networking initiatives.

Outreach schools are special schools developed to support students who cannot or do not wish to attend mainstream schools. These schools are often integral components of a jurisdiction's high school completion strategy. The programs in outreach schools respond to students' particular circumstances and are flexible so that they can adapt to students' diverse requirements.

Outreach schools operate outside of traditional school environments. In fact, Alberta Education policy stipulates that outreach schools must operate in stand-alone sites. Thus, outreach schools can be found in shopping centres and office buildings.

Outreach schools are staffed by small cadres of dedicated teachers who teach a range of high school and, in some cases, junior high courses. Students complete their work independently or in small groups with the support of certificated teachers using a variety of distance learning and locally designed materials.

The foundation of outreach education is the personal relationship that students develop with the school staff. Because students typically work with teachers one on one or in small groups, a trusting working relationship often forms. This relationship ensures that students who have often not experienced success in school are able to develop a sense of security and connection that will help them achieve success.

We can be found at http://oec.teachers.ab.ca/ or www.outreachcouncil.ca and we have a discussion group on the 2Learn2Gether website, www.2learn2gether.ca/groups/entry/Outreach-Education-Council. Also, look for us on Facebook soon.

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Greetings from the Alberta Assessment Consortium

It is a pleasure to share some of the recent work of the Alberta Assessment Consortium (AAC) with the Alberta professional development community. Although I am not new to the work of AAC, I am new to the role of executive director and I am delighted to be able to focus full time on this exciting work.

The Alberta Assessment Consortium is a not-for-profit equal partnership of basic education organizations. It is dedicated to enhancing student learning through classroom assessment that increases students’ confidence as learners and enables them to reveal what they know and demonstrate what they can do.

The work of AAC is to provide support to Alberta teachers and leaders in developing classroom assessment capacity. AAC has been working since 1994 towards this goal. Over the years, five main purposes have emerged. While professional development is specifically mentioned in one purpose statement, providing opportunities for professional learning is simply part of our ongoing work.

Purpose #1
*Develop a broad range of assessment materials that are directly tied to the Alberta curriculum and based on grade level standards, and that will enhance student learning.*

AAC maintains a large online library of assessment tasks across a range of subject areas and grade levels. However, the value of this collection is not simply in the tasks themselves. Each task represents a professional development journey for teachers who attended intense summer development workshops, and then returned to their classrooms with increased assessment capacity.

Purpose #2
*Provide support for leadership development in classroom assessment.*

AAC has been specifically supporting the growth of assessment leadership capacity for the past six years with the Assessment Specialist Initiative. Each member jurisdiction has had the opportunity to nominate up to four teachers or leaders to participate in this ongoing professional development program. Many former and current AISI leaders throughout the province have been active participants in this initiative.

Purpose #3
*Support teachers by providing opportunities for quality professional development.*

The AAC fall conference is an outstanding professional development event that brings together top assessment speakers from all over the world to present alongside teachers and leaders to discuss promising assessment practices within the Alberta context. This is a professional development opportunity not to be missed. Responding to requests from the field, we have opened up more space at our venue and no longer need to restrict registration. Check the website www.aac.ab.ca in early April for registration information. Fall conference 2010 will be held on November 5–6, with Leadership Day scheduled for November 4. Mark your calendars and plan to attend.

Purpose #4
*Facilitate networking and sharing of knowledge, skills and expertise.*

AAC recently held a series of video conference seminars focused on the assessment component of three key AISI
project themes. The use of video conference allowed teams from diverse locations to join the conference, whereas distance would have prohibited face-to-face participation. AAC field services facilitators are currently involved in follow-up from the video conference sessions. While networking has always occurred within the regional groups, our facilitators have begun to communicate more broadly across the consortium membership in an effort to increase networking across the regions.

Purpose #5
Establish liaisons with other agencies.

This has been an important year of re-establishing liaisons with other agencies. AAC is currently working on several collaborative projects with Alberta Education partners, including attendance at the zone curriculum meetings, the distributed professional learning project and the essential conditions committee. AAC has been part of ATA Summer Conference and all ATA teachers’ conventions. Specific projects are under way in many regions with the Alberta Regional Professional Development Consortia (ARPDC). Conversations with CASS, Alberta School Councils’ Association and the universities are ongoing, and we continue to look for opportunities to work towards common goals.

AAC provides a range of opportunities for teachers and leaders to build assessment capacity. Consistent with the research, our goal is to have professional learning become less of an isolated event and more about supporting teachers in building professional practice over time. Certainly, the work in building assessment capacity is best accomplished when viewed as a long-term collaborative venture. AAC is pleased to be part of the process and we look forward to further opportunities to support this work.

Upcoming ATA Events

| March         | First Nations, Métis and Inuit Council Conference |
|              | Mighty Peace Teachers’ Convention                |
| April        | Middle Years Council Conference                  |
|              | Healthy Interactions Facilitator Training Workshop |
|              | (note change) PD Facilitators’ Spring Meeting    |
|              | (note change) Convention Association Meeting      |
|              | Spring Professional Development Area Conference  |
|              | Global, Environmental and Outdoor Education Council Conference |
|              | Career and Technology Studies Council Conference  |
|              | Alberta School Library Council Conference         |
|              | Health and Physical Education Council Conference   |
|              | English Language Arts Council Conference           |
| May          | Creating a Legacy Together—Global Citizenship Conference |
|              | Association Instructor Training                    |
|              | Annual Representative Assembly                     |
| August       | Summer Conference, Banff                          |

The Alberta Teachers’ Association
New Advocacy Tool for PD Leaders: Looking Forward

Gaylene Schreiber,
Executive Staff Officer, Professional Development


Professional development leaders will find this recent ATA research update a timely and concise document that can be used to inform local PD planning, advocacy on professional issues, and policy development to support teachers’ efforts. As the preface to Looking Forward states,

This document provides an analysis of the teaching and learning conditions in Alberta schools that shape the work life of Alberta teachers, and identifies key opportunities to enhance their work in the next three years and beyond. Prepared by Dr J C Couture, Executive Staff Officer, Government, who coordinates the Alberta Teachers’ Association’s (ATA) research programs, this publication draws on a number of ongoing research studies and initiatives over the past year. …

As the professional organization of Alberta's teachers committed to promoting and advancing public education, the Association sees the next three years as a critical time for addressing systemic issues and for capitalizing on such key opportunities as supporting beginning teachers in the early years of practice, advancing administrator leadership development, and advocating for policies and programs that will address socioeconomic barriers to learning.

With recent ministry initiatives designed to gather stakeholder input—such as Setting the Direction for Special Education, and Inspiring Education: A Dialogue with Albertans—it is important for local PD leaders to be able to inform conversations around them with current information that represents the perspectives of the profession. Looking Forward offers succinct and accessible data on class size and composition; access to resources (including print and technology); workload concerns; issues related to students’ readiness to learn; and the concerns of specific teacher demographic groups, including those new to the profession. A section devoted to issues surrounding PD opportunities will be of special interest to those planning and supporting professional development.


Inquiries regarding paper copies may be made through Barnett House at 1-800-232-7208 or 780-447-9400.

Reminder: Spring PDAC, 2010 04 23(eve)–24
Nous avons eu le plaisir d’accueillir en Alberta, début février, Monsieur Ronald Boudreau, Coordinateur de recherche et Directeur des services aux Francophones de la Fédération canadienne des enseignantes et des enseignants (FCE). Monsieur Boudreau s’est rendu sur les lieux du congrès de la NCTCA et en particulier au salon des exposants où se trouvait le kiosque de la FCE. Plusieurs enseignants de langues française et anglaise ont visité le kiosque pour recueillir brochures et renseignements. Ils ont pu poser en personne leurs questions à Monsieur Boudreau.

La FCE, c’est quoi au juste?


Reminder: The Global Citizenship Conference will be held at the Radisson Hotel in Canmore, May 6–8, 2010. This symposium is a two and one-half day event focusing on the role of public education to prepare students to live peacefully and responsibly in an interconnected, sustainable world. It will provide a forum to share promising practices for developing engaged global citizens for the 21st century within the UNESCO four pillars of learning: Learning to Know, Learning to Do, Learning to Be, and Learning to Live Together. Please see the Association website events calendar for further details.