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Association canadienne des administrateurs et des administratrices scolaires



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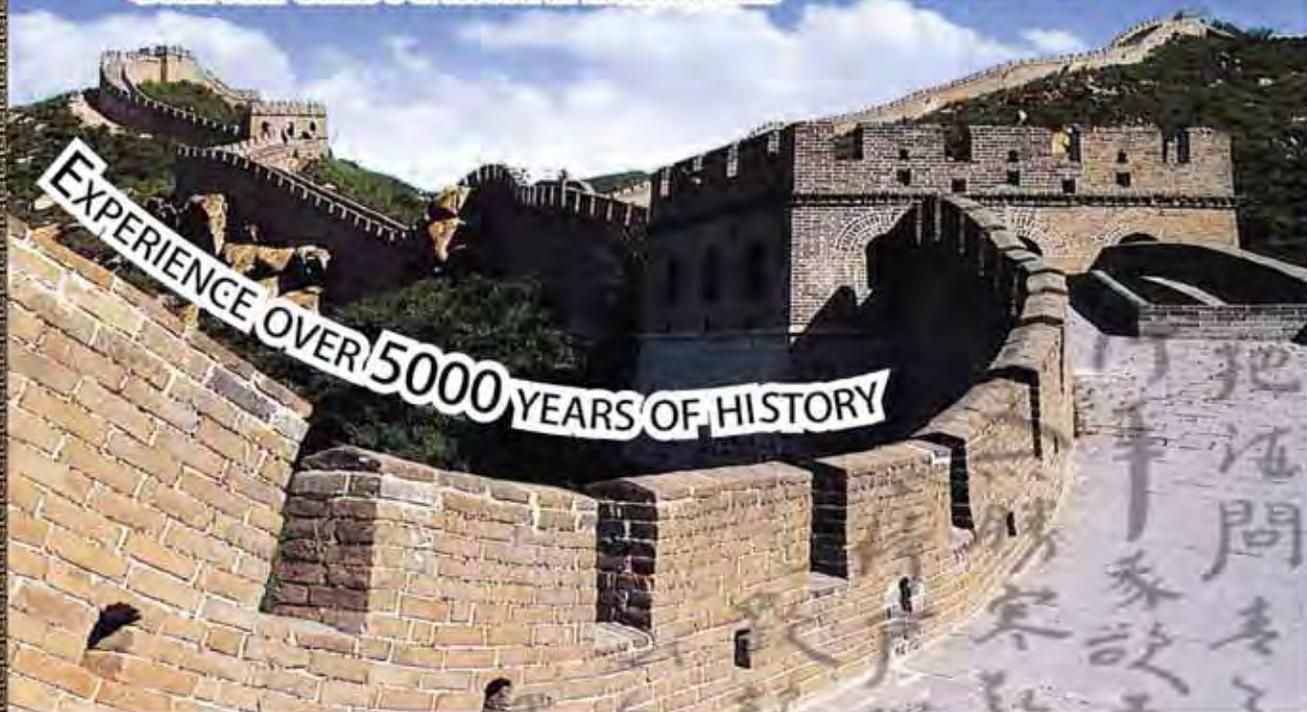
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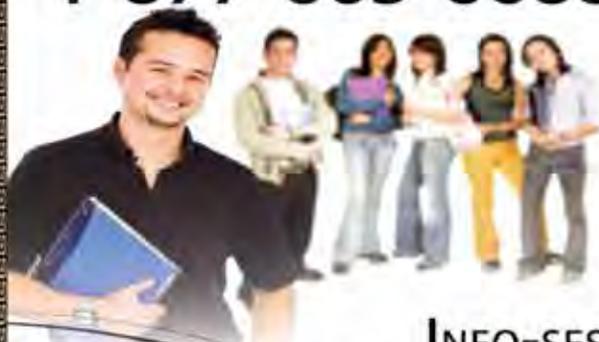
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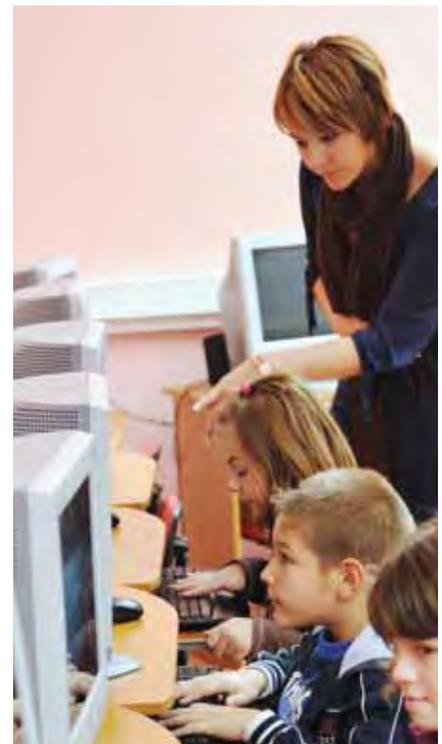
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A

s we look forward to the CASA 2011 Annual Conference in Niagara Falls, Ontario from July 7 to July 10, 2011, CASA as a professional organization for school administrators continues to move forward with its mandate of providing high quality professional development to CASA members, from coast to coast across Canada in a national conference.

The theme for this year's conference is "21st Century Learning". This topic is one that generates excitement, enthusiasm, and educational conversations in classrooms and school districts across the country, as the 21st century learning skills are implemented in schools. CASA is pleased to present such esteemed keynote speakers as Roger Garriock and Ian Jukes to set the stage for us with their messages about innovation in teaching and learning in our current digital age. Furthermore, there will be 34 workshop sessions on various topics based on the theme of "21st Century Learning" for

participants provided by 70 presenters from jurisdictions across Canada. On behalf of the Executive, I would like to express appreciation to the CASA affiliates and members with their teams for their tremendous response to the 2011 Annual Conference. As a result of the positive teamwork, the CASA 2011 Annual Conference continues to be an excellent professional development opportunity for CASA members, to enhance their learning about new programs and initiatives, share information, and to network with other members from across Canada.

This year CASA welcomes members to Niagara Falls, the home of the internationally renowned scenic wonder, and many other attractions for members and their families to enjoy while in attendance at the conference. The Niagara Region features golf courses, the Shaw Festival in historic Niagara-on-the-Lake, the beautiful Niagara Parkway, restaurants and wineries, along with many other activities for enjoyment and entertainment during a stay in the beautiful Niagara Region.

I would like to take this opportunity to personally extend an invitation to all members of CASA to attend the CASA 2011 Annual Conference.

This time of year presents many challenges for Canadian school administrators making decisions regarding budget, staffing, programs and facilities in school districts. These decisions require focus, time, and coordinated efforts in order to make the best decisions on behalf of all students in Canadian classrooms. As school administrators, we continue to work within our school districts on improving student achievement, particularly in literacy and numeracy skills, and meeting the needs of all students by continuing to provide quality, educational programs in our Canadian schools.

CASA members continue to lead their educational communities, and to grow professionally working with their teams to support students in their educational journey of 21st Century Learning. On behalf of the Executive I look forward to seeing everyone at the CASA 2011 Annual Conference in Niagara Falls, July 7 to 10, 2011. Thank you for your continued support of CASA!



Lee Ann Forsyth-Sells
CASA President

“As a result of the positive teamwork, the CASA 2011 Annual Conference continues to be an excellent professional development opportunity for CASA members, to enhance their learning about new programs and initiatives, share information, and to network with other members from across Canada.”

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Keeping content current and relevant is the responsibility of superintendents and those who monitor curriculum in our schools. There is evidence from students at every level that they wish to learn about new things that are happening in this fast moving world. Parents support provision of content that is new and based on happenings in our global society.

Our world continues to provide meaningful happenings from which we can draw new life lessons and comparisons with what we find in textbooks and fixed units of study.

The events of this year demand review and study by our young people. As senior administrators, we should look for applications within our school curriculum and continually question what is being done to involve students in meaningful ways.

Just think of the lessons to be learned from the terrible natural disaster in Japan. What happened there in minutes speaks volumes to science and geography. It shows us the power of nature and creates a respect for the environment. There are lessons to be learned about preventive construction and building locations. The nuclear complication which followed allows for a detailed study of how power is generated around the world and the precautions that must be taken.

Handling the natural crisis has shown a very complex image of the Japanese culture. In the midst of terrible trauma, there has been a stoic acceptance and remarkable activity of renewal. No doubt there are basic lessons here for the differences in human nature.

The events that have transpired in the Middle East provide years of study about history and religion and economics. The questions that come to mind immediately are: Why did this happen now? What are the desired outcomes? What is the role of young people? What do these changes mean to the Western world? Are the current impacts temporary or will our world be changed permanently?

Is there a place for study of the massive oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico? Think of the impacts of that disaster: natural devastation, economic costs, effect on industry and local businesses. Such an event will change the nature of work and living conditions in that area for years to come.

These are only three major events of the past year. Consider also on-going wars, political changes and pending elections, the impact of communication developments and the involvement of our population with various sport activities and media changes.

CASA members work hard to make schools effective. As we work to improve new learning, we must promote effective inclusion of current issues and draw significant lessons from them for our students.



Frank Kelly
Executive Director, CASA

Announcing the CASA Planning Forum

All CASA affiliates from across Canada will be invited to send system leaders to a two-day session considering future national education priorities. From these deliberations, CASA will set directions for the next three years.

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Environmental Learning Centres

Environmental stewardship starts in the classroom.

By Paul Scinocca

The Upper Grand District School Board believes that, as a school system, it has the unique opportunity to teach environmental stewardship in the classroom which can spill over to the home and at the same time, stimulate interest in environmentally responsible choices for thousands of future home owners.

Part of the Board's strategy is to construct a series of 'Environmental Learning Centres' which students use as classrooms. These free standing buildings which are full-time elementary school classrooms, contain teaching resources to support lessons which align with Ontario Curriculum, in energy conservation, renewable resources, solar advantages of building position, natural processes and energy generation.

The size of the buildings allows the materials and technologies used in their construction to be more residential in nature and be visible and interactive to students.

The first centre which is in Orangeville, is a straw bale insulated, wood framed building, clearly oriented on the site to take advantage of solar energy and to protect the inside environment from the prevailing winds. The majority of windows face south to allow sunlight into

the building. The winter sunlight provides passive solar heat as well as natural light to the interior of the building. Overhangs protect the classrooms from the heating effect of direct sunlight in the summer. The north face of the building has very few openings creating a solid barrier to the prevailing wind. Any children who have turned their backs to a cold winter wind to stay warm will understand how this works.

The energy demands of the building are reduced by its orientation, innovative technology and its highly insulated character. In 2010, the 2,280 square foot

building, which gets all its power from electricity, used approximately 17,000 kWh to provide all energy requirements including heat, lights and ancillary power. The environmental centre generates its own electricity through renewable resources with a small wind turbine (1.8 kW) and solar photo voltaic (PV) panels installed on the centre's roof. The performance of the photo voltaic system can be monitored on the internet by students and the public for educational purposes. See <http://enlighten.enphaseenergy.com/public/systems/hrbH1162>.



Island Lake P.S. – Environmental Learning Centre, 50 Oak Ridge Drive, Orangeville.



A solar to air collector, constructed with recycled cans, provides heat on sunny days.



Rainwater Cistern located in the rafters, visible to students.

The Island Lake Environmental Learning Centre is presently operating at zero net energy costs. The electricity generated by the 2kW PV system is supplied to Orangeville Hydro under the terms of the Feed-in-Tariff (Micro F.I.T.) Program at 80.2 cents/kWh which creates revenue to offset the operating cost. In 2010 the revenue from the 2,400 kWh generated completely paid for all the power coming from Orangeville Hydro.

Conservation is a major theme of the building. A rainwater cistern, completely visible to the students, stores runoff water from the roof for use in the toilets of the two washroom facilities.

The building is naturally ventilated and cooled when the outdoor weather conditions allow it. Windows open on command of the building automation system and, in conjunction with the roof cupola, provide fresh air to the classrooms. Even low wind speeds can result in significant ventilation rates. The building also incorporates an

innovative solar to air heat source using recycled pop cans.

When the outdoor environment cannot provide natural ventilation, a heat recovery unit will reclaim heat from the exhausted air to partially heat or cool the fresh air being brought in to ventilate the classrooms. These heat recovery units have been modified to allow students to visually observe the inner workings.

The reclaimed heat can be demonstrated using temperature readings and the environmental building data is available at any time on the internet through a customized building automatic control system. This information is available to students in the Upper Grand District School Board so that the actual data can be used in lessons at any of our schools.

While of environmental and economic significance, the excitement generated by this initiative is more about the lessons it supports. The classes using these buildings daily are immersed in a classroom

supporting environmental learning. In its first year of operation, the students in the Island Lake Centre provided tours for over 500 students from surrounding schools. The environmental concepts have been incorporated into science and technology curriculum lessons available to teachers across the district.

The Upper Grand District School Board intends to build on the success of its Orangeville Centre.

The second environmental learning centre under construction at Minto Clifford Public School in Harriston, Ontario, is scheduled to open in 2011. The building is constructed using environmentally friendly left-in-place wall forms made from recycled wood products and a cement binder. The building utilizes a biomass boiler, which can burn either wood pellets or corn to generate heat. The equipment is all exposed for students to see. On the south facing wall a prototype solar collector will help heat the classroom on sunny days.

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Minto Clifford Learning Centre under construction.

Here is what some of our students are saying ...

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“I think this building is a great thing because it has helped me learn about SAVING ENERGY and how much power it takes to make energy. The building has pop can heaters and pop cans are used.”

“Some of the features make me wish I had them in my own house. I love the materials it is made of.”

“What I like about being in the Eco-Pack is being able to tell my parents about it.”

“It helps us learn about energy because it is right around us, like we can see it, and touch it, and it teaches us to work green and be green, and that is a very important lesson in life.”

One of the most interesting features of the Minto Clifford Environmental Learning Centre will be the living wall. Classroom air will be ducted through the wall so that it can act as a biofilter removing harmful organic gasses and contaminants.

Presently under construction is a prototype portable classroom built using straw bale insulated wall construction. It is being built off site and will be moved to Rockwood Public School. The comfort of the environment and the energy consumed by this building will be compared to our

regular portables on site. Construction has started on a third Centre in Fergus, Ontario.

Shaping Our Schools, Shaping Our Future: Environmental Education in Ontario encourages schools to, “Model environmentally sound practices in their facilities and operations development.” The Upper Grand District School Board is taking this recommendation to heart and aims to utilize these buildings to teach students about the environment and to be an environmental leader in our field.

After the first year of operation in Orangeville, we know one thing for sure... the students love their classroom and are eager to share its lessons with anyone who comes to visit. ○

Paul Scinocca presently manages the Capital and Renewal efforts of the UGDSB. He spent much of his professional engineering career as a consultant designing structures with a particular interest in school buildings. He has taught at Conestoga College and at the University of Waterloo in both the Faculty of Engineering and the School of Architecture.

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Reporting on the Growth of the 21st Century Learner

By Anita Griffore and Peter Maguire

What are the qualities of people that equip them for a life that is responsive to ever-changing demands and information? What qualities do our young people need to live fulfilling and successful lives in the future? These are the questions we asked our stakeholders as we revised our report card to focus on standards and to separate behaviour from the demonstration of learning outcomes.

Relying on the ideas of Ken Robinson, Howard Gardner and Art Costa, we were hoping to stretch our programming to recognize creative thinking, social responsibility and the ability to synthesize large quantities of data in solving problems.

Once the academic learning outcomes section of the new report card was in place for all grades, kindergarten to grade eight, the old section on ‘Work Habits and Behaviour’ was left to each school to define as the standards based report card was piloted. There was no continuity between schools and disagreement on what was important. Some reporting areas were very broad and vague (works hard) and others were very specific (on time). Items being reported on did not reflect our district’s motto “Educating for Life”. A decision was made to standardize

this section of the report card across the district but the task then was to select the key aspects we could commit to reporting on from year to year.

An invitation was sent to parent groups, community business, civic and church organizations, Aboriginal groups, student leadership groups, trustees, teachers and school administrators, educational partners (Montessori, Department of Education), etc. asking them to send a representative to a forum to help us identify the key characteristics 21st century citizens would require. Over 100 people turned up, representing a broad

spectrum of the community and, using the World Café method, they spent the day identifying qualities considered essential for full participation in the community of the future.

Educational services staff of the district clustered the qualities identified at the World Café into four key areas of personal development: critical thinking, social intelligence, metacognition, and problem solving. Representatives from the original workshop reconvened and validated this clustering. The four areas of development were defined by the educational services team in the following ways on page 22:

K-2	3-5	6-8
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> attempts to solve problems. explores alternative solutions to a problem. perseveres when attempting to solve problems. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> takes initiative. takes risks. perseveres through process to completion. shares process. considers variables. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> spends sufficient time on a problem before asking for assistance. finds information or resources to solve problems independent of the teacher. perseveres when faced with challenging problems. develops awareness of uncontrolled variables. applies various strategies in solving problems. evaluates the reasonableness of a solution. recognizes the validity of various solution strategies.

Figure 1. Expanded Criteria for problem Solving

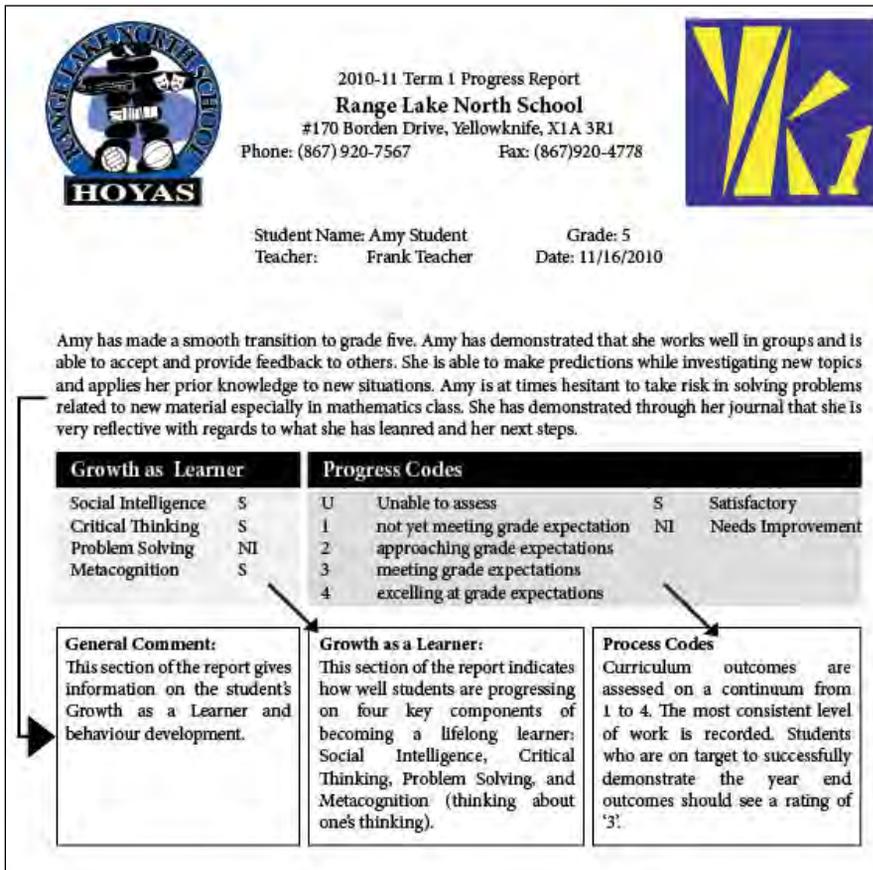


Figure 2. Report Card Sample

Social intelligence:

Social intelligence can be described as a combination of abilities. The first is a basic ability to understand others. The second is the ability to interact successfully with others. Social intelligence can be thought of as the ability to get along and cooperate. Social intelligence also includes an awareness of how one's actions impact others and the surroundings.

Social intelligence includes:

- Advocating for self (asking for help);
- Having and keeping a friend;
- Managing impulsivity;
- Being responsible and accountable for one's actions;
- Working with others;
- Respecting self, others, and the environment;
- Having a positive outlook; and
- Performing community minded actions.

Critical thinking:

Critical thinking is reflective thinking. It is focused on identifying one's understandings and connecting one's response to those understandings. It involves creative activities such as formulating hypotheses,

plans, and counterexamples; planning inquiries; evaluating observations and actions; and recognizing alternatives.

Critical thinking includes:

- Being inquisitive;
- Asking questions;
- Applying knowledge to new situations;
- Evaluating and justifying ideas and actions; and
- Managing time appropriately.

Metacognition:

Metacognition is thinking about thinking. It is the ability to understand how one learns and which strategies work best at different times. It is a critical ingredient to successful learning. It consists of three processes: monitoring progress, making changes, and adapting strategies.

Problem solving includes:

- Showing an awareness of the process of learning;
- Identifying what you already know;
- Defining learning goals;
- Demonstrating intrinsic motivation;
- Estimating time requirements;
- Making plans and setting priorities;
- Organizing materials;

- Reflecting on work;
- Monitoring self by questioning and self testing;
- Providing your own feedback;
- Exhibiting concentration;
- Monitoring self (health, wellness, other influence on his/her learning);
- Setting goals and priorities;
- Demonstrating self-confidence; and
- Showing passion towards an activity.

Problem solving:

Problem solving is applying knowledge to new situations. It may involve using creative methods to approach a situation. Successful problem solving involves the willingness to take risks that may not necessarily lead to correct solutions. Successful problem solvers demonstrate perseverance.

Problem solving includes:

- Showing stamina;
- Being flexible;
- Being resourceful;
- Demonstrating self-confidence;
- Demonstrating initiative;
- Being resilient and adaptive;
- Showing perseverance; and
- Taking risks.

In the months following, teachers were gathered by division (K-2, 3-5, and 6-8) and criteria were developed for each characteristic which would reflect appropriate development at that stage. The following description of problem solving exemplifies how a student demonstrates the characteristic across the elementary years. The chart (See Figure 1) is used by teachers who are reporting progress on the report card and can form the basis for the general comment section identified in the report card sample (See Figure 2).

The implementation of this new reporting of growth as a learner with students, parents and teachers has been smoother due to the process put in place. The inclusion of the stakeholders into the development of the criteria has led to much greater acceptance and support in the community. The investment in the process has paid off. ○

Anita Griffore is currently district coordinator for student support services in Yellowknife, NWT.

Peter Maguire is currently district instructional coordinator in Yellowknife, NWT.



Figure 1. Expanded Criteria for problem solving.

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Bursting Boundaries and Borders BIT by BIT

Technology provides unique opportunities at St. Thomas Aquinas RCSR No. 38.

By Mark Basaraba, Jamie McNamara and Troy Davies

Education systems can benefit significantly from the sharing of expertise related to emerging technologies in teaching and learning. Technology provides unique opportunities for expanding educational programs for students and increasing levels of student engagement. Used effectively, it can also lead to gains in student achievement, inspire changes in teaching practice, and increase students' and teachers' proficiencies in the digital domain.

Those battling to reduce high school student drop-out rates are discovering that the source of the problem often resides not with disengaged teens per se, but with learning environments that do not capture the curiosities of students and provide them with the challenges necessary to sustain their interest. In short, high school students are 'checking-out' because they are bored (Barak, 2006). A 2005 survey by Peter D. Hart Research Associates that polled nearly 500 diverse young people

aged 16-24 found that most students did not drop out of high school because they could not do the work. In fact 90 per cent had passing grades, but 81 per cent were longing for more 'real world learning' that would be more engaging.

Linking the positive potential for technology with a desire to increase student engagement, in the spring of 2008 St. Thomas Aquinas RCSR#38 applied for and received a grant from Alberta Education for a research project that would enable us to make this linkage. We named the project BIT, which was an acronym for Building Integrated Technology Together. The research project was to span over two years and involve the division's three high schools, a core group of 15 teachers, six site-based administrators, three division administrators and over 500 high school students. Simply stated, the mandate of the research project was to **implement projects that would integrate technology in order to improve student engagement and success in high school.**

The BIT project focused on applying technology in the classroom so as to assist in the

delivery and enhancement of instruction that would provide students with real-time learning and community connections. Through the use of web-based software, teachers were supported in their classroom pedagogies by being able to SKYPE connections to local, provincial, national and international workplaces. In so doing, students were able to interface with people who were actively applying the very skills in their workplaces that students were learning about in their classrooms. With each new connection, the borders of the classroom were breached as students and teachers tapped into the ever-expanding world, in real-time, that existed beyond the confines of the school walls.

The following four SMART goals were pursued during the project:

1. By September of 2010, 80 per cent of high school teachers in the division will be using real-time learning to engage students though connecting new knowledge with application in the real world.
2. By September 2010, the division's high schools will strategically use instructional technology to increase the percentage of

grade 10, 11 and 12 students who stay in school and make academic progress towards high school completion.

3. By September 2010, 80 per cent of students will self-report an increase in their engagement as a result of incorporating real-time learning in the classroom.
4. By September 2010, 50 SKYPE-enabled local, provincial, national and international contacts will be made with businesses, organizations and individuals and entered as data in a resource directory for shared use.

The project had a significant impact in four domains. These were:

1. Impact on student learning

- By the end of the project, students were approaching their teachers and inquiring about what was coming up next in the curriculum they were studying. In turn, students themselves created SKYPE lessons that they would incorporate in their classrooms. In essence, students were creating real-time learning opportunities for themselves and their peers by establishing connections with experts in the community and around the world.
- A high level of student engagement was reported, specifically 85 per cent, when SKYPE lessons were used in the course of instruction.

2. Impact on teaching

- Teachers became familiar with technologies and software that could enhance their instruction.
- SKYPE enabled the development of Professional Learning Communities across the division that transcended considerable geographical distances. The outgrowth of these PLCs included common lesson planning, common examination preparation and SKYPE interactions between students and classrooms.

3. Impact on leadership

- Using a capacity-building leadership model, teachers have been able to coach each other using software and hardware to deliver real-time learning. Teachers, in turn, have been able to coach students assisting them to plan SKYPE-based peer lessons.
- Professional growth in the areas of technology and student engagement has increased.
- Each school involved in the project has a site-based technology and instruction leader to make the program plan sustainable.

4. Impact on school operations

- The division supported and encouraged continued growth and development in the integration of technology with instruction. In



Mark Basaraba is principal of Holy Trinity Academy in Drayton Valley, Alberta and served as the BIT project's leader. Jamie McNamara and Troy Davies are the Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent, respectively, of St. Thomas Aquinas RCSR #38.

the fall of 2010, two days were dedicated to division-wide professional development in the area of technology. This included the BIT project being presented to the division's teaching staff including discussion of possible implications and opportunities for elementary and junior high schools.

- A noteworthy advantage of this project was the low cost of sustainability and the low maintenance required for ongoing technological support. Initially, however, there was extensive work involved in the purchasing, hardwiring, and implementation of the technology required.

Challenges encountered

At the start, the major challenge was for teachers to identify how they could use SKYPE in their lessons. Uncertainty and fear of technological failure during a classroom lesson posed additional challenges.

In order to assist teachers in identifying how SKYPE could be used in curricular areas, the project team gathered teachers from each of the three high schools and organized SKYPE lesson planning days. The collegial planning proved successful with many teachers claiming it had been some of the best professional development they had experienced.

In response to teachers' fears of technical failure during a SKYPE lesson, a manual was created to assist teachers in both planning and light trouble-shooting of technical issues. A calendar of events was created in each school that would allow the site-based project lead to be on alert should they be required to provide technical support during a SKYPE lesson.

A website was also created to assist teachers in gathering survey data related to the project's aims and view videos on how to SKYPE. This site can be viewed at: www.buildingittogether.com.

Promising practices

Promising practices emerging from the project relate to observed increases in:

- Teacher use of technology during instruction;
- Students wanting to use technology in their learning;
- Using technology for administration of school operations;
- Forming community/business relationships within our communities;
- Building leadership capacity;
- Building collegial PLCs among teachers in three different schools separated by hundreds of kilometres; and
- Students planning technology-inspired classroom lessons, alongside teachers, which requires students to be looking into the curriculum and taking ownership for their own learning.

The Alberta Ministry of Education recently presented the division with an award for improvement in high school completion, a distinction which is partly attributable to the success of the BIT project. ○

Mark Basaraba is the principal of Holy Trinity Academy in Drayton Valley, Alberta.

Jamie McNamara is the superintendent of St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic School Division.

Troy Davies is the assistant superintendent of St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic School Division.

Lead at the Elbow

Implementing technology with the 21st century learner in mind.

By Cindy Matthews

Ours is a rapidly changing society. The job of educators is to prepare youth for an unknown future. With that in mind, teachers have a specific and purposeful role in using social media with 21st century learners. In this article, we explore best practice considerations when implementing technology into modern-day classrooms.

Why bother?

Youth spend inordinate amounts of time using social media. Viewed as time-wasting by some, other educators believe schools must instruct the ethical, creative, and responsible use of social media.

Jodi McMahon is an experienced literacy coach and teacher at P. W. Kaeser High School, Fort Smith, Northwest Territories. She and her students have a Facebook site (pwkreads) where students are presented reading challenges and discussion opportunities. In 2010, her English class developed a Wikipege called pwklitrocks. These ideas arose from a pilot project, Literacy with

Information Communication Technology (LICT).

She believes in getting 'into students' worlds and engaging them in a positive way...we have an opportunity not only to connect with...our learners, but also to promote learning that matches with the real world...that will propel them toward the next century'.

Students get immediate feedback on work posted and work is recognized. A written record of teacher and student comments exists.

Alberta teacher Shelley Cunningham is a lead teacher in the 21st Century Project and Alberta Initiative for School Improvement. Cunningham uses wikis for discussions and journal writing. Email is a communication tool for students and parents. One literacy question alone was viewed 2000 times and had received more than 150 responses in a class of 25 students. This type of exposure to a critical question cannot be duplicated. Students are more engaged and apt to participate using this mode of communication than traditional formats. Teachers mediate and direct the conversation while providing online support and input.

These tools allow for greater clarity of expression. A student writes, rereads, edits, rephrases and edits again. Reflection on ideas and writing process is considerable.

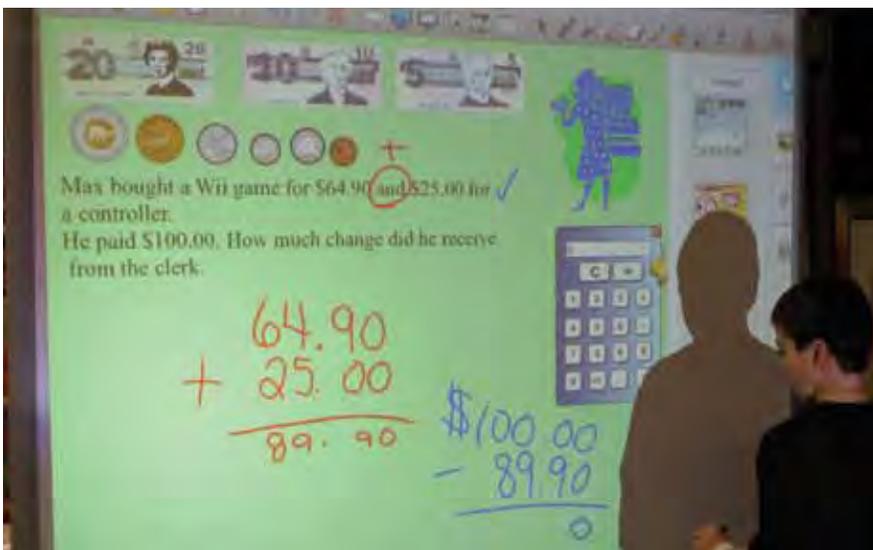
So now what? What are the steps to implementation?

Greg Bass, superintendent of Education in Rocky View Schools, Alberta, says establishing a common district-wide vision is vital. Community engagement is significant to success. The district used a Facebook community page, Twitter and Word Press to invite input. Emphasizing the development of employment skills helped with parental buy-in. Further, the district built a powerful wireless system with abundant bandwidth to support access. Teachers were provided MacBooks, projectors, Interactive Whiteboard Technology, and professional development. These supports are important in helping staff move from 'knowledge disseminator to facilitator of knowledge construction'.

In the Northwest Territories, McMahon says the LICT pilot project is in three Northwest Territory schools and is poised to spread. Professional development has a technology integration focus and the territorial wikispace facilitates collaborative sharing by staff. Teachers using technology in the classroom lead by example.

Ryerson Public School in Cambridge, Ontario, is a unique example of a whole school technology venture. The original Ryerson was torn down and a new one built on the same site. Principal Peter Berndt designed and implemented a school with a technology vision. Every classroom has a document reader, access to iPads, built-in Smart Boards as well as sound-field speakers wired into the infrastructure.

This writer observed technology actively being used by Ryerson Public School special education teacher Kim Gill. Her students are reluctant readers and writers. Students use Twitter to message parents, a local university, classmates, and other teachers.



A student with special needs is thoroughly engaged in completing a mathematics problem on the Smart Board.



Technology must be up-to-date and accessible as evidenced by these two users.



This student uses traditional and contemporary forms of text at Ryerson Public School.

They participate in Teddy Bears around the World. (www.langwitches.org/blog/travel/teddybearsaroundtheworld) One student blogged about taking a class mascot on a cruise and then received feedback on his ideas.

Gill maintains a class website. Students write collaboratively through the Progressive Story Project (<http://writeyourstory.wikispaces.com>) with students from Canada and the U.S. One student likes using Global Read Aloud because you can talk to people anywhere in the world.

And therein resides the hook...**a global presence.** This alone validates to students the purpose of writing. When written words are 'valued' by others, students are more motivated to take risks and share ideas. Her students are engaged in learning in ways she never anticipated. Now her previous 'home-work avoiders' are responding to online questions at home!

Some parents who might not have come into the school offer ideas and ask questions through social media. Surveyed parents say they prefer staying in touch through Facebook.

Peter Berndt's vision of a technologically savvy staff and student body will be sustained if teaching staff remains engaged over the long run.

Berndt sums it up this way, "We can't afford to become dust balls."

Wait a second? What about the naysayers?

Implementation of technology is not without issues. Many stakeholders are totally against the concept of technology in the classroom. These range from parents to community members to teachers themselves.

"This type of exposure to a critical question cannot be duplicated. Students are more engaged and apt to participate using this mode of communication than traditional formats. Teachers mediate and direct the conversation while providing online support and input."

The success of young people in the work place is contingent on aptitude with technology. Further, youth need to be critical users of technology and educators have a role in teaching the multimedia formats and platforms as well as netiquette. Educators must keep pace with those changes and embrace learning as 'modern literates'. Infrastructure, hardware and professional development dollars are required. Accountability is critical. And teachers must determine how to measure student growth and learning.

Bass says that teachers need to shift thinking and practices. In their district, future editions of textbooks will only be available in online formats. Staff must have an online presence with student learning as the focus.

Bass says, "This is not a fad—it is a revolution." His district has committed to facilitating teachers to work in a 'community of practice'. Fear of change is not helpful. District leaders must show persistence in the visionary plan. Sure, there will be growing pains and discomfort. With supportive 'master' teachers providing guidance, the negativism of naysayers can be contained.

McMahon and Gill agree that learning about technology and monitoring usage requires commitment, interest and time.

McMahon reminds us that deconstructing lessons to determine the skills being taught and/or reinforced is critical. Students are risk takers who uncover media tricks that teachers never imagined. And teachers have to be comfortable within that construct.

Greg Bass sums up the need for technological innovation this way: "It is about learner engagement, fostering innovation, creativity, collaboration, critical thinking, and civic, social and environmental stewardship. All students need to be successful, in and along a path of their choice, for their flourishing."

Social media: Powerful educational potential we cannot afford to miss. ○

Cindy Matthews is a vice-principal of Section 23 and Enrichment in Waterloo Region District School Board. She has taught at the community college, secondary, and elementary levels. She was an itinerant developmental education resource teacher before going into administration. In addition, Cindy is a special education instructor for online AQ courses in special education (Parts I, II and behaviour) for Queen's University. You can view more of her writing at www.cindymatthews.ca.

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Engaging the Digital Native

How blended learning will increase student engagement and improve student learning.

By Travis Kartye

Students will soon be given a chance to enhance their learning. This enhancement will immerse them in the curriculum, engage students in their learning, and change their learning. The change will be dramatic, for the teacher, yet natural to the student. The natural progression will come much later than it should, but it will never be too late, and will have all teachers rethinking their pedagogy. This pedagogy will improve student engagement, resulting with improved student success.

cLearning, or classroom learning, is common place for curriculum delivery. However, fewer students and teachers have heard of eLearning, or electronic learning, which allows a student to complete a course online over the Internet. The benefits of this curriculum delivery method are numerous, yet currently reach a very small subset of the elementary and

secondary school sphere. However, the next phase of online curriculum delivery will affect every single teacher and will benefit every single student.

bLearning, or blended learning, is the next logical phase in the delivery of curriculum to students. Blended learning will fuse the best aspects of classroom learning and electronic learning creating a learning environment that will support students with the goal of improving student learning. bLearning provides students with the ability to use technology in the classroom, and beyond, giving them the ability to use traditional classroom teaching strategies while enhancing student engagement by providing access to myriad of online tools. "The Blended learning environment transforms the traditional classroom to meet the learning needs of its tech savvy students, while fostering and developing 21st century skills."

bLearning students will have access to online tools, provided by the Learning

Management System (LMS) such as drop box for assignment submission, calendar and events management, archived and current class news, rich discussion administration and online curriculum that is rich with multimedia elements. All of this will be available 24/7 from any internet connected device to enhance student engagement when outside the brick-and-mortar classroom facility. Student engagement with learning will have no boundaries, and will now be fluid as it continues to take place beyond the cLearning environment. bLearning will provide students with access to curriculum and the learning community without restriction.

In 2009-2010 eLearning Ontario, or eLO, (www.elearningontario.ca) launched its blended learning pilot to determine the feasibility of bLearning in Ontario. It has met with great success. 2010-2011 saw the pilot expanded to include more students. The Alberta Distance Learning Centre offers courses in a variety of

formats, such as blended. In addition, Alberta provides some direction about bLearning in their annual Guide to Education. In Quebec, a programme sponsored by the Ministry of Education, called Networked Remote Schools is used to engage students in bLearning opportunities based on themed projects. There is some trepid engagement with bLearning across the country, but it's application is soon to explode. Today's digital native student can no longer wait for the digital immigrant teacher, administrators and Ministry officials to realize bLearning will help improve student learning.

With this said, educators will have to address some of the challenges they will face with the implementation of bLearning. For example, we must realize that bLearning will affect everything from students and teachers to administration and infrastructure. Students are technologically ready and waiting for education to move forward. How can we support the teachers and administrators in this transition? How can we support the technology required for bLearning? How can we ensure students are engaged in order to support improved student learning?

During the 2010-2011 school year, Thames Valley District School Board (TVDSB) supported an eLearning project called Improving Student Engagement. This project was founded on the need to help eTeachers collaborate, by sharing best practices, and encouraging a Professional Learning Community.

With the help of Ontario's Ministry of Education Regional eLearning Contact (ReLC), David Miller and the Ontario eLearning Consortium's (www.oelc.ca) Coordinator, Alison Slack, eTeachers have had the

opportunity to learn strategies to improve student engagement. For example, the eTeachers have been introduced to strategies of curriculum delivery that goes beyond the traditional linear, text-based approach.

TVDSB eLearning teacher Shereen Miller states, "It is incredibly beneficial to have a community with dedicated time to discuss eLearning, especially as a new eTeacher. The opportunity to create working relationships with colleagues not only provides a sounding board for pedagogical issues resulting in increased student engagement, but also supports students by providing continuity between courses delivered in the online environment. A key aspect of our community is the sharing of best practices, which ultimately benefits students in all of our online courses."

TVDSB's community of eTeachers has learned about the power associated with providing descriptive student feedback using audio, perhaps, in addition to the more traditional text-based format. With the help of Ryan Ewaskiw (www.tvdsb.ca/webpages/rewaskiw), a learning technologies coordinator, they have discovered that audio can provide more authentic student-centered feedback as the teacher is directly speaking to the student. This was accomplished using a free software application called Audacity (www.audacity.sourceforge.net). In addition, the eTeachers have been working to implement community building by engaging the students in interactive video sessions using technologies such as Ustream and Adobe Connect.

Ustream (www.ustream.tv) is the leading, free, live interactive broadcast platform that

allows anyone with an internet connection and a camera to engage with their family, friends or students anytime, anywhere. On the other hand, Adobe® Connect™ is an enterprise web conferencing solution for online meetings, eLearning, and webinars to deliver rich interactions that students can join easily. The Ontario Software Acquisition Program Advisory Committee (www.osapac.org) advised the Ministry of Education's Ontario Educational Software Service (OESS) in regards to the benefits of Adobe® Connect™ in the eLearning environment and beyond. As a result, Adobe® Connect™ is available to all publicly funded school boards in the province of Ontario. This technology is starting to become used by teachers in the eLearning environment and certainly will have benefits in the bLearning classroom.

Teaching online is fundamentally different from teaching face-to-face. The design of effective online learning requires rethinking teaching practices. The rapid advancements in educational technology encourage the growth of collaborative online learning experiences unconstrained by time and space. eLearning and bLearning will soon become common place in the educational environment and we must provide teachers with strategies to implement online learning to improve student success. ○

Travis Kartye is a learning technologies coordinator with TVDSB specializing in eLearning. He has taught numerous eLearning courses over the past 10 years.

For further information, contact Travis Kartye at t.kartye@tvdsb.on.ca.

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Enabling Learning Through a Strategic Plan

The Lester B. Pearson School Board has developed a Strategic Plan to prepare students for success.

By Robert T. (Bob) Mills

In a fashion that is typically quite Canadian, we find ourselves rushing forward in an effort to develop a new paradigm in our schools in spite of excellent achievement of our students in international assessments.

While there is no doubt that changes must be made to enable our students to function effectively in a shrinking and ever-changing world, we must be careful to build upon the successes we have in place currently. To function with effectiveness in this new context, we must foster within our learners the ability to be creative and to be innovative. Both qualities are derived from continuous and rather intense direction and pursuit, not from a sudden awakening or interaction. Our approaches must lead our students consistently in this direction.

We are all aware of the necessity to engage students in different ways, to adjust our methodologies to their electronic, social-networking world but, while doing so, we must be careful to maintain our focus on those ever-present and absolutely essential basics: literacy, critical thinking skills, and to create, in the words of Socrates, a belief in our students that “wisdom begins in wonder.”

In the Lester B. Pearson School Board, there is active, on-going discussion at staff, political and parent levels that has led to the development and adoption of a Strategic Plan⁽¹⁾ and measurable objectives in four specific directions, each of which contributes to preparing students effectively for increased success in all they undertake, now and as future citizens. A quick review of this material shows clearly the impact of technology on the classroom of the 21st century, a learning space that, at last, has no walls.

The four major directions of the Strategic Plan are all focused on strategies that will foster increased student success and, by the elaboration of specific measurable



A four-year-old kindergarten student at his computer.

objectives, reflect the movement towards organizational and public accountability, a clear feature of today’s educational environment. We have implemented measurement tools that enable teachers, administrators, and consultants to carefully monitor student progress and achievement. Performance data is collected at grade, school and school board levels to enable ever more accurate assessment of the effectiveness of our teaching and learning strategies and our progress towards the achievement goals specified in the Strategic Plan. Staff is currently involved in the design and implementation of the LUMIX© software program that assists in tracking and interpretation of relevant data on student performance.

As the 21st century quickly envelops us, there is no doubt that technology has become a major feature of our pedagogical approaches as well as the basic necessity for our students and for their lives in the future. At the present time, technology is ever prevalent in our approaches to the four strategic directions.

Direction one refers to increasing literacies: reading and writing; numeracy; media; international awareness; multi-cultural learning and appreciation and, of course, technological literacy. ipods© and ipads©,

smart phones and tablets are appearing in our classrooms as teachers embrace the technologies with which their students are familiar. In a kindergarten classroom, the ‘playtime’ moments that once involved blocks and toys now see a rush to computers and ipads© for some quick, fun learning. We might find senior students from a neighbouring high school developing learning activities for them, part of the senior students International Baccalaureate requirements.

While French and English are taught in all of our schools, an increasing number now feature Spanish or Italian or Mandarin as a third language option. Teachers and students are finding Rosetta Stone© software to be a valued aid in this activity. Media literacy has become ever-more important as has multi-cultural awareness. To help ensure that students and staff integrate effectively into this new technological world, a school board-wide Digital Citizenship Project is underway.

Direction two provides a focus on empowerment of teachers and learners through effective use of new technology. Virtually all classrooms are now furnished with SMART Boards© that are in almost constant use by students and staff. An extensive library providing video streaming opportunities of up-to-date material is available as is a

direct link to the wealth of Discovery Channel© materials. As well, our students and staff have access to LEARN (Leading English Educational and Resource Network), an educational foundation that offers e-learning services and support to all English school boards. In addition, our educational services and student services departments provide extensive professional development activities and workshops for staff and parents. Students with special needs are provided with various learning tools such as hearing and speech devices, touch screen monitors and other adaptive devices to assist in their learning.

Internationalization and global partnership development, as specified in the third direction of the Strategic Plan, has been developing rapidly. The board's International Program has brought to our board and schools students and staff from Europe, the British Isles, South America and Asia for professional development programs for staff and for short-term and year-long stays for students who are integrated into our schools. Formal relationships have been established with a number of schools and organizations in China and we currently have teachers training their Chinese colleagues in pastry-making in

a vocational school in that country. Resultant activity in receiving schools brings together students through video conferencing and common classroom activities. Staff and student exchanges between our board and school districts in China, Korea and England are increasing in frequency.

Ecological awareness and effective practice are receiving increasing emphasis throughout our organization with a system-wide energy efficiency project underway. As part of this project being conducted by Johnson Controls, we have benefitted from their development of related curriculum materials for our secondary science program.

It may well be said that, for those of us who are not digital natives, the pace of curricular change is incredibly fast and we must rush into developing new methods and new content to match the tech-savvy clientele we now serve. There can be little doubt that such modification is needed and needed quickly if we are to foster the intimate engagement of our students in their own learning as the years unfold.

As we embrace the new, we must do so with caution, ensuring that we continue to value with single-mindedness and purpose

the basic literacies of reading, writing and numeracy. We must be certain that, amongst the excitement of new technologies, we do not undermine their critical importance to all learning. ○

(1) Available at www.lbpsb.qc.ca

Robert T. (Bob) Mills is director general of the Lester B. Pearson School Board in Montreal, Quebec. It is a K-11 system of approximately 30,000 students in both youth, adult and vocational education sectors and operates approximately 65 facilities on the western half of the Island of Montreal and extends to the border of Ontario.

Over the 30-plus years of his career, Mills has been a teacher, school administrator and board-level administrator prior to assuming his current post five years ago. He has been active in professional associations at the local, provincial, national and international levels. He has held recent association positions such as president of the Association of Administrators of English Schools of Quebec (AAESQ), president of the Canadian Association of School Administrators (CASA) and is currently completing a six year term on the Board of Governors of the American Association of School Administrators (AASA).

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Opening Up a World of Possibilities

Webcams and Web 2.0 tools encourage ultimate student engagement in Fort Vermilion School Division classrooms.

By Kathryn Kirby

Many students in remote northern Alberta rarely have the opportunity to travel the long distances required to experience educational programs available across the province. In an effort to increase students' access to these programs and thereby impact student engagement and the relevance and authentic nature of student learning experiences, webcams were installed in FVSD classrooms. The webcams were initially installed through a Technology and High School Success project funded by Alberta Education and are now accessible by teachers and students at all grade levels. Our students are able to reach out and participate in programs anywhere in the province, country and beyond.

The Fort Vermilion School Division (FVSD) is a small, rural jurisdiction in the north western corner of Alberta. Approximately 3,200 students attend 15 traditional schools, which range in size from less than 50 students to approximately 450. The division also has four Learning Stores that offer an alternative education to prepare students to face life's challenges not only academically but also emotionally and socially. Our schools serve families from diverse cultural backgrounds including several distinct First Nations and Métis groups as well as a large Mennonite population among others.

Through the use of webcams, students in a number of schools across the jurisdiction

have made connections with the Royal Tyrell Museum in Drumheller, the Glenbow Museum in Calgary, as well as the Canadian Museum of Nature in Ottawa. In addition, students have connected with the MP for the Peace River constituency as part of their grade six social studies program, and grade five and six students have connected with the Canadian Space Agency together with students at a school in Ontario. Through each of these learning connections, students have been able to interact with scientists, astronauts, museum interpretive staff and other students whom they have never met.

The benefits of these educational programs are obvious to those participating alongside the students who are actively engaged, asking questions that were prepared prior to the session or that have come up in the moment, much like they would if the students were participating in the educational program at the actual site. In some cases, parents who have been reluctant to support extensive technology use in the past have attended their child's class on the day of the session. These parents now speak of the benefits of this type of learning experience for their children. The use of webcams in the Fort Vermilion School Division levels the playing field by opening up a world of possibilities to our isolated northern students who might otherwise never have such opportunities.

Student learning is also being impacted by the use of Web 2.0 tools and student laptops in a collaborative learning environment. In efforts to actively engage aboriginal

students in particular, who often have high drop-out and low high school completion rates, teachers have been infusing such tools as blogs and wikis within their regular classes. Students post ideas, questions or responses to their teachers' questions on the blogs which can be viewed by their classmates as well as others who have been provided access. This allows students to develop communication and critical thinking skills within a meaningful and authentic learning environment.

As they read and comment on the ideas of their classmates and others, students begin to think differently and more deeply about the topics and their responses. The students' sense of pride when they realize that someone they don't know, especially if that person comes from another part of the province or beyond, has responded to their post speaks volumes about the impact of this type of experience on their learning.

The use of 21st Century Learning strategies and technology is indeed helping students in the Fort Vermilion School Division as we strive to meet our vision of "Building Success: One Student at a Time." ○

Kathryn Kirby is the assistant superintendent of teaching and learning at the FVSD. Her current portfolio includes responsibility for curriculum and assessment from early childhood services to grade 12, student services, as well as technology in education. For more information, you can contact Kirby at kathrynk@fvsd.ab.ca.



Grade six students "meeting" with the MP for the Peace River constituency.



Grade five students interacting with a museum's educational program in southern Alberta.

Think Bigger

The Grande Prairie Public School District is maximizing the use of available technology.

By Cheryl Brown and Sandy McDonald

As leaders in the field of education, we are challenged daily to support 21st century learners with no increase in funds. In order to meet this goal, school leaders must have clarity of vision, be reflective in practice and seek synergies in resource allocation. Integrating technology across all learning environments is essential, but it must be looked at as a challenge of integration rather than as an add-on.

Given that we are 11 years into the 21st century, urgency exists to maximize the use of the available technology across the pyramids of intervention in educational environments. School leaders struggling with limited funds can benefit from remembering that often strategies and technologies applied to students with unique learning needs may also be useful for the larger student body as well.

Schools should consciously seek to maximize the use of assistive technology resources, embed their use in standard practice and to build the collective capacity of all staff. Schools can set a universal goal to support the most students in the most flexible way by enhancing their learning with a finite number of resources. A modified SETT Framework is often used by the Grande Prairie Assessment Team (GPAT) to help area schools use a systems approach to attain this goal (www.joyzabala.com/Documents.html).

The first step is to evaluate the general needs in the school with respect to Student traits. Schools will then identify the Environmental factors available, such as the availability of learning specialists, support team

members, specific assistive technologies (software/hardware), IT department parameters, etc. The third step is to create a master plan that identifies target goals and outcomes (the Tasks to be completed). Lastly, school learning teams evaluate how best to deploy the finite resources (Tools) available for maximum success in achieving identified goals.

An example of a universal goal is to help all staff in a school develop baseline knowledge of the available assistive technology within the jurisdiction. Instructional leaders, learning support specialists and educational technologists can work together to identify core technologies and how they may be used in an integrated manner. Various strategies for developing baseline knowledge for all staff are established and outcomes are identified. The

final step is for the school to determine how these finite resources may be deployed to reach the goal, and to measure and assess success.

In the Grande Prairie Public School District, assistive technology is recognized as essential to success with pyramids of intervention. The past practice of referring students to district specialists is used less frequently with the knowledge that what is good for one student may be good for all students. Graphic organizers (such as Inspiration or Kidspiration), word prediction software, speech-to-text and text-to-speech software are examples of technologies that have the potential to benefit all students. Virtual licensing and the pooling of resources, as used in the Grande Prairie Public School District, can help



jurisdictions to efficiently and flexibly utilize resources to support many students. When schools pool resources to purchase district licenses, such as text-to-speech software, staff and students from any site within the jurisdiction can access it at any time.

As educational leaders in the 21st century, it is our responsibility to reflect on existing practice. On a regular basis we must ask where efficiencies may be gained to better support all students. As assistive technology continues to grow in affordability, availability and utility, we must actively seek to integrate it into our practice.

We must embrace the opportunity to maximize resources and commit to integrating technology in all areas of our schools. Addressing technology integration from a systems approach and building it into our vision for preparing 21st century learners is something we owe the students in our charge! As leaders in this field we must reflect often and think bigger!

Cheryl Brown is currently director of inclusive supports for the Grande Prairie Public School District and a speech language pathologist. She has worked with this district and other jurisdictions in north western Alberta for over 20 years. You can email her at: cheryl.brown@gppsd.ab.ca or phone (780) 539-0333.

Sandy McDonald has been a school administrator since 1997 with the Grande Prairie Public School District. He is currently the director of educational technology for the jurisdiction.

You can email him at: sandy.mcdonald@gppsd.ab.ca, phone him at (780) 532-4491 or find him on Twitter: [acmcdonaldgp](https://twitter.com/acmcdonaldgp).

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Excellence in Educational Technology

The Near North District School Board's Mobile Learning Initiative.

By Christopher Walking

Advances in mobile technology have created a vast array of modes through which people communicate. While it has been argued that today's youth are the most adept at navigating these tools, many teachers are also discovering exciting new ways to engage and support learners. Mobile devices, now capable of cross-mediated communication (using written text, still images, videos and audio) have captured the innovative spirit of educators and have acted as a catalyst for pedagogical change.

In 2009, the Near North District School Board initiated a Teacher Leadership and Learning Project (TLLP) designed to enable teachers to explore the many educational opportunities presented through highly mobile devices and dynamic digital content. The Mobile Learning Initiative emphasized organic, classroom-oriented, teacher-directed action research and provided embedded opportunities to access expertise, implement new skills and share knowledge

and understanding within a professional learning community.

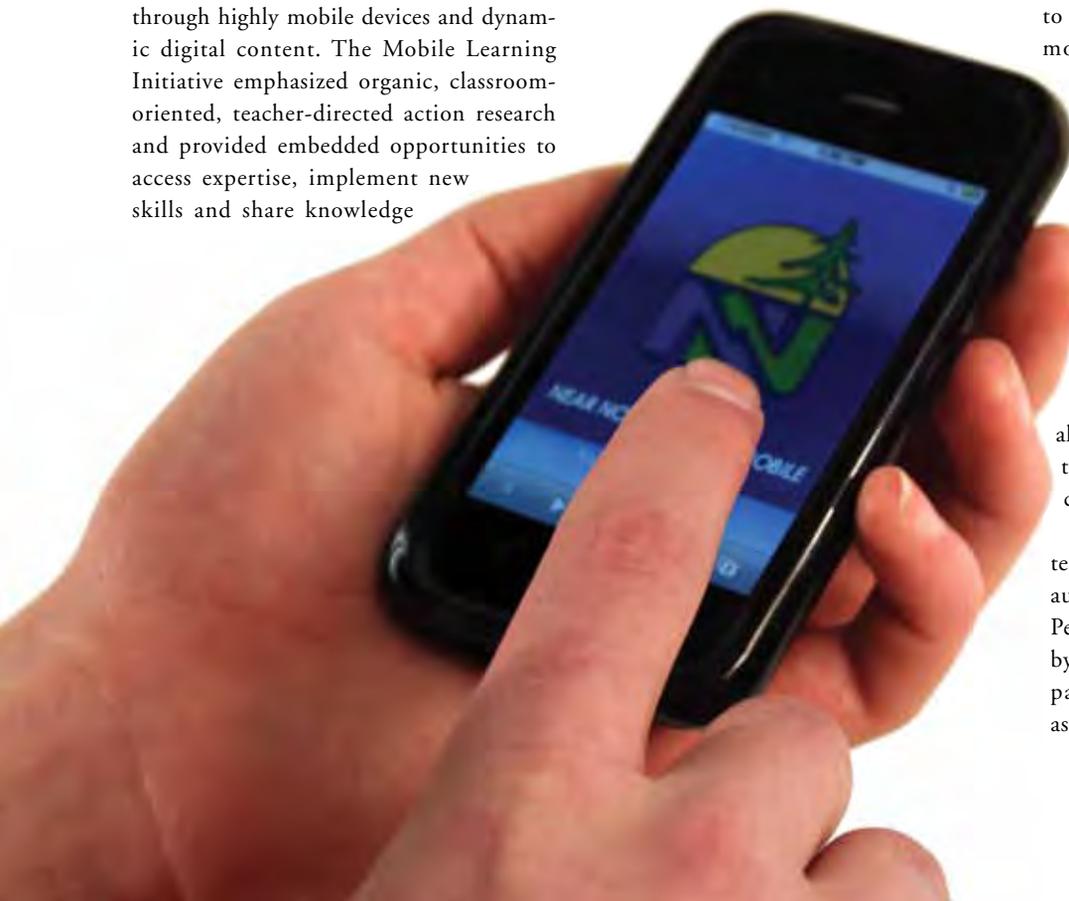
In place of "top down" professional development, teachers were provided with access to the technology (Apple iPods) and openly encouraged to explore how these mobile devices may be used to develop new pedagogical processes and support student success. Teacher experiences were documented and now act as resources to support ongoing professional development, and continuous improvement planning.

Teacher participants developed groundbreaking ways to use mobile devices to deliver learning content, engage learners across a diversity of learning competencies, and differentiate instructional strategies. The project 'team' was comprised of individuals with a wide range of experience working with technology; some considered

themselves 'novice' users while others were able to cite years of experience working with classroom 'techno-gadgets'. Interestingly, one of the most widespread applications of the devices was developed by a group of cooperative education teachers who previously had very limited access to technology. The coop teachers were hoping to find a tool that would support their efforts to differentiate assessment and were intrigued by the audio recording capabilities of the iPod Touch and the integrated Voice Memos application.

The teachers acknowledged that the longstanding practicum logbook and scripted written reflections did very little to engage learners or provide opportunities for meaningful assessment. In fact, incomplete written reflections often acted as a barrier for students attempting to move forward through the course. The mobile technology presented a creative solution. Rather than have students struggle to write their responses to the reflection questions, they used the iPods to record audio assessments using "Voice Memos". Student audio assessments were imported into iTunes and organized into playlists. Teachers were able use the same process to generate descriptive audio feedback responding to the student reflections. In some cases, employers were also asked to provide recorded comments to support student progress during the coop placement.

As the iPod technology improved, teachers began using video in addition to audio to document student achievement. Performance tasks can now be reviewed by the student and teacher and are accompanied by a formative dialogue about assessment and next steps.



As a result of the Mobile Technology Initiative, cooperative education teachers across the Near North District School Board have adopted the use of iPod technology to facilitate differentiated assessment and evaluation. Using audio and now video assessments, students and teachers are better able to track progress during coop placements. This technology has enabled students to more accurately demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of learning expectations. Students may now choose to use oral communication skills to share their ideas, experiences, and responses to the various reflection and integration assignments. The student logbook and journal have been revised to work in conjunction with this form of differentiated assessment and evaluation. Practicum reflection activities have incorporated strategies to support the conceptualization and organization of ideas for oral literacy.

Coop teachers have shared their experiences through the Mobile Learning Initiative: Profiles of Success, (an online resource), and teachers in other curricular subjects and grade levels have begun using the iPod devices to support the implementation of descriptive feedback and meaningful assessment. ○

Christopher Walkling is the secondary educational technology coordinator for the Near North District School Board. He can be reached by email at: walklingch@nean-northschools.ca or by phone at: (705) 472-7015 ext 5066.

Roy Desjardins is the experiential learning/OYAP coordinator for the Near North District School Board. He can be reached by email at: desjardiro@neanorthschools.ca or by phone at: (705) 472-8170.

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Immigrants and ESL Students in the 21st Century

Red Deer Regional Catholic Schools is addressing the needs of an ever-increasing population of non-English speaking students.

By James Ward, M.Ed. and Paul Stewart, Ed.D.

In 2009, Canada welcomed over 600,000 immigrants and refugees where approximately 20 per cent of the refugees were aged 15-24 and 25 per cent were under 15. As migrants enter Canada they strive to measure up to what media, school, and Western society expects of them including their acquisition of English skills.

Many experience disenfranchisement, confusion, and frustration when they enter Canadian schools that differ in norms compared to their homeland schools. Many youth and their families attempt to balance the conflict and anxiety of living and communicating in both their new and old cultures. It is clear that a 21st century Canadian education systems should

be flexible enough to address the needs of an increasing population of non-English speaking students.

What are the factors that influence an ESL student's success in high school? Students new to Canada need to move beyond basic communication as their primary goal and toward 21st century academic competencies that include literacy development, critical thinking, adaptability, social collaboration and learning strategies to become more productive citizens. From day one, our programs for ESL students link to 21st century skills that are tied to academic standards targeted to individual needs.

A major hurdle is to bridge the parental and societal expectations for these children to achieve academically while identifying the factors that will address low graduation rates. Many families move to Canada

so their children have the opportunity for a better life and where it may take two years to adapt to Canadian culture. Along with culture shock, ESL parents may not know what educational opportunities exist for their children which may disable their advocacy ability. Attention to 21st century skills may seem contrary to their vision for the 3R's.

Before attention to 21st century skills can be emphasized, trust in the new culture and school system needs be developed before the students can learn. Many immigrants from Latin America and Eastern Europe come to school from a cultural system that engenders trust in teachers. Immigrants from refugee camps often require time to develop trust in schools and societal systems. A team approach involving community agencies, the



Students using Flipcams while reading a book. Students then can correct their mistakes when they listen/watch themselves read. Flipcams can also be used for interviews, self-reflection, etc.



Students new to Canada learning about two important Canadian icons—the maple leaf and curling.

school and recreational facilities will help new families and their children develop the trust that is needed to start anew. Ongoing and continuous support includes peer and teacher intervention to bridge the gap between the home and school. Our schools use individual approaches to foster relationships with students from different countries to ensure success in school.

Effective communication is key for all students but has different meanings for students new to the English language. Survival in oral language skills is the first thing we help our new students strive for. ESL students need processing time when they translate back to their first language before responding in English. A focus on academic language can follow after students become proficient. Students then have the confidence to lead their parents in English skill acquisition.

Today's students are tech savvy and able to learn such skills quickly. By combining technical skills with critical thinking and problem solving ability, ESL students

become empowered and better prepared for Canadian society. However, in many cases, technology is only available to ESL families at school, public libraries or shared among peers. We support students for 21st century learning through media by including applications, Internet and television in schools. With that, lessons in digital citizenship become as important as other academic subjects for ESL students.

Canada enjoys a tremendous economy which desires manpower to sustain

its prosperity. Increasingly, attention to immigration is looked upon as a solution. As such, our public education system is called upon to provide increased services to Limited English Proficient students arriving at our schools. Effective ESL programs linked to technology, academic language and communication in math, science and civics will enrich our population and may support increased graduation rates among ESL students in the 21st century. ○

James Ward is currently a high school learning coach and biology teacher. Ward has formal and informal leadership experiences in Red Deer Regional Catholic Schools.

Paul Stewart is an associate superintendent who oversees student services areas in Red Deer Catholic Regional Schools.

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Balancing Educational Approaches for the 21st Century

By John Picard and Garfield Gini-Newman

Educators in the 21st century will continue to be subject to theories about teaching and learning that range from the traditional to the progressive. Traditional (or classical) approaches insist upon the need for a clear set of objectives including specific content and defined skills which are taught in an explicit and structured manner. Teaching strategies falling under the progressive or romantic banner tend strongly towards a more natural approach in which children can explore and develop their own understanding, acquiring knowledge and skills in a more personal and meaningful way.

Believing that the dichotomy between teacher-centered and student-centered learning provides false choices in education, Foundations for the Future Charter Academy (FFCA) in Calgary has been developing a balanced educational approach in which the “direct instruction” model of teaching provides a foundation for the integration of more progressive approaches. As an example, teachers working with the support of the Critical Thinking Consortium (TC²) are finding that there is a strong synergy to be found between direct instruction and the development of critical thinking.

The term “direct instruction” derives primarily from the work of Barak Rosenshine (1979, 1986), who identified common “teaching functions” which had proved to be effective in improving student learning. These teaching functions included teaching in small steps with student practice after each step, guiding students during initial practice, and ensuring that all students experienced a high level of successful practice.

In a typical direct instruction lesson, after identifying the key learning targets and the criteria for success, student engagement is activated with a preparatory set of advance organizers, sometimes called the “hook”. When teachers focus the hook on being an invitation to solve a problematic situation or a “critical challenge”, teachers create the conditions, and a context, for student engagement and achievement. When direct instruction is harnessed to problem-solving in this way, the result is the creation of teaching conditions for very powerful learning.

Shirley Coughlan’s grade seven classes spend considerable time learning about the various historical events leading to Confederation. As they learn about these events, they are also learning to determine which ones have the most historical significance. The criteria for historical significance are taught directly, with multiple examples, until the students come to a place where they can apply those criteria on their own.

These young people have been exercising critical thinking and coming to an understanding of historical events that goes well beyond the learning of facts and dates. At the same time, a great deal of direct instruction has been brought to bear in equipping students with solid background knowledge and skills in research, critical thinking and self-expression.

In her grade nine language arts class, Pamela Hunnisett integrates essential critical questions into her practice of direct instruction as she leads her students to an understanding of the universal nature of the “hero pattern”. While the concept of the hero pattern is taught directly, the criteria for determining a hero are worked on together. Students apply and chart the application of the criteria, and use critical questions to guide their work, as

well as their planning of performance tasks to demonstrate their learning and their understanding.

Critical thinking involves the thoughtful application of criteria to a problematic situation. The development of the intellectual tools for quality thinking is done within the model of direct instruction as students are engaged in solving meaningful problems derived from learning objectives set out in the curriculum.

The evolution of the program of instruction at FFCA is revealing the potential of the direct instruction model to effectively integrate a variety of different teaching strategies. The development of critically thoughtful habits of mind and the introduction of critical challenges into the model provide a stimulating environment for learning that engages students and makes their experience more meaningful. ○

John Picard is a principal educator with Foundations for the Future Charter Academy (www.ffca-calgary.com), a charter school in Calgary, Alberta. FFCA has expanded from 211 students in 1997 to over 2900 students on seven campuses in 2010, and has over 4000 students on its waiting list.

Garfield Gini-Newman is a critical thinking facilitator with the Critical Thinking Consortium (www.tc2.ca), and a lecturer with OISE (Ontario Institute for Studies in Education) at the University of Toronto.

For more information on this subject, contact John Picard at john.picard@ffca-calgary.com.



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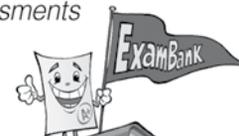


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Creating Vibrant Learning Cultures: *Reaching the Digital-Age Student.*

By Bonnie Crane and Leslee Jodry

Northern Gateway Public Schools (NGPS) has worked with its school-based administrators and teachers through four three-year cycles of the Alberta Initiative for School Improvement projects. The initiatives undertaken have included early and middle literacy, differentiation, numeracy, assessment and critical thinking and represent the underpinnings for student success in the 21st century.

School leaders are motivated, yet challenged, to provide learning environments that support the 21st century learner. They have the complex task of connecting the instructional core with district priorities. Teachers often have a sense of 'one more thing' being added to an already demanding workload. Creating learning environments that support students as 'knowledge builders', flexible, critical and creative thinkers and collaborators that persist in their learning is complex work that often challenges

past practice. To develop understandings of the inter-relationships of the many facets of school improvement, coherent and integrated plans of action need to be carefully constructed.

To support effective learning in the 21st century, principals and teachers must develop competencies to ensure students are prepared for "active participation in a global and knowledge-based society" (Alberta Education, 2011, p.1). Schools have to teach students the skills to advance digital-age literacy, inventive thinking, and effective communication in highly productive classrooms (Lemke, Coughlin, Thadani, Martin, 2003, p.9).

Two models of school improvement are highlighted to illustrate how teachers engage in research-based practices that support the 21st century learner. Four small schools work collaboratively to build a community of reflective practitioners who embed critical thinking into curriculum, instruction and assessment to increase student engagement. A mid-size elementary school utilizes a framework of planning to create learning environments that reflect the needs of the 21st century learner.

Four jurisdictional schools teamed up to overcome the unique challenges encountered by small rural schools. The principals created a structure based on mutual needs to facilitate strategic curriculum planning founded on critical thinking principles. The communities of learning, consisting of grade level partners, ensure teachers have in-depth curricular knowledge to embed effective instructional and assessment strategies that engage students in authentic learning experiences.

The teachers develop and review critical thinking activities. They hold each other accountable to their learning community and build repertoires of 'best practices'. Together, the learning communities deepen understandings of metacognitive and cognitive thinking strategies to create learning environments that allow students to critically evaluate information and construct new knowledge. This framework, founded in affiliations, is flexible to adjust to the evolving nature of school improvement goals and allows both the needs of teachers and students to be the primary focal point for teacher collaboration. It provides a balance between stimulating change and maintaining sufficient focus and stability to keep people moving in a purposeful direction.

In an elementary school, serving 450 students in kindergarten to grade seven, teachers have common understandings of good teaching practice to support both horizontal and vertical collaboration. The school's participation in a provincial project studying the effects of 'one-to-one' technology on student learning enhanced teacher understandings of the 'new literacies' generated by information and communication technologies. Alberta Education's three-year mobile computing study provided the leverage to create a broader and deeper vision of the "educational opportunities 21st century skills can bring to students" (Lemke, et al, 2003, p.7). Using Wiggins and McTighe's Understanding by Design as a framework, grade level teams plan units of study. The teachers engage with curricula to apply



Digital personal devices in Onoway Elementary School provide flexible, mobile tools to support both individual and social learning strategies.



Teachers from Darwell School, David Ovans Elementary, Grasmere School and Rich Valley School collaborate to embed effective instructional and assessment strategies to meet the needs of the 21st century learner. Curriculum is at the core of the work.

research-based instructional and assessment strategies through critical thinking, differentiation, and multi-modal literacies. Meaningful and purposeful learning opportunities are constructed for their students.

Making instructional sense of the vast number of skills the 21st century learner requires to be successful is a challenge. School-based administrators provide the lens to view new practices through frameworks that integrate and build connections between improvement areas. Well-constructed and well-implemented school improvement plans focus teachers' attention on the instructional goals for their students and make links to effective teaching and learning strategies. Teachers who engage in

pedagogical practices that value 'knowledge builders' create classroom environments that prepare students to take charge of their learning and shape their futures. ○

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Learning Through Social Media and Literacy Strategies

By Daniel Espejo and Susana Gerndt

By getting our students to collaborate and share their thoughts we are treating their ideas as meaningful and valued. This seems to be what our “millennials” experience in their digital social lives outside of school. After all, our students are online and in touch. Social media sites such as YouTube, Facebook, Wordpress and Twitter provide students with a platform that gives them immediate access to other’s thoughts. More importantly though, it gives our students a platform to share their voices with the global community.

A few months ago we had the privilege to witness the power of social media in a seventh grade classroom at Monsignor

Fee Otterson Junior High School. That morning, in Robert Madunicky’s social studies class, all students had firsthand experience sharing their learning with their peers by using the microblogging site: <http://todaysmeet.com>. Using this website, students were asked to pose questions they had about a specific topic. Every student in the classroom had the opportunity to contribute and to read everyone’s thoughts. These class generated questions were later used to guide discussions and study sessions for upcoming assignments, projects and quizzes. While the activity was seemingly simple and quick it was a small snippet of the journey for the students in this class. Rob put excellent scaffolds in place so that his students would not only be engaged but also be effective and able to reap the benefits that this type of experience can offer.

Rewind back to September of 2010 when Rob had just started working with his grade seven students in the area of social studies. Although Rob felt very blessed that his students had one-to-one laptops, he remembers that his students were not accustomed to guiding their learning through questioning and collaborating with others to develop common understandings.

Questioning and collaboration were areas that Rob fostered from the start through the cultivation of literacy-rich activities in the day-to-day life of his classroom. Since questioning seemed to be a struggle for most of his students, Rob spent significant time modeling two types of questions: what he calls “right there” questions where the answer can be found directly in the text and “deep questions” where the answer is often an



Students have colour coded cards with question starters when learning how to ask better questions. The goal is to eventually ask various types of questions naturally...without the cards.

opinion or an amalgamation of information and background knowledge. “Barrett’s Cards” is a specific questioning tool that the students learned to use effectively in order to ask more thought-provoking questions of themselves and their peers.

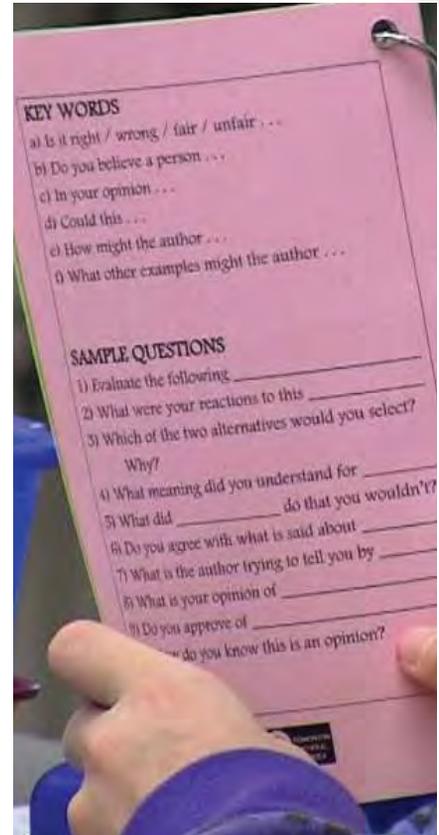
When asked about the benefits of using a questioning strategy coupled with a microblogging experience, Rob’s students were not at a loss for words. Andrea, a student in the class, compared the experience to that of making soup; all of the questions that her classmates generated were put together and “before you know it you’ve made something that’s wonderful, tastes great and helps”. Another student, Joshua, voiced that this made him more confident on tests because he had a better understanding of the questions themselves and how to tackle answering them. Joshua also stated that he liked that his teacher could see what everyone in the class was thinking and monitor their progress on the spot.

The literacy scaffolds that Rob put in place not only helped with the effective use of a microblogging site like

todaymeet.com but also with the execution of projects, the use of mindmapping tools like bubblus.com and collaborative presentation tools like prezi.com. His students have become more adept at several important 21st century skills, such as how to guide their own thinking, work with others and create meaningful representations of what they have learned. Meaningful use of one-to-one laptops, technological tools and project creation would not have been possible without the support of literacy strategies and a master teacher. ○

Susana Gerndt is the content literacy consultant for Edmonton Catholic Schools and this is her ninth year being involved with the district. Prior to this role, Gerndt taught grades two, four and six. She can be reached by email at: Susana.Gerndt@ecsd.net.

Daniel Espejo is an educational technology specialist with a background in teaching high school physics and math. This is his sixth year with Edmonton Catholic Schools. He can be reached by email at: Daniel.Espejo@ecsd.net.



In the beginning, the teacher models the use of the question starter cards as a form of guidance.

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On Q: Delving Deeper with Questioning

By Brian Weishar

Bill and Marlee are team teaching a lesson in a grade nine religion class where students are jotting their ideas on chart paper about the meaning of words like identify, summarize and explain. Janice has grade seven students sort out cards with words such as 'how' and 'why' and match them to what those words request. Janet has her students in her grade 10 English class use a strategy to understand questions before they discuss them in their literature circle groups. Shannon is itemizing each question on a task and assessing how well students perform on each type of question she poses. These are a few examples of Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School

Board teachers who have been working on a multi-year project to gain greater understanding of questions and to how use them more precisely.

The teachers worked with the Mosenthal Taxonomy of Learning (a copy of the taxonomy is posted on the Literacy GAINS website: www.edugains.ca). This taxonomy, like other taxonomies, such as Bloom's or Costa's, provides a structure to classify types of questions. However, this taxonomy identifies three different aspects of questions. Specifically, the Mosenthal taxonomy structures according to three qualities: what is requested (e.g., 'why' requests a reason), the type of processing required (e.g., identify), and the source of the answer (e.g., directly from the text).

We know that questioning is an effective way to help students develop a

range of thinking skills. It is one of the most utilized approaches teachers use to prompt and expose students' thinking. However, the research indicates that teachers are not always strategic with questions. Students encounter, on average, between 300 and 400 a day. About 70 per cent of these questions are lower level, closed types of questions.

One of the goals of the project was to use questions more effectively. The work of the teachers led to several outcomes:

- **More precision**
Teachers found that they eliminated redundancy in questions, and by using the taxonomy were able to identify the kinds and range of questions they were asking, and select more purposefully the questions they needed to tap into the desired learning.
- **Stronger connection to assessment**
When teachers were more purposeful in their questions, they were better able to identify the criteria and skills they were assessing.
- **A more balanced use of questions**
Teachers reported they were asking fewer questions. This means students spent more time thinking deeply about fewer questions. There were also more opportunities for students to pose questions.
- **A means to scaffold**
The structure allowed teachers to more effectively scaffold questions. As they posed high level questions, they also had a way of scaffolding questions, when they needed to, to help all students be able to attempt the high level questions rather than simply lowering the level of the questions.



Grade seven students collaboratively sort question words and match them to the kinds of information that is requested or required by each word as part of their work in developing a greater understanding of questions.

- **Greater clarity of question prompts**

There was greater clarity in what a number of question prompts mean. Teachers created a number of supports including anchor charts to help build students understanding of what certain prompts such as define, summarize and explain mean.

In order to navigate an increasingly complex, information-rich world, students need to develop questioning skills to think critically. In this project, teachers found that students were more thoughtful when they were more deliberate in thinking about questions.

As one teacher put it, “before the students usually raced to get [questions] finished so they wouldn’t have any homework, so they would be answering in very limited ways. Now they are really better at thinking it through...and looking at more than one way to answer the question as well as the best way to answer the question.”

If we want students to use questions to open up possibilities of thinking and learning, they need to be explicitly taught the complexity of questions. Ultimately, when students have a greater understanding of questions, they have greater control when they engage in them. ○

Brian Weisbar is a secondary curriculum consultant with the Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board. He has facilitated this Literacy GAINS project for the last three years.

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CASS professional learning project completing fourth year

The College of Alberta School Superintendents professional learning project to build system leadership capacity is completing its fourth year. Leadership, research and a bias for action drive the Moving and Improving initiative. In conjunction with the Ministry of Education, three provincial education partners and the province's three graduate programs in educational leadership, CASS is actively building district leadership capacity, enhancing school system success and fostering stronger research-oriented linkages among superintendents and the leadership research community. Two research informed documents now shape system level leadership practice in Alberta. The CASS Practice Standard (2008) is designed to inform the individual CASS member's leadership practice, while the CASS Framework of School System Success (Morrow & Schmold, 2009a) supports the collective work of the school district leadership team. The Framework is founded on Ken Leithwood's (2008) CASS commissioned review of the literature on high performing school districts.

New capital funding announced for 120 school projects in Saskatchewan

Saskatchewan's education system received good news today when Education Minister Donna Harpauer announced in February 2011 more than \$60 million in additional funding for 120 school renovation and improvement projects in 65 communities across the province.

"This is funding that will help address enrolment and renovation pressures being felt in schools and school-based child care centres across the province," Harpauer said.

Funding of \$17.8 million is for block capital projects that will provide functional and safer environments for students and children. This includes:

- \$9.9 million for more than 65 roof replacement projects;
- \$1.8 million for seven heating and ventilation upgrades;
- \$1.8 million for relocatable classroom construction and relocation to address overcrowding; and
- \$4.3 million for other miscellaneous projects.

Also, an additional \$42.2 million for capital will complete the funding for eight major projects previously announced and will move the design and construction ahead for the six projects given Approval-in-Principle on March 18, 2010.

Schools in Preeceville, Lashburn, Maple Creek, Balcarres, Swift Current and Yorkton are just a few who will see some funding come their way to initiate new projects or finalize those in progress.

The Government of Saskatchewan has committed more than \$402.6 million since November 2007 to move forward 29 major school capital projects and about 570 additional smaller school capital projects across the province. This represents a record high investment in school infrastructure over a three year period.

New directors of education in Ontario 2010-2011:

Ottawa-Carleton District School Board	<i>Barrie Hammond (Acting)</i>
Superior Greenstone District School Board	<i>Terry Ellwood (Acting)</i>
Near North District School Board	<i>Paul Moffatt (Acting)</i>
Avon Maitland District School Board	<i>Ted Doherty</i>
Lambton Kent District School Board	<i>Jim Costello</i>
Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board	<i>Brian Beal</i>
Peterborough Victoria Northumberland	
Clarington Catholic District School Board	<i>Greg Reeves</i>
Rainbow District School Board	<i>Norm Blaseg</i>
Halton District School Board	<i>David Euale</i>
Algonquin and Lakeshore Catholic District School Board	<i>Jody DiRocco</i>
Grand Erie District School Board	<i>John Forbeck</i>
Bluewater District School Board	<i>John Bryant</i>
Ottawa Catholic District School Board	<i>Julian Hanlon</i>
Windsor-Essex Catholic District School Board	<i>Paul Picard</i>

McGuinty government expands popular high school programs

For the fifth year in a row, Ontario is expanding the Specialist High Skills Major programs to help students graduate and find their passion in the workforce.

Starting September 2011, students will have access to over 1,300 Specialist High Skills Major programs—an increase from 1,000 this year. This expansion will ensure more than 34,000 high school students are able to participate next year—an increase of 6,000 students.

Specialist High Skills Majors encourage students to develop their skills and interests and help put them on the path to a successful career. Through these programs, students earn credits while developing the skills needed for college, university, apprenticeship or the workplace. These programs engage students and are helping to increase high school graduation rates across the province.

Building a well-educated workforce that helps Ontario compete in the global economy is part of the McGuinty government's Open Ontario plan to open the door to a bright future for high school graduates.

Reducing team staffing

District school boards in Ontario face a 10 per cent reduction in executive team staffing over the next two years. Each board is asked to make local decisions.

Education Act

A new Education Act was expected to be passed in the spring session of the Legislature. The retirement of Alberta Premier, Ed Stelmach, may delay the legislative process until later in the term of government.



Premier honours 10 students for contributions to their communities, healthy living

Healthy Living, Youth and Seniors Minister Jim Rondeau presented 10 grade 12 students from across the province with the Premier's Healthy Living Award for Youth at a ceremony held on June 3 at the Legislative Building.

"Our award winners share a common thread—a willingness to help others, outstanding leadership qualities and a dedication to healthy living," said Selinger. "Their efforts are helping to build stronger, healthier communities throughout Manitoba."

This year's recipients of healthy-living awards are:

- Jordan Beer, Springfield Collegiate Institute, Oakbank;
- Grant Burch, Stonewall Collegiate, Stonewall;
- Melissa Campbell, Stonewall Collegiate, Stonewall;
- Sara Catellano, West Kildonan Collegiate, Winnipeg;
- Gurpreet Chahal, Sisler High School, Winnipeg;
- Natalie Dearborn, École communautaire Réal-Bérard, Saint-Pierre-Jolys;
- Veronica Fieldhouse, Glenlawn Collegiate Institute, Winnipeg;
- Shayla Hickie, Morris School, Morris;
- Kevin Nikkel, St. Paul's High School, Winnipeg; and
- Naomi Sawchuk, Vincent Massey Collegiate, Winnipeg.

Each participant received a medal and certificate for their achievements, as well as a letter of congratulations from the premier.

"These young citizens are outstanding role models for other children and youth," said Selinger. "They make our province a better place to live and they are truly inspiring."

The Premier's Healthy Living Award for Youth builds on the existing Manitoba Youth Leadership Scholarship Program that recognizes grade 12 students who have engaged in meaningful volunteer activities that promote leadership, citizenship and healthy living in their schools and communities.

EXL award given to John Mackle

John Mackle, director of education for the Peterborough Victoria Northumberland Clarington Catholic District School Board was selected for the EXL award given by CASA to the Canadian superintendent of the year. John received his award in Quebec City last summer and was later recognized at the American Association of School Administrators conference in Denver in February.

LEADS

The College of Alberta School Superintendents will partner with Dr. Kenneth Leithwood to present at the LEADS (League of Educational Administrators, Directors and Superintendents of Saskatchewan) Annual Policy Conference, February 27 - March 1 in Regina, Saskatchewan.



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Coldstream celebrates a century of learning with new school

Students celebrated 102 years of learning on June 6 in Coldstream by officially opening their new elementary school, a green facility that ensures rural families have access to quality education while supporting a healthy environment, Education Minister George Abbott says.

Located in the Coldstream Valley southeast of Vernon, the school was designed to fit into the natural surroundings of Coldstream Park and reflect the rural lifestyle and rich agricultural history of the region.

The official opening of the new \$13.6-million school will mark a legacy of more than 100 years of education at the site—from its beginnings as a modest one-room school house, to the state-of-the art, green school of today.

Some of the features of the new school include:

- A unique selection of colour materials to reflect a typical fall day in the nearby Coldstream Park, including greens, reds and yellows. The corridors also feature blue-coloured flooring to depict a nearby stream.
- Curved benches in the main foyer that allow children and parents to gather. These have become a popular area for imaginative games at recess and lunch.
- A horizontal geothermal field under the soccer field for heating the school.
- An irrigation system hooked up to the weather station so that watering the fields is controlled depending on how much it has rained.
- Occupancy sensors in all the classrooms turn lights on when a room is entered, off when the room is no longer occupied.
- Various trees and shrubs to provide shaded areas for the school.
- Each classroom has two computer stations, and the school has a wireless network.
- A new parking lot that includes a bus superstation and parent drop off zones. The design ensures buses no longer stop traffic on Kalamalka Road, easing the morning commute.

McGuinty Government supporting clean schools, building clean energy economy

This fall, 126 schools will be turning on more cleaner and renewable sources of power, like solar, wind and geothermal, creating cleaner and more sustainable places to learn for Ontario students.

Using renewable energy will help schools reduce their greenhouse gas emissions, save money on energy costs or earn revenue by selling electricity back to the grid. Schools and boards will reinvest savings and revenue to support improved student achievement and success.

Investing in our schools is an important part of the McGuinty government's, Open Ontario plan, to strengthen and protect public education.

QUICK FACTS

- In 2009-10, Ontario school boards spent nearly \$400 million on utility bills.
- Since 2009, the McGuinty government has invested more than \$620 million to make Ontario's schools cleaner, more sustainable places to learn. As a result, more than 2,400 schools have benefited from more than 4,200 clean energy projects.
- From that investment, \$50 million went toward solar, wind and geothermal technologies as a part of the Renewable Energy Funding for Schools program.
- Solar panels and wind turbines can sell electricity back to the grid through the MicroFIT Program, an important part of the Green Energy Act.
- Ontario's Long-Term Energy Plan includes increasing the province's renewable power supply from sources like wind, solar and bio-energy by more than 500 per cent, up to 10,700 megawatts.
- Ontario now has more than 1,500 megawatts of wind power online generated by more than 800 wind turbines. In 2003, there were only 15 megawatts of wind power generated by 10 turbines. This is a 100-fold increase in wind power capacity.

Innovation growing in rural schools

With projects ranging from Aboriginal performing arts, full-day nature kindergarten, Doukhobor history, renewable energy, and healthy food choices for students, Government is supporting rural schools with a \$300,000 program to enhance learning for rural students.

Out of the impressive 61 submissions from 36 rural districts, a remarkable response to the call for applications, 17 were selected with a focus on their impact on students in rural communities, innovation, and potential for research.

An 18th award, of \$6,000, sponsored by the Eleanor Rix Professorship in Rural Teacher Education at the University of British Columbia, will go to George M. Dawson Secondary school in Masset for their proposal to build an outdoor classroom.

Last March, the Ministry of Education and UBC teamed up to launch Growing Innovation. The province-wide program provides grants to the districts selected so they can bring their innovative ideas to life and enhance rural learning.

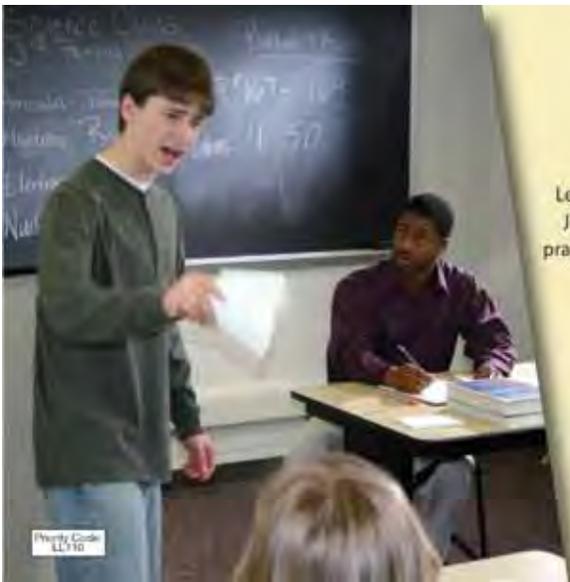
Graduate students will support and document research in the districts and in May, 2012 schools/districts and researchers will share information at a symposium at UBC. As well, all districts involved will develop demonstration sites to highlight their findings.

Full-day kindergarten and after school programs

The Ontario government's initiative in providing full-day kindergarten and before and after school programs has moved through its initial stages and plans are under way for provision of instructional spaces for the final years of the five-year plan. Program has been received very positively. Boards and Ministry continue to facilitate staffing and building concerns.

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A photograph of a teacher and two young girls sitting at a table in a classroom, looking at Dell laptops. The teacher is pointing at the screen of a red laptop. The girls are looking at a blue laptop. There are callout boxes with text and a Wi-Fi symbol.

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