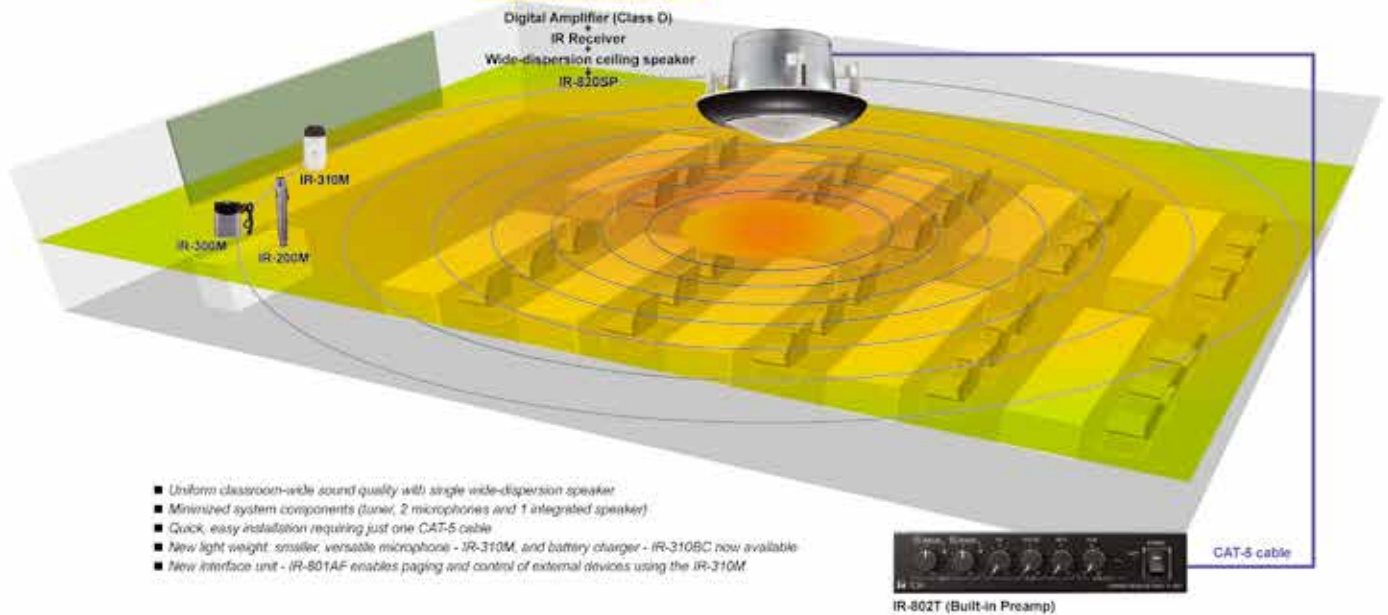




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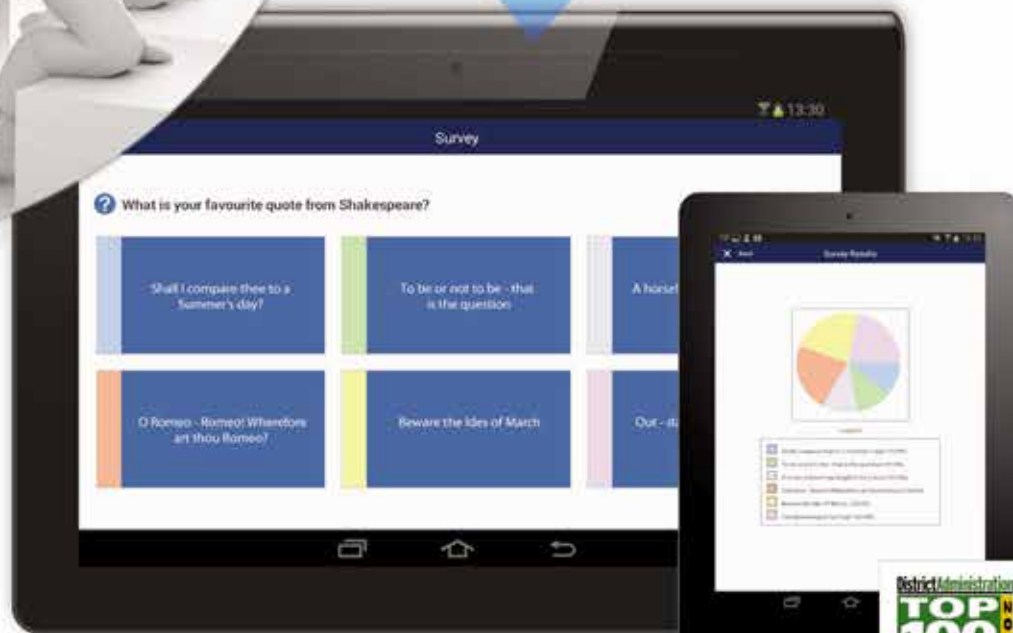




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## Research into Practice



*Ontario Leadership Framework 2012, With a Discussion of the Research Foundation*, directed by Professor Kenneth Leithwood, provides the research foundation underlying the design and revision to this leadership resource.



*Strong Districts and Their Leadership, 2013*, commissioned in partnership with CODE, provides comprehensive research to support districts in reviewing their leadership development plans.



*Ontario Leadership Framework - A School and System Leader's Guide to Putting the Ontario's Leadership Framework into Action*, revised: September 2013. This guide will assist school and system leaders to effectively implement the OLF.

### Development:

The *Safe and Accepting Schools Project* presents various strategies, knowledge and experience to ensuring safe and accepting schools.

For more information on the OLF and other resources, visit the IEL website at:

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L'Institut de leadership en éducation de l'Ontario (ILE) est une organisation virtuelle qui :

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## La recherche en action



*Le Cadre de leadership de l'Ontario 2012 : une discussion relative aux fondements de la recherche*, dirigé par le professeur émérite Kenneth Leithwood, présente la recherche sous-jacente à la conception et à la révision de cette ressource liée au leadership.



Le rapport de recherche : *Les conseils scolaires et leur leadership*, commandé en partenariat avec CODE, présente des recommandations visant à orienter les conseils scolaires dans l'examen de leurs plans de développement du leadership.



*Le cadre de leadership de l'Ontario : Guide à l'intention des leaders scolaires et des leaders du système pour la mise en application du Cadre de leadership de l'Ontario*, révisé en septembre 2013. Ce guide permettra aux leaders scolaires et aux leaders du système de faire une mise en oeuvre efficace du CLO.

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**Winter 2013-2014**  
**PUBLISHED FOR:**  
**Canadian Association of School System Administrators**  
**/ Association canadienne des gestionnaires de commissions scolaires**  
1123 Glenashton Drive  
Oakville, Ontario  
L6H 5M1  
Tel: 905-845-2345  
Fax: 905-845-2044  
www.CASSA-ACGCS.ca

**PUBLISHED BY:**  
**Matrix Group Publishing Inc.**  
Publications Agreement Number:  
40609661  
Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to:

309 Youville Street  
Winnipeg, MB R2H 2S9  
Toll Free: 866-999-1299  
Toll Free Fax: 866-244-2544  
www.matrixgroupinc.net

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— Natalie Graham, Teacher, Waterloo Region District Public Board, ON

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W

elcome to this edition of *Leaders & Learners*, with its focus on student engagement. We align our magazine content with the theme of our summer conference, which will be held this year from July 3 to 6, 2014, in Calgary, Alberta. Our theme is “Engaging Students – Making A Difference.”

This week the Prime Minister’s Awards for Teaching Excellence were announced and one of our new reporters for

the local newspaper wrote an interesting article contrasting his experiences in school with his perceptions of what he imagined were the experiences of students in the classrooms of award recipients. He commented that, “I had a few teachers who were entertaining and genuinely passionate about what they were doing, which made, in those classes, all the difference necessary for student engagement.”

One of the instruments we use to engage students is our Tell Them From Me (TTFM) surveys, which we use to triangulate the data that we receive through the provincial accountability surveys. Our results indicate that as student’s progress through the grades, their level of engagement drops. By high school too many of our students are “doing school” and find that their educational experience isn’t overly interesting or something that they particularly care about.

School systems today are much more intentional about making the student central to the decision making process. Here in Alberta our Ministry of Education has set a provincial direction, articulated through a process called “Inspiring Education,” which is focused on students becoming “engaged thinkers and ethical citizens with an entrepreneurial spirit.” Throughout that process focused consideration was given to “student voice” and ensuring that the students themselves played an active role in providing feedback and defining their educational experience.

Similar to the Ontario Student Voice initiative, Alberta launched Speak Out where youth facilitators met with students aged 14 to 19, in a variety of educational contexts, especially those youth who were “doing school” and not necessarily well-served by the current system. Those youth were intentionally challenged to reflect on and discuss their experiences with those who were in decision making positions and tasked with charting the course for the future direction of education in this province. As part of the process, our Minister formed a Youth Advisory Panel and many boards put structures or processes in place to give students avenues and opportunities to provide input in terms of how they could make the educational experience better for the students they collectively serve.

Certainly if we want to have students truly engage psychologically in their own learning, meaningful opportunities must be provided for them to become involved. Engagement has been a part of our educational lexicon for many years. I believe though, that today it is much more than a “buzzword” and that much work has been done to customize and personalize the classroom experiences for our students in order to make them more engaging. Today’s students are much more actively involved in making decisions about their learning, and structures and processes are not much more intentionally a feature of school and system design to ensure that we give them a strong voice in their educational future.

This edition of our magazine is a testament to the efforts of many of our colleagues and it profiles just some of the work that has been done in this important area.

On behalf of the CASSA/ACGCS executive, I want to express my sincere appreciation for all those who have contributed to this edition of our magazine. I would also encourage readers, for which this theme resonates in terms of the work that you have done in your respective jurisdictions, to consider submitting a proposal to present at our summer conference and share your best practices with our national audience.

Our Canadian education system is one of the best in the world and we can certainly all learn from the work that we are involved in together across this great nation.



Roger Nippard  
CASSA/ACGCS President

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**Certainly if we want to have students truly engage psychologically in their own learning, meaningful opportunities must be provided for them to become involved.**

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**Ken Bain**

CASSA/ACGCS Executive Director

**G**reetings on behalf of the Canadian Association of School System Administrators (CASSA) and its Board of Directors! I want to begin by sharing some of the most recent changes to our organization:

- We welcome the Manitoba Association of School Superintendents (MASS) as members of CASSA and are delighted to have MASS President, Reg Klassen, and Past President, Robert Chartrand, as members of the CASSA Board of Directors.
- CASSA is the new name for the organization; the extra “S” better clarifies that our members are school **system** administrators.
- The CASSA website has been refreshed and updated, thanks to our partnership with Blackboard Engage
- CASSA has a new constitution and by-laws, all of which were passed at the Annual General Meeting in Newfoundland.

This year, our theme for the two *Leaders & Learners* magazines, AND our annual conference, is “Engaging Students – Making A Difference.” This issue includes a variety of articles highlighting an array of student engagement practices and programs from across Canada! Article topics range from student choice and voice in the Northwest Territories, to discovery learning in Manitoba, to Quebec’s Roots of Empathy program. This issue is sure to provide readers with thoughts and ideas worth considering for your students! We are also very pleased this issue, to have received abstracts from almost all regions of the country! We hope that future issues will continue to reflect the amazing examples of great education taking place from coast-to-coast.

My thanks to the many author-contributors to this issue! CASSA appreciates the time and effort you put into preparing your articles, and, of course, the work you do on a daily basis to engage students meaningfully in the lives of their schools and communities!

Mark your calendars now to attend the CASSA Annual Conference, “Engaging Students – Making A Difference,” scheduled for July 3-6, 2014, in Calgary, Alberta.

---

**CASSA is the new name for the organization; the extra “S” better clarifies that our members are school system administrators.**

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# Students Own Their Learning

By Reg Klassen and Marg Janssen

*“... it goes without saying that at the commencement of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the problems we face in foreign and domestic affairs, the effects of globalization, and the changes in nature, that we must educate students to be able to identify important problems, ask probing questions, and conduct rigorous investigations aimed at finding answers and solutions.”*

— Barell (2007)

**R**olling River School Division began its “Inquiry Project” in September 2011 with its first cohort of Grades 5 to 12 teachers. We had three objectives: first, to implement “inquiry learning” in order to encourage students to learn, think and adapt in a way they had not done before in our division; second, to integrate technology to facilitate learning; and third, to allow students to develop 21<sup>st</sup> century “real life” skills that included collaboration, creativity, communication, problem solving and critical thinking skills. We wanted teachers to change the way they taught, moving away from the traditional teacher-centred classroom to a vibrant, student centred learning community.

## Successes

Teachers met regularly throughout the first year to explore with each other their understanding of inquiry learning and to share their learning about the implementation of inquiry in their classrooms. They

critiqued each other’s lessons and assessed their progress. They shared resources and taught each other about websites that supported their work. Teachers were willing to take risks with the support of their colleagues and their teaching practice began to change.

Early success was noted particularly with middle years students, who made such observations as, “You treat us like human beings” and “It is normal to work with others.” Students were becoming independent learners, unafraid of taking ownership for their learning.

One principal noted that, “My teacher is transformed.” A participating teacher said, “My classroom is much more active, at times, noisy. But the noise is collaborating, discussing and debating . . . I have had to learn to step back and let things happen.”

Another teacher reported, “Students who had not been engaged in my class came alive and became an ‘expert’ on a topic that fit with our unit and with their passions.” Colleagues not in the project began to take notice, which created opportunity for cohort participants to share. Principals, in turn, requested more information so they could better support their teachers.

In Year 2 of the project, a second teacher cohort was established. In advancing the inquiry project, technology integration became the focus and teachers were each given an iPad. As a result, teachers gained confidence, both in their personal use of technology and also in its integration in their lessons. Students were then encouraged to bring their own devices and to use their technology as a matter of course in their learning.

In our group discussions, a recurrent theme emerged. Teachers felt that they were covering the curriculum as widely as in previous years; however, they did note, with some surprise, that students demonstrated a much deeper understanding of the course content as a result of the inquiry process.



## Challenges

*“The Inquiry process, like any demanding learning experience, brings with it various feelings, including enthusiasm, apprehension, frustration and excitement.” — Branch & Oberg (2004)*

This was no different for us, as our high school students did not initially like the inquiry process. In one of our sessions, a teacher shared how a Grade 11 student, with tears in her eyes, said, “Just tell me what you want.” Most of our high school students had become conditioned to learn in the traditional, teacher centred classroom and found it difficult to transition to a more student focused model where they needed to take more responsibility for their own learning. Added to this were the parents of these students who found it difficult to see value in an inquiry-based process replacing how they had been taught in school.

When faced with student and parent concerns, it is also difficult for teachers to work in isolation and to stay committed to inquiry based learning. Although more teachers are now involved in the inquiry project, and teachers are now able to work with colleagues in their schools, inquiry teachers remain a small group within their home schools and within the division.

Perhaps the biggest challenge in implementing inquiry based learning is to convince teachers that this pedagogy can be used effectively over time and across the curriculum. Teachers find it difficult to “let go” of their control and take on the role of facilitator. They have difficulties seeing

its applications in the maths and sciences, where content tended to be “heavier” and more specific. They also have difficulties recognizing that students can still be ready for provincial exams even when teachers haven’t directed their learning. Seasoned inquiry teachers continue to be challenged by their inclination to return to traditional practices where they feel they can maintain control over what their students learn.

## Next Steps

Now in its third year, the inquiry project involves 25 teachers from kindergarten to Grade 12, including teachers from the previous two cohorts who now mentor new members of the group. They continue to meet as a large group throughout the year; however, this year the participants have also been divided into small groups based on their grade levels. These small groups will meet several more times to observe each other using inquiry-based learning in their classrooms, with opportunity given for critical feedback, group reflection and planning time.

Although our goal is to make all our classrooms student-centred, inquiry based learning communities, implementation has not been rushed. We believe the teachers who are engaged in this process will have a deeper understanding of inquiry, will feel more confident to use and incorporate technology and will be able to guide their students in their development of the necessary 21<sup>st</sup> century skills.

Teachers in small groups, inquiring and reflecting on their practice, has, in our

experience, been the best way to bring about change in their practice. We will need to ensure they have supportive administrators, in a supportive environment and the support of each other as they make lasting changes in their classrooms and for their students.

## Conclusion

The objectives of our inquiry project have been achieved on a variety of levels in the classrooms of participating teachers. However, our attempt to bring change to a system that is deeply steeped in tradition has not been easy. After two years, we have learned that change requires teachers to have the supports and resources necessary, and regular opportunities to learn together to observe, critically reflect, and collaborate. It is a work in progress. ○

*Reg Klassen, MEd, is the Superintendent of Rolling River School Division in Minnedosa, Manitoba. Marg Janssen, MEd, is Assistant Superintendent of Rolling River School Division. For further information contact Reg Klassen at rklassen@rrsd.mb.ca or call (204) 867-2754.*

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# Engaging Students Through Choice and Voice: The Story of Kaw Tay Whee School

By Léa Lamoureux



*Enjoying the BMX Bike Program.*



*Tapping birch trees.*



*Picking lunch from the school garden.*

**I**magine. Imagine a school where the philosophy is, “If you can dream it, we can do it,” where all roads are pointing toward student achievement, and engagement and the development of a life-long learning mindset is everyone’s top priority.

## **Our Context**

Kaw Tay Whee School is a small pre-K to Grade 7 community school in Dettah, NT. Governed by the very supportive Dettah District Education Authority, the school resides on the land of the Yellowknives Dene First Nation, with 95 per cent of students being members. Yellowknife Education District No.1 provides superintendent services.

Six years ago, the student population struggled dramatically with academic achievement, enrollment and overall engagement in school and learning. The future looked uncertain, and data related to attendance, assessments and student registrations backed up this forecast.

## **Where to Begin?**

With the development of an annual student interest survey—including questions about everything from student food preferences, to book-related interests—student voices were compiled and the staff set to work to ensure a stimulating learning environment, peppered with high-interest, curricula-connected learning experiences cultivated to include rich opportunities for pre- and post-discussion, reading and writing.

School staff strongly believed that a sense of belonging and linking students with

experiences of interest would lead to better attendance, higher levels of engagement, wider vocabularies, stronger social-emotional skills and wider general knowledge bases, thus leading to on-time attendance and higher levels of academic achievement.

As stated in the research of Swisher and Deyhle (1989), “The physical, social and cultural environments in which a person grows and matures significantly influence behaviours, learning preferences, perceptions and other human characteristics.”

## **School-Based Initiatives**

Many of the school’s initiatives gained national attention when they were recently featured on the nationally syndicated CBC radio program, “The Sunday Edition.” As the school struggled with attendance and punctuality, a special recognition program was developed and continues today.

“On Time By Nine<sup>®</sup>” assists students and the community in understanding the importance of on-time attendance at school and its relation to student success. Special student-chosen and planned “Recognition Events” are scheduled regularly to ensure opportunities for celebration. With the most popular events being “Lego Bash” and “Spooky Surprises,” the school-wide alarm clock program is highly popular!

On-time student attendance has risen to an average of 80 per cent on a monthly basis. Other special events related to crafts, cooking and fitness are excitedly attended by students.

The school’s year-round indoor food garden, which uses a combination of hydroponics

natural and artificial light, provides food for the school’s family-style daily lunch program. Students relish growing greens, herbs, potatoes, tomatoes, beans, peas and other delectables. An outdoor “Fairy Flower Garden” recently evolved. Many delighted students spend recess-time nurturing its growth.

Raising literacy levels has also been an ongoing goal of the school. The school-wide daily Guided Reading program has ensured highly targeted small group implicit reading instruction. In addition, the “Family Library” project created a hand-picked, reading-level/interest-based “for keeps” house library for every school family to grow into.

These two projects have assisted with a dramatic increase in student achievement in the areas of reading and writing, as referenced in both school-based assessments and the standardized assessments. The student population maintains on-going blogs to gather evidence of their learning and to build connections to the world around them, while gaining valuable ICT skills.

In addition to a visit from the Tooth Fairy, the annual KTW Super Surprise, and the highly anticipated Super Duper Razzle Dazzle Show, students have written, illustrated and published one bilingual book, titled “Walking in Dettah,” and are in the planning stages for their second.

## **Education Outside the Classroom and Experiences Program**

The annual interest survey provides an opportunity for students to “dream big” and make requests to try things that they may not



otherwise experience. Students have participated in pottery, annual multi sessions of yoga, various types of dance, Zumba, various sports workshops and a variety of culture-based key learning experiences. Students have also attended, and hosted, live theatrical and music events.

Based on survey results, and in consultation with various funding partners, the school now has programs for cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, BMX biking and canoeing. A special program for every season allows the goals of healthy active living to prevail through the coldest months.

As annual "Drop the Pop" participants, putting health on the forefront of all that occurs, the students designed and implemented an annual School Nutrition Fair, which follows the annual theme of the Dietitians of Canada. This event is widely attended by families and community members. Students prepare presentations, cook and serve a healthy meal, and share their learning with the wider community.

### Culture-Based Education

With the introduction of a Respected School Elder four years ago, the students are participating in the acquisition and reinforcement of traditional knowledge in both the areas

of the Wiilideh Language, and traditional arts and skills. The recent school moccasin project was a source of somber pride with each student in the school; each student designed and completed their own set of moccasins, under the careful guidance of our Elder.

In partnership with the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre, an award-winning science teacher, Neil Penney, sets and supervises an annual Birch Syrup harvest line for a two-week period. This connects traditional harvesting skills with un-traditional methods.

### Vision is Crucial

As a community of staff and student learners, it has been agreed that success must be visualized and worked-toward consistently, in order to be achieved. Diligence, responsibility, respect and high expectations are required. Excuses are not accepted.

As part of envisioning a positive future, the development of the school's Aboriginal Role Model program has proven to be crucial in sharing the success and determination of others. This program has allowed for the promotion and projection of the possible future success of Kaw Tay Whee students.

Working with successful authors, musicians, physicians, entrepreneurs and other professionals has assisted students in physically meeting and conversing with local Aboriginal role models; something that they have reported as influential and important.

### The Future

With widely discussed and celebrated increases in on-time student attendance, academic achievement, student enrollment and student confidence levels, the uncertain future has begun to fade, replaced with fired-up determination for continued diligence and improvement. ○

*Léa Lamoureux is the principal of Kaw Tay Whee School. She is a recipient of the GNWT Ministerial Literacy Award in the Educator category, and is currently pursuing a MEd at St. Francis Xavier University. Connect with her on Twitter at LeaLamoureux.*

### Reference

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# Making Education Meaningful: Inquiry Time at Lake Trail Middle School



*Students put on an art show to support the homeless.*

By David Mayert

“**W**e are born to learn, not born to be taught.” ([www.born-to-learn.org](http://www.born-to-learn.org))  
We often forget this in the school system. Trying to maintain everyday order and organization often is what kills the very curiosity and excitement for learning that we would like to cultivate and maintain in students.

Delivering content to students, often in the form of lectures and notes to prepare for exams, does not allow our students to be invested and engaged in their learning. Even our best students are often invested and engaged in getting good marks; not in learning. Students need to have ownership and be engaged in their learning for it to be meaningful.

At Lake Trail Middle School (a 250 student, Grades 7 to 9 school in the Comox Valley, B.C.) we have tried a few different things over the last year to get kids more engaged at school. We weren't starting from scratch. Even before these initiatives, we had some very strong programs in place at the school, ranging from leadership, to individualized alternate education, community service, elementary school mentorship, environmental and garden clubs, a strong athletics program, and community programming in the school. The school had developed a real sense of belonging for students.

Unfortunately, this engagement was in mostly extra-curricular activities and specialty programs, and didn't cross over to

everyday classroom learning. The staff recognized this and moved forward in initiating several changes to increase engagement and meaningful learning. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's flow research, Dennis Littky's Big Picture Learning and Daniel Pink's thinking on motivation were some of the sources that helped us shape our vision of student engagement.

This year, we have grouped our students into grade pods. Each pod of 90 students has three main teachers (math/science/humanities) so that teachers can connect more deeply with the students and with each other, as well as integrate subject matter. We have changed our timetable to allow teachers more flexibility and collaboration time (including common prep time for pod teachers and 90 minutes of Professional Learning Community (PLC) time each week) to support their work. Pod teachers also create the class groupings and daily schedules to give them even more flexibility.

We have supported this with teacher development around PLC, inquiry, design thinking, project based learning, work place and community apprenticeship, and resilience. We have worked to increase engagement by creating greater access to traditional electives and adding some more creative exploratory multi-grade blocks with classes, like Street Art and Board Game Creation on offer. But the change that has made the biggest difference has been the addition of two blocks a week (two hours and 30 minutes, in total) of what we call Inquiry time.

During inquiry time, students, in multi-grade groupings, each developed a question around a topic they wanted to learn about. The teacher facilitated when needed but the students directed their own learning. Inquiry topics this year included belly dancing, graffiti art, music production, anime drawing, skateboarding, computer building, t-shirt creation, farming techniques, healthy cooking, popularity, fashion, learning a second language, and homelessness.

Students went through the process of developing a question, creating leading questions and then working through their research (traditional, online, mentor links, etc.) to learn more about their area of inquiry and towards an “answer” to their inquiry question. This often led to more questions than answers, as deep learning often does.

We tried to make sure that the focus was on the process and not the “answer.” This was a struggle for some students and some teachers who had to unlearn years of traditional “learning,” as there was no right or wrong answer. There wasn't even necessarily a final product.

The process culminated in an Inquiry Showcase Day, where students shared their learning process with their Inquiry teacher, their parents and often siblings or friends. This included some interesting “bi-products” of their inquiry question; the creation of a non-profit organization to combat homelessness; a student art show to raise money for the non-profit, with artwork ranging from traditional water



colours to graffiti art; the creation of a gaming computer; the publishing of an original book of poetry; and an original sound recording, where the student had individually recorded the playing of musical instruments and vocals before layering them into one track.

The “bi-products” of the process show just how high the students’ levels of engagement were. The students’ inquiry processes were not graded; they were simply evaluated as complete or incomplete. The teacher had been giving formative feedback as the facilitator throughout the process. The incompleteness rate was low, with only a half dozen requiring a little more time and an extra facilitator to help them dig a little deeper.

When we ask students what their favourite class is, we often hear, “Inquiry, because I get to choose something I want to learn about!” Through the inquiry process students worked on some important skills; resilience, as some of the best learning came when students were stuck or had to work through difficulties; communication, showcasing their work to an authentic real world audience; and self direction, they were responsible for and had personal ownership in their learning.

As we work towards helping students be prepared for a rapidly changing future we should be focussed on skills, so why not let students choose the content while sharpening these skills and having students truly engaged in their learning?

**“Education is the kindling of a flame not the filling of a vessel” — Socrates** ○

*David Mayert was the Vice-Principal at Lake Trail Middle School and is currently the Principal of Cumberland Elementary School, which is located in Cumberland, B.C.*

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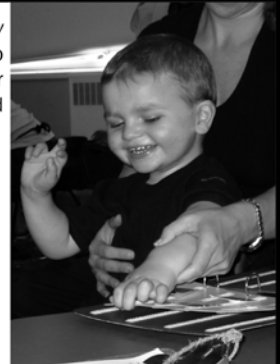
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# Roots of Empathy Program Engages Students, Teaches Compassion

By Patti L. Moore and Annabel Busby

**W**hen high school teacher Annabel Busby first heard about the Roots of Empathy program ten years ago, she knew that she wanted to bring the program to the school where she was teaching. Mac-Lean Memorial School (MMS) is situated in remote Chibougamau, in northern Québec. Part of the vast territory of the Central Québec School Board (CQSB), MMS has a population of 190 students, providing education to children from kindergarten to Secondary V.

The Roots of Empathy mission is “to build caring, peaceful, and civil societies through the development of empathy in children and adults.” This mission is achieved in a unique way: throughout the year, a local parent (mom or dad) and their infant baby visit a classroom over a nine-month period. At the onset, the baby is aged two to four months, so that children can observe “a real, live baby” as he or she grows and develops throughout the year.

Based on extensive neuro-scientific research, the program is carefully constructed to teach children empathy; to value differences and to accept each person’s uniqueness, which leads to a reduction in aggressive behaviour. Local Roots of Empathy instructors agree to follow

a specific format, which includes a 40 minute visit to the classroom each month by parent and baby; specific springboard preparation prior to each visit to get the children involved, thinking and motivated; and a structured post-visit discussion about children’s observations, comments and questions.

During the actual visits, baby and parent are observed from around a green blanket in the middle of the room. Children have been prepared beforehand with the “emotional literacy” required to watch for the baby’s emotional clues through body language and facial expressions. They learn the importance of providing the baby with positive attention. They also observe how the baby is developing physically.

Follow-up discussions with the local Roots of Empathy instructor often become an opportunity for children to express their *own* emotions and to learn that while each person is unique in how they *express* their emotions, *we all* feel happy or sad. At no time are children made aware that Roots of Empathy is an anti-bullying program. As Annabel Busby says, “The entire approach is very subtle; very gentle.”

Approximately five years ago, after Annabel pitched the idea of bringing the Roots of Empathy program to Mac-Lean Memorial School, school principal Frédéric Grégoire applied for a small



*Students observe a baby and parent, and look for emotional clues through body language and facial expressions.*

grant to research ways of ensuring better inclusion for all MMS students and to examine programs that focused on social responsibility. Annabel spent a great deal of time, during that research year, speaking with and meeting Roots of Empathy trainers, visiting Roots of Empathy classrooms, exploring how the program might specifically benefit the students of Mac-Lean Memorial School and being provided with intensive four-day training with a Roots of Empathy trainer.

Chibougamau is a relatively small community, although large for the north, of approximately 7,600 inhabitants. Sixty-three per cent of MMS students are First Nations Cree. Approximately half of the First Nations students and 25 per cent of the non-native students live below the poverty line. The Québec government has long recognized that success

**During discussions with the children, there are no right or wrong answers; no great or mediocre answers. We never praise in this program; we simply thank the children for their contribution to the discussion.**

rates tend to be lower and drop-out rates higher in schools situated in socio-economically-deprived areas and it provides support in the form of grants to increase student success accordingly.

Nonetheless, illegitimate absences, especially at the high-school level, are an ongoing challenge and the Tell Them From Me+ survey indicates that 71 per cent of MMS elementary students from Grades 4 to 6 report feeling safe (the national average is 87 per cent), while 33 per cent of elementary students report being victims of moderate to severe bullying (the national average for these grades is 26 per cent per cent).

The Roots of Empathy program has carried out extensive research on the impact of the program, in terms of reduced bullying behaviour on the playground and overall school climate: it is the goal of MacLean Memorial School to improve these percentages, at least in part through the impact of the Roots of Empathy program.

Although Roots of Empathy can be implemented in classrooms up to Grade 8, the MMS team started with Grades 5 and 6 and eventually opted to work with the Grade 1 and the Grade 4 levels. After four years, awareness of the program has spread throughout the school not to mention the School Board. Roots of Empathy concepts happen to fit very well with the overall curriculum and as a result, classroom teachers have started to incorporate elements into their own classrooms, whether it is by comparing the benefits to the environment of using cloth diapers rather than disposable diapers or calculating the impact on the family budget of cloth versus disposable diapers, to name but one example.

“It has been exciting to watch this program develop and evolve at MMS,” says Central Québec School Board Director General Marielle Stewart. “Increasing student engagement is always a concern and a focus within the schools of our board. MMS has shared the benefits of the Roots of Empathy program at school board workshops. It is our sincere hope that other schools will adopt this program as well.”


Becoming a Roots of Empathy instructor also brought some unexpected benefits to Annabel Busby. “Roots of Empathy is

*not so innocent*

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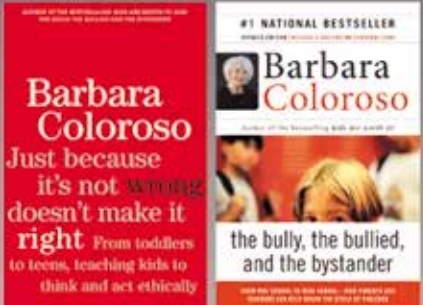


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designed to be inclusive. During discussions with the children, there are no right or wrong answers; no great or mediocre answers. We never praise in this program; we simply thank the children for their contribution to the discussion. This has meant, unlearning everything I knew as a teacher but in the process, I feel that it has definitely impacted my teaching (at the high school level). It has made me much more conscious of how I respond to my (high school) students' answers."

The program is in its fourth year at MacLean Memorial School and is now well anchored in the school community. "This is one of the best programs for dealing with student behavior and student engagement that I have seen," declares Annabel Busby. "When our Roots of Empathy baby comes for a visit, the kids get so excited! It is always a delight. Their tenderness is incredible to see." ○

*Patti L. Moore is Secretary General of Central Québec School Board (CQSB) and Annabel Busby is a MacLean Memorial School teacher*



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# Hands On – Minds In

By Nicole Schatz and Marlene McDonald

**I**n these economically challenging times, teacher ingenuity is key to obtaining specialized classroom resources to promote high student engagement. Our Grow Local: Kids-Feeding-Kids grant proposal began on the drive home from an ATA Science conference in Banff. We were inspired by a teacher-led PD session and recognized the potential of this project as a powerful real world activity.

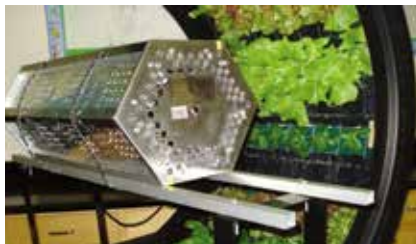
Louis St. Laurent is a junior-senior high, with approximately 1,000 students in Grades 7 to 12, with a large population of new Canadians and international students. Many of our students have limited experience and knowledge about where their food comes from or how it is produced.

The Grow Local Initiative was started in 2011 with the help of a Devon Energy Grant, whereby teachers literally “cultivate” student interest in science by creating a direct link to what they eat. A hydroponics project was implemented in junior high to provide students with a sustainable, local alternative to how they feed themselves and as a way to reduce their carbon footprint.

The science-society-technology (STS) connection between small-scale production of food and its application to large-scale food production is very tangible for students. They learn about this innovative technology from lighting, nutrients, electrical energy required, methods to improve quality-quantity of produce and how to reduce waste. The hope is that this project inspires students and their families to consider sustainable food production at home and in the community.

Each plant cycle is 28 to 40 days so a number of crops are possible each school year. This allows for many students to be involved and for a number of trials-experiments to be conducted in a relatively short time. Experimental designs include studying how to grow particular plants, ways to reduce propagation time and the manipulation of variables to increase yield.

This authentic-learning task focuses on inquiry and provides opportunities for students to connect science content in meaningful ways. The project is student-led by the Green Team,



*Growing lettuce in the Volksgarden hydroponic system.*

who promote “no waste” lunches, collect recyclable containers to fund social action initiatives and work on the beautification of our learning environment.

There are direct links to the Alberta curriculum: Grade 7 Plant Unit (plant life cycle, measuring yield and factors to improve growth) and Interactions & Ecosystems Unit (recycling and school environment); Grade 9 Environmental Chemistry (pH effect on growth); and Grades 7 to 9 Health.

Students have been front and center in troubleshooting problems and actively engaged in solution-driven diagnostics to solve significant problems, like bitter lettuce and brown spots. They hypothesised that the bitterness was due to the change to the rock-wool growth blocks and that the spots were due to an imbalance of fertilizers. It is through trial/error reflection that our students develop greater understanding and ownership.

Students are more engaged in science when activities are meaningful experiences, real-life based with relevant content. We empower students when we allow them to develop solutions to our world’s most daunting problems. Sticky science is the science where students get their hands on and minds in.

## Summary

These are economically challenging times with high expectations for student success. Participating in science conferences with colleagues provides an invaluable opportunity to explore new ideas, to dream and to reflect on practice. Administration support of teacher professional development is paramount—if we don’t look after the needs of teachers, we **won’t reach anyone.**



*Kids-Feeding-Kids: School salad compliments of the Green Team.*



Critical challenges are an invitation to engage or invite students to think critically. They create a climate for thinking. As educators, we need to do less thinking for our students; allow them to delve into messy science where there are many variables and no single solution. With no easy answers, we can promote patient problem solving and collaboration.

High attention, high commitment learning is active, engaging, relevant and fun. Activities that have meaning and value, like the Kids-Feeding-Kids hydroponics project, encourage students to work collaboratively and persist in the face of difficulty. Twenty-first century thinking-based learning beyond the facts encourages students to become information producers and to ask the “what if” questions. ○

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*Nicole Schatz is a science teacher and IB MYP Coordinator at Louis St. Laurent School. Marlene McDonald is a science consultant, Learning Services Innovation, at Edmonton Catholic Schools.*

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*For a list of references, which accompany this article, please email [ssavory@matrixgroupinc.net](mailto:ssavory@matrixgroupinc.net).*





# Empowering Student Voice Through Blogging

By Lisa Michaluk

**A**t Sigurbjorg Stefansson Elementary School (SSES), located in Gimli, Man., we believe in the true creativity and curiosity of a child. We believe in creating learning environments rich with interest and thought provoking dialogue. We believe in empowering children.

It is from these beliefs that our Life at SSES blog was born. Our blog gives us an opportunity to celebrate each child in our school. Through the blog posts, we see children engaged in rich learning opportunities, celebrating milestones and memories, and becoming engaged, contributing citizens in an ever-changing world. Our Crop Garden post (<http://lifeatsses.blogspot.ca/2013/10/our-crop-gardens-2013.html>) highlights the amazing journey from seed to table right in our own playground. Our older students planted, cared for, harvested and baked with the wheat from our crop gardens. This experience introduced students to the value of sustainable food in a meaningful and engaging way.

Our Food Drive post ([http://lifeatsses.blogspot.ca/2012\\_12\\_01\\_archive.html](http://lifeatsses.blogspot.ca/2012_12_01_archive.html)) celebrated humanity and the true spirit of giving. Capturing the photos and thoughts throughout the food drive inevitably captured one of the many reasons we are so incredibly proud of our students at SSES—they have naturally giving souls.

Each blog post is written from the refreshing, innocent perspective of a child. We have the privilege of working with children ages three to 10 as we chronicle and document our learning journey. Writing articles for the blog enables students to create authentic writing pieces with a clear purpose for an intended audience that gives immediate feedback. The students possess a great sense of pride at the sight of their name posted beside the latest article.

The articles are written individually, in small groups and as whole classes, allowing



*Children at SSES engaged in rich learning opportunities: spark tree provocation to explore wiring, beading and art mediums (top left); observing reflections through mirror and light explorations (top right); and harvesting our wheat crop in the fall (bottom photo).*

children to work collaboratively with each other creating a cohesive blogging community. We celebrate the blog as a school and share it with our extended school communities. It has become a powerful link to our families and community. Families are able to view their child's learning journey through thoughtful photos, videos and informative posts.

In a technology driven world, with blogging comes social responsibility. Each child is aware of how powerful their voice is and is encouraged to use it responsibly. Each post is written with the thoughtful approach of informing, reflecting, responding and celebrating.

The children that write the articles for our blog feel the sense of importance that we place in their voice. The bloggers are celebrated, not only in the classroom community, but in our division, our community and throughout our global network. At every opportunity, we strive to demonstrate and portray the importance of student voice and its impact. Although the children in our school range in age from three to 10 years old, young to many from a blogging point of view, we firmly believe that creating an environment that teaches children that their voice is extremely important and that they are capable of

extraordinary things opens up a world of possibilities.

Our recently posted blog, "I am..." is a true celebration! (<http://lifeatsses.blogspot.ca/2013/10/a-celebration.html>) It shares the power of viewing children as inquisitive, creative and imaginative beings. When you see children as scientists, artists, musicians, storytellers, communicators, and more, you see not only the citizens of tomorrow, but the capable, talented citizens of today.

Creating the Life at SSES blog has been a journey rich with celebrations and memories. It has been a true catalyst for empowering student voice and a demonstration of meaningful student engagement at our school. As our blogging journey continues, we anticipate the adventures yet to come.

**"All of the flowers of all of the tomorrows are in the seeds of today." — Chinese Proverb**

*Lisa Michaluk is ICT Facilitator and lead teacher with Sigurbjorg Stefansson Elementary School's 21st Century Learning endeavors and exploration of the Reggio Emilia philosophy. Michaluk works with all of the students and staff in her capacity as ICT Facilitator and is the creator/co-author (with the students) of the blog posts in our Life at SSES Blog.*



SPECIAL FOCUS





# Inclusive Support for Students with Challenging Behaviour

By Gina Daus

Students with severe challenging behaviours often have limited success within the school setting. While Edmonton Catholic Schools has had a policy that an inclusive placement is the first choice for students, historically, when a student was demonstrating severe challenging behavior and all options had been exhausted within the community school, the student would be referred to a district segregated site for challenging behavior. Moving students out of their community school is never ideal. The student must leave their peers and sometimes face long bus rides.

Last year, Edmonton Catholic Schools began looking for a new way to support students with challenging behaviours within their community schools. Rather than sending the students away, we began asking how we could bring the supports and services to the students within their school. We had identified some patterns and barriers to success for this population of students.

In some cases, teachers wanted to program differently to support students but didn't know how. Teachers were not confident in identifying the function of a behavior and designing interventions based on function. In addition, often these students had underlying mental health conditions. Families were struggling to navigate the mental health system. There were a series of appointments, doctors and therapists that the family might be working with outside of the school system. Sometimes information was not being transferred between the school and the mental health professionals.

In September of 2012 a Behaviour Specialist and Family School Liaison Worker (FSLW) began working within nine elementary schools to support

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**“If the child’s home life is supported, there is a much greater chance for academic and social success.”**

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students with challenging behaviours and their families.

The Behaviour Specialist focused on building capacity with teachers and educational assistants to create and implement Positive Behaviour Support plans using a functional behavior assessment approach. He visited each school on a weekly basis, working in classrooms alongside teachers. The behavior specialist was able to observe, suggest and model new strategies, and participate in meetings with parents. In an electronic survey done part way through the year, teachers expressed that they felt better supported and would like to have even more support if it could be made available.

The learning team at Good Shepherd School said, “The team provided supportive coaching for our staff and modeled positive interactions for our students.”

The FSLW is a Registered Social worker within Alberta and worked to connect with families to increase the overall well-being of the student in order to increase their success in both the school and home setting. Through home visits and frequent phone contact, the FSLW was able to develop strong relationships with families who otherwise might have remained distant from the school. The FSLW provides both school-based services and family based services.

Helen Emeny, Learning Coach at St. Martha School said, “Our social worker has helped us to provide our at-risk

children with much needed supports outside of the school setting. If the child’s home life is supported, there is a much greater chance for academic and social success.”

The Family School Liaison Worker was also able to attend appointments with physicians and psychiatrists with families. This helped to bridge the gap between education and health. She was able to help parents understand what was happening and what the next steps were. When parents needed support to complete paperwork, find transportation to appointments or simply reminders of upcoming appointments the FSLW was able to do that. These simple steps went a long way to help families access the mental health system and appropriate supports and services outside of school thereby increasing success within the school setting.

The Behaviour Specialist and Family School Liaison Worker worked closely with the Inclusive Programming Consultant, school based learning teams and outside service providers as part of a multi-disciplinary team. Due to the success of this model, Edmonton Catholic Schools will be expanding to involve two additional cohorts of elementary schools in the 2013-14 school year to further build capacity in schools to program for students with challenging behavior. ○

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*Gina Daus is an Inclusive Programming Consultant within Edmonton Catholic Schools.*



# We're All in This Together: School-Wide Literacy Intervention

By Simone Gessler

**W**eledeh Catholic School (kindergarten to Grade 8, with approximately 400 students) in Yellowknife, NT, has developed an intervention block that is delivering results in more ways than one, and it shows.

During a school mapping session it became clear that a new and unique approach was needed to address both staff frustrations of not being able to meet the wide range of needs in the classroom, as well as unsatisfactory reading scores.

As a result, a school-wide literacy intervention model was implemented to meet the needs of three distinct groups of students. Based loosely on the Response to Intervention (RtI) model, Weledeh's program focuses on supporting three levels of learners. This "all hands on deck" system was developed as a three-tiered approach to provide strategic, targeted intervention to address specific instructional needs.

School-wide benchmarking three times per year allows students to be organized into mixed groups based on need; at or above target reading goals (Tier 1); struggling to meet target goals (Tier 2); and requiring specialized programming for academic, social, emotional or physical needs (Tier 3). Four blocks of intervention are scheduled throughout the year with fluid movement in and out of tiers as needed.

Having all staff and students work on literacy at the same time, and utilizing every space in the building, enables Weledeh to provide optimal literacy teaching and learning, in small-targeted groups, for 30 minutes every day.

Students in Tier 1 are challenged through enhancement units aimed at increasing literacy understanding through alternative mediums. Project based learning units, such as "Dr. Seuss on the Loose" and "Rocket Theory and Design," allow students the opportunity to go



Grade one students celebrate with a "Green Eggs and Ham" breakfast, part of Dr. Seuss is on the Loose.

beyond the typical language arts activity. At 15 to 18 students, these are the largest of the groups and are led by specialty teachers.

Tier 2 students require additional support in meeting their reading goals. The groups are based on specific targeted instruction in one of the areas of early literacy or in comprehension, vocabulary or fluency. Groups are limited in size, typically ranging from six in the primary to a maximum of 12 in the upper grades. Classroom teachers provide the instruction for this tier and monitor the progress of the students, and the success of the intervention, every two weeks.

Tier 3 students are on Individualized Education Plans, have Functional Grade Levels of more than three years below, or require programming for social, emotional or sensory support. These students work in small groups that range from one to six students and focus on specific program goals, always including a literacy component. Support staff provides the intervention at this level with program support teachers coordinating and determining areas of need.

The intervention block has been very successful in increasing the reading scores and literacy levels of students. School, district and territorial based test results have shown significant improvements in scores, with the most dramatic result being the impact the program has had on struggling readers.

This third year of the program has witnessed a shift in the organization of the tiers. Tier 1 and 2 groups have increased in number and tier 3 groups have become more instruction-based, necessitating a transformation into tier 2- type supports. This, coupled with standardized test results, provides evidence of the success of the program in moving students forward in meeting reading goals.

While data is important to show the progress of students' reading scores, it's the engagement students demonstrate in their learning that has had the greatest influence. How they see themselves as readers encourages them to take risks and enjoy literacy from a different perspective.

The success of this program can really be measured by the sense of pride students feel in explaining their progress, or the excitement they have in sharing their latest literacy project. This is the evidence that affirms for Weledeh staff that what they are doing is making a difference. The fact that reading scores have increased by approximately 18 per cent across the board, is simply icing. ○

*Simone Gessler is Principal of Weledeh Catholic School, located in Yellowknife, N.W.T.*



SPECIAL FOCUS



# A Practical Plan for Building Resiliency

By Gerald Fussell

In September 2011, the Comox Valley School District was in the midst of a rash of depressing acts with one teen murdered by another, three horrific suicides, a stopped suicide pact and a massive increase in student depression. In November, their top graduate from June was ready to quit university. Coaches and teachers lamented the lack of commitment from students and parents complained of listless teens. Despite the macabre situation, the worst part was that their experiences were not unique to them.

We all react to challenges differently. One group, led by Murray McRae, worked with Shane Koyczan to produce an anti-suicide video<sup>1</sup>; other groups worked privately to meet the needs of their constituents. As a district, with the leadership of Esther Shatz, Director of Instruction (Student Services), and Superintendent Sherry Elwood, a group was put together to explore ways to teach resiliency.

Guided by the work of Paul Tough<sup>2</sup>, Dr. Angela Duckworth<sup>3</sup>, Dr. Martin Seligman<sup>4</sup>, Dr. Jane Gillham<sup>5</sup>, and Mark Linkins<sup>6</sup>, the team looked at what could be done to create resiliency throughout the system. After a year and a half of work, pilot projects, government grants and research, the following three part plan was presented.

## Part One

**Goal:** Build capacity and understanding about resiliency and positive approaches in adults connected with kids.

Find ways to build cumulative capacity in the essential building blocks of resiliency. Ken Ginsberg identified seven: competence, confidence, connection, character, contribution, coping and control.<sup>7</sup>

These components will be reinforced in many ways throughout the district, including hosting parenting sessions, planning programs and consciously building a healthy

eco-system for youth. Improving competence, confidence and contributions are things already done and work will continue to improve the multiple and diverse connections students have. Then, what follows is the more formal approach to building resiliency through character education, and skills targeting increased coping, capacity and control.

**MindUp:** Encourage and subsidize teachers who want training in MindUp.<sup>8</sup> This program works to build effective meta-cognition.

Create and maintain a **blog** with pertinent information, resources, up-dates, etc. (<http://road2resiliency.wordpress.com>).

**Pro-D/Seminars:** Host afternoon and evening sessions on related topics, such as anxiety, resiliency, etc.; build in sessions at various pro-d events specifically targeting positive approaches and resiliency.

Challenge all administrators to take one of the 21-day challenges, led by Shawn Achor.<sup>9</sup>

## Part Two

**Goal:** Build resiliency and capacity in elementary students primarily focused on self-regulation and character education. The team found that each elementary school has their own “characterized” program and most help to build resiliency. For those that don’t, having teachers participate in the MindUp program would be beneficial. A number of key, lead teachers in the district have already done the training and will set up a cohort to develop broader capacity. Release time will be provided for them to collaborate to create staff presentations and resources about how resiliency fits the various character education parts in each school.

## Part Three

**Goal:** Build resiliency and capacity in secondary students through heightened awareness and discrete understanding of resiliency and resilient people.

Use the Resilience Cafe model by the Buck Institute.<sup>10</sup> Have one or two teachers

from each secondary school volunteer to become part of a pilot program that will meet every two months. The team suggested adapting the content to replace the 17 Attributes of Resiliency featured in the Buck Institute materials with the Seven Character Traits that Paul Tough has identified are keys to success: grit, curiosity, self-control, social intelligence, zest, optimism and gratitude.<sup>11</sup> This project will take a complete year and will be worked on in the eighth grade.

## Conclusion

Over the past two years, increased focus has been placed on developing resiliency in students and in systems internationally. Through research, expert support, professional development and pilot projects, the Comox Valley School District has developed a practical plan to address these demands within the evolving 21<sup>st</sup> century learning paradigm shift. ○

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# From Face-to-Face to Online Engagement

By Jeanne Davis

Over the years, Red Deer Catholic Regional Schools has used various approaches to engage its stakeholders. Our stakeholders have always helped shape the decisions affecting our schools.

We live in busy times and stakeholders are not available ALL at the same time. Space and distance are also challenging for a regional school board. Face-to-face engagement can also present issues of anonymity. And traditional engagement forums require significant amounts of resources.

For all of these reasons, our school board decided to adopt the internet and social media approach for stakeholder engagement. The conversation was to engage, gather input, strengthen relationships and inform the Board of Trustees on education matters in our schools.

## Your School. Your Voice.

The board chose to ask stakeholders, “What would you do to make your school even better?” The question was broad and open ended. The intent was to collect as many ideas as possible and understand what was “top of mind” for our stakeholders. At the end of the six weeks, all the ideas and comments were to be compiled for trustees to review, respond to and possibly act upon.

The Communications Department led the project, involving the Superintendent and the Chairperson of the Board of Trustees as required. Like all social media initiatives, moderating the conversation was very important and involved doing some moderating over the weekends by communications staff. A budget was established and included the cost of two iPad draws, translation services, crowdsourcing platform fees and advertising. Actual costs were \$7,700, including fees for professional services for data interpretation.

“Your School. Your Voice.” was adopted as the initiative’s branding name. The domain name [www.yourschoolyourvoice.ca](http://www.yourschoolyourvoice.ca) was



established and used throughout the campaign. The brand was heavily promoted in schools using school newsletters and posters that targeted students, teachers and staff, parents and greater community members. Posters were translated into Tagalog and Spanish for our ESL families. A YouTube video of the Superintendent with an invitation to participate was posted.

The conversation went on for six weeks. Strategies to maintain the momentum included a social media campaign (Twitter and Facebook) to keep the community informed of top ideas and to draw in new participants. To maintain momentum there was also an iPad draw mid-way through the conversation and one at the end. The conversation was monitored seven-days a week for appropriateness. Very rarely was intervention required.

A significant task over the life of the conversation was to group ideas into categories as growing number of ideas sometimes overlapped. By making categories, the number of ideas was reduced to fewer than 100.

## Results and Evaluation

The feedback received from students, parents, staff and community members was overwhelming, insightful, varied and thought provoking. Never has the division received so much feedback in so many areas from so many stakeholders. Approximately 280 participants

took part and submitted nearly 400 ideas and made over 1,600 comments.

The conversation remained very engaging and appropriate throughout. Only three comments were adapted for appropriateness in language and only one was removed. The cost of this engagement project was significantly less than previous methods and resulted in much more information being collected.

From the vast amount of feedback received, it was evident that people found the online conversation a worthwhile and useful method of communicating with the Board of Trustees. The Board of Trustees was particularly impressed with not only the quantity but the quality of the conversation. The Board of Trustees has addressed the top ideas and reported back to the community. It will continue to address all ideas and comments.

Students reported, “This is a great way to share our ideas to make our school a better place” and “I think we should do this online conversation yearly.”

The success of this first initiative of its kind led to a second conversation to assist in naming a new school. With very little effort, over 40 suggestions were received to assist in naming our new high school.

*Jeanne Davis is the Communications Director for Red Deer Catholic Regional Schools, which is made up of over 7,500 students in 18 schools in Alberta.*



SPECIAL FOCUS



# Working Together to Engage Hearts, Bodies and Minds

By Eve King-Hunter

For over 20 years researchers have been exploring the construct of student engagement, its impact on learning outcomes and ways to increase it for all students. Medicine Hat School District 76 (MHSD76) has been examining student engagement using the Tell Them From Me (TTFM, The Learning Bar, 2013) survey for the past three years.

With its commitment to improved learning through enhanced instruction, a desire to extend our work with instructional intelligence and a TTFM needs-based assessment, MHSD 76 chose to explore how cooperative learning strategies (CL) might influence engagement and achievement for all students. Cooperative learning involves “the instructional use of small groups so that students work together to maximize their own and each other’s learning” (Johnson & Johnson, n.d., p. 2). It is the district’s belief that various approaches to CL could have a positive impact on social, institutional and intellectual domains of engagement for years to come.

This instructional initiative was commenced by the exploration of the CL safe-classroom approach (Bennett & Rolheiser, 2008) using Tribes Learning Communities (Gibbs, 2006) in the 2012-13 academic year. It is grounded in The Four Agreements (attentive listening, appreciation, no put-downs, right to pass/participate, and mutual respect), and guided by inclusion, influence and community along The Tribes Trail.

All contractual teachers and educational assistants were in-serviced by certified MHSD76 Tribes trainers during the year via hands-on workshops and professional collaboration time. In turn, teachers began to *play* with various classroom energizers and instructional strategies (such as “Pull My Finger” and “Novel in an Hour”, respectively) to strengthen their lessons.

By the Spring of 2013, baseline data derived from district-based TTFM questions

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**It is the district’s belief that various approaches to cooperative learning could have a positive impact on social, institutional and intellectual domains of engagement for years to come.**

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revealed that roughly 43 per cent of elementary students and 40 per cent of secondary students encountered two to three CL activities at school, per day. From the survey-based TTFM questions, a few of the notables from each engagement domain included:

- **Social:** While students’ *sense of belonging* in both elementary and secondary schools was below Canadian norms, the *positive friendships* that they developed were on par with, or above Canadian norms, respectively;
- **Institutional:** While students’ *homework behaviours* in both elementary and secondary schools were less than Canadian norms, *school attendance* for district students was greater than Canadian norms; and
- **Intellectual:** In both elementary and secondary schools, students felt they put more *effort* into their learning as compared to their *interest and motivation* levels.

With this formative assessment data in mind and teachers’ expressed interests in additional cooperative learning strategies, the district extended its instructional inquiry to include the CL structure approach (Bennett & Rolheiser, 2008) for the 2013-14 school year.

This past August, Dr. Duvall from Kagan Professional Development, conducted separate seminars for elementary and secondary teachers regarding the use of Kagan Cooperative Learning (Kagan & Kagan, 2009) structures. Teachers have now witnessed and experienced how the principles of positive-interdependence, individual accountability, equal opportunity, and simultaneous

interaction contribute to efficient and effective CL structures like “RallyRobin” and “StandUp-HandUp-PairUp.”

Through district professional learning communities, educators are purposefully working together to select commensurate CL tools from their instructional toolboxes to bolster their teaching, and engage their students socially, behaviourally and cognitively.

Medicine Hat School District 76 is moving forward with its pledge to improve student learning based on 10 Principles of Enhanced Instruction (MHSD76, 2012, pp. 13-14). Using effective research-based strategies, such as cooperative learning, could honour these instructional principles and improve student engagement and achievement. Stakeholders at the micro, macro and mega levels of our educational organization (Kaufman, Guerra and Platt, 2006) could also benefit from this meaningful change over the next three to five years (Fullan, 2007, p. 18).

Through Tribes Learning Communities and Kagan Cooperative Learning, the district hopes that increased student engagement will breed success for every student (MHSD76, 2012, p. 19), support the development of learning competencies (Alberta Education, 2011, p. 2) and prepare our graduates to meet the global demands of the 21st century (Murgatroyd, 2011, p. 69). ○

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*Eve King-Hunter serves MHSD76 as a teacher and research consultant. She is also a doctoral student specializing in Learning, Instruction and Innovation at The Richard W. Riley College of Education and Leadership, Walden University.*





Photos courtesy of Tourism Calgary.



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## NEWS FROM LESTER B. PEARSON SCHOOL BOARD

### Appointment of Véronique Marin as Director of Adult & Vocational Education

The Lester B. Pearson School Board is pleased to announce the appointment of Véronique [Ronnie] Marin as Director of Adult and Vocational Education, effective October 1, 2013. Upon the retirement of Gloria Keenan, Marin assumed leadership of this dynamic and growing department within the school board.

Most characteristic of Marin is the Objective Statement that heads her curriculum vitae, "To continually grow in the field of educational leadership." In her career, she has moved from classroom teacher and adult education, to the Vice Principalship in the Youth sector and to the Director position in our major Adult Education Center. She was then promoted to the position of Assistant Director under Gloria Keenan.

### Bridge to Burundi: A Truly Remarkable Student Initiative

Students at Westwood High School in Hudson, Québec, have found that they are capable of extending their educational frontiers much further than they thought possible.

Four years ago, in response to their appreciation of a staff member, Jean Claude Manirakiza, from Burundi, students decided that they could indeed do something for those far less fortunate. This led to the Westwood "Bridge to Burundi" project.

Students began their fund-raising activity in the traditional way, with dances, bottle drives and Christmas carolling for donations. They then were fortunate in having a graduate, a former Facebook executive, who taught them how to gather online donations. In less than a year, they had received more than \$40,000, created their own Non-Governmental Organization and a two-room school was built over the summer and 95 students began their education.

The project has become much more than a fundraiser and has morphed into a wonderful learning experience for students who are separated so far geographically and socially, but who are now joined so meaningfully.

A former Westwood student felt very passionate about the project, which led her to begin a student group called Corporate Pitch. The Corporate Pitch team presents the Bridge to Burundi project to corporations, illustrating to them how they could help the youth of our community change the world, one classroom at a time. A parent then joined her team and volunteered his time every Friday to teach students marketing strategies and public relations.

After four years, the school consists of three brick and mortar buildings, housing 400 students in Grades 1 to 5. Further rooms are under construction. The school and village have been provided with a fresh water supply, piped from a mountain source two kilometres away, and washrooms have been built with hand washing stations. The project has helped the village create a business development association that, in partnership, has been able to purchase a flour mill, sewing machines, farm animals, farm machinery and has opened a local pharmacy. A 12 room medical center has been funded and built to open early in 2014.

This project is a wonderful example of the power of young people who, along with a group of dedicated teachers, can make an enormous difference in the lives of others.

### Updates from Quebec: Conference, New President, and More

Leadership Defined is the theme of the AAESQ Spring Conference, which will be held in Quebec City from May 22-14, 2014. The host school board will be the New Frontiers School Board. AAESQ also has an active retiree committee. Recent activities include golf outings, wine-tasting tours in Ontario, dance lessons and a visit to the Montreal Botanical Gardens. Carol Gray, past president of CASSA, is very actively involved in the AAESQ retiree committee.

AAESQ has a new President Elect. Jim Jordan, from the Riverside School Board, who has been on the Executive of AAESQ for several years as well as Treasurer and Canadian Association of Principals representative, has been named President Elect. Currently, Jordan is principal of Boucherville Elementary in Boucherville, Quebec.

## CASSA Welcomes President Elect Cindy Finn



It is a tremendous honour to be President-Elect of the Canadian Association of School System Administrators. I feel quite privileged to have been given the opportunity to serve on the executive of one of the country's most dynamic and important educational associations.

This is a particularly exciting time to be involved with CASSA. There are many indicators that CASSA is fulfilling its mission as the national voice for senior educational leaders.

First, CASSA's name change better reflects who we are. Including the term school system administrators helps to sharpen the focus of the organization. We strive to represent leaders who work at the board or district level and work in partnership with other educational associations, all of which have student engagement and success as our overarching goal.

Second, CASSA has made a concerted effort in the last few years to connect with educational administrators from coast to coast to coast. We continue to work at increasing our affiliate memberships and encouraging leaders from all over Canada to get involved with CASSA. For example, our annual summer conference and the Leaders & Learners magazine are important vehicles for sharing the incredible initiatives going on in our schools. Having attended the CASSA summer conference for the last several years, I can attest to the rich and productive conversations educators are having. Despite the differences across our various systems of education, there are several common threads that unite leaders working in public education today. We are well on our way to creating a vibrant and unique professional learning community.

Finally, CASSA is embracing technology to help us bridge the geographic distances between educational jurisdictions. We are updating our website regularly and using Twitter to keep members connected.

As CASSA continues to implement its strategic plan, we will continue to grow and strengthen our place on the national stage. I am excited to be a part of this growth and look forward to the good things to come.

Cindy Finn, Ph.D.

Director of Student Services

Lester B. Pearson School Board

*Cindy Finn is President-Elect of CASSA and will be installed as President in July 2014. Finn is the Director of Student Services at the Lester B Pearson school board in Dorval, Que., the largest English speaking school district in Quebec.*



## DON'T MISS THESE 2014 EVENTS!

### March 7, 2014

**MASS Spring Members' Session  
(MASS Members Only)**  
Hilton Winnipeg Airport  
Winnipeg, Manitoba  
[www.mass.mb.ca](http://www.mass.mb.ca)

### April 23, 2014

**OPSOA-OPC Symposium**  
Toronto Hilton Hotel  
Toronto, Ontario  
[www.opsoa.org](http://www.opsoa.org)

The Ontario Public Supervisory Officials' Association (OPSOA) and the Ontario Principals' Council (OPC) jointly sponsor an annual one-day symposium that provides an opportunity for senior system and school leaders working as teams to build professional capital at the school and system levels. Guest speakers include Dr. Andrew Hargreaves and Dr. Michael Fullan.

### April 24-25, 2014

**The OPSOA Annual Conference**  
Details to come.  
[www.opsoa.org](http://www.opsoa.org)

### May 1-2, 2014

**The CASS/Alberta Education Annual Conference**  
Double Tree by Hilton (Old Mayfield)  
16615 - 109 Ave NW  
Edmonton, Alberta  
[www.cass.ab.ca](http://www.cass.ab.ca)

The CASS/Alberta Education Annual Conference planned by a committee of CASS and Alberta Education representatives. There is a CASS President's Reception, CASS Retirement Banquet and Fellowship Breakfast, as well as the CASS Annual General Meeting.

### July 3-6, 2014

**The 2014 CASSA Annual Conference**  
Coast Plaza Hotel  
Calgary, Alberta  
Theme: Engaging Students - Making a Difference  
[www.CASSA-ACGCS.ca](http://www.CASSA-ACGCS.ca)

### OPSOA Welcomes New Directors in the Province

Bluewater: **Steve Blake**  
Greater Essex: **Erin Kelly**  
Hastings & Prince Edward: **Mandy Savery-Whiteway**  
Thames Valley: **Laura Elliott**  
Toronto: **Donna Quan**  
Waterloo Region: **John Bryant**

## TIENET Special Education Management Proven Performance Across Canada

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*Russ Coles, Senior Manager of Enterprise Applications, York Region*

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*Nova Scotia Teacher*

### Nova Scotia Implements TIENET

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### Niagara Catholic Announces New Superintendent of Education

Niagara Catholic District School Board's Director of Education, John Crocco, has announced the appointment of Ted Farrell as the new Superintendent of Education, effective October 7, 2013. Ted Farrell has held a variety of school and leadership roles with Niagara Catholic; most recently as Principal of Denis Morris Catholic High School in St. Catharines. Prior to that, Farrell was Principal of Blessed Trinity Catholic Secondary School in Grimsby. He replaces Superintendent of Education Mario Ciccarelli, who announced his retirement in August.

Farrell thanked the Board of Trustees and Director Crocco for his appointment and the confidence shown in his Catholic leadership. "It is an honour to have been selected from a distinguished group of applicants to become Niagara Catholic's newest Superintendent of Education," said Farrell. "This is an exciting time for me, as I transition from school leadership to system leadership. I will certainly miss the Denis Morris Catholic community, but I look forward to this new challenge of serving all students across Niagara Catholic."



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### Kim Jenkins Wins EXL Award

Congratulations to Kim Jenkins, former Superintendent of Fort McMurray Catholic

School District (FMCS), for recently winning the National Xerox Executive Leadership (EXL) Award. This award is presented annually by CASSA, and recognizes excellence among members of the superintendency.

Jenkins spent 32 years at FMCS; the last five of which as superintendent. During that time, Jenkins says he pushed the district into a lot of calculated risks designed to grow the district, improve programming, improve community involvement, and improve education.

The two projects he is most proud of are:

- 1) Raising \$6 million from within the community to build not only a new high school, but also the Suncor Energy Center for the Performing Arts at Holy Trinity High School. The center includes a Proscenium Black Box Theatre, with seating for 350, a floor level playing space that is sprung throughout, state of the art theatre audio and lighting equipment, a short travel theatrical fly system and a full stage white PVC cyclorama for projection and special lighting effects.
- 2) Raising \$5 million from within the community to transform Father Patrick Mercredi High School into a Grade 7 to 12 Science and Technology Centre. The school contains high-tech multiple-labs throughout the facility that give students greater exposure to science and mathematics in a real life context.

On winning this award, Jenkins says, "I am an ideas person and I think big. I see what can possibly be and am lucky to be surrounded by very good people who can take my ideas and actually make them work. I had a great team to support me, to take my ideas and improve them, and make them work."

Jenkins is also thankful for the community support, saying, "When I pitched these ideas, I was lucky that there were people at these businesses who believed in what we were doing. They realized these projects would be good for the community, good for the school and good for their own businesses because, for example, the Science and Technology centre is training their future employees."

Congratulations Kim Jenkins!





**Alberta Announces New Superintendents**

Christ the Redeemer Catholic Regional Division: **Scott Morrison**

East Central Alberta Catholic Separate Schools: **Charlie McCormack**

Edmonton Public School Board: **Darrel Robertson**

Elk Island Catholic Separate Regional Division: **Michael Hauptman**

Fort McMurray School District: **Doug Nichols**

Fort McMurray Roman Catholic Separate School Division: **George McGuigan**

Grasslands Regional Division: **David Steele**

Horizon School Division: **Wilco Tymensen**

Lakeland Roman Catholic Separate School Division: **Joe Arruda**

Lethbridge School District: **Cheryl Gilmore**

Livingstone Range School Division: **Dave Driscoll**

Medicine Hat Catholic Separate Regional Division: **Garry Andrews (Acting Superintendent)**

Prairie Rose School Division: **Brian Anjelic**

Rocky View School Division: **Susan Williams (Acting Superintendent)**

St. Thomas Aquinas Roman Catholic Separate Regional Division: **Troy Davis**

**Edmonton Public Schools Trustees Approve Student Representative for Board**

In September 2013, the Board of Trustees unanimously approved a recommendation to include a student representative in public board meetings for the 2014-15 school year.

“This is an exciting step for our Board and yet another example of how Trustees are working to better meet the needs of our students,” says Board Chair Sarah Hoffman.

One key feature of the recommendation is that the student representative will be elected

by his or her fellow students. Trustees have asked the administration to develop a suitable election process for the current school year so that a student representative is in place for the next school year.

The student representative will not have the right to vote and will not attend in camera meetings where Trustees discuss confidential issues in the areas of land, labour and law. The representative will take part in public board meetings and will have the right to ask questions and participate in debate.

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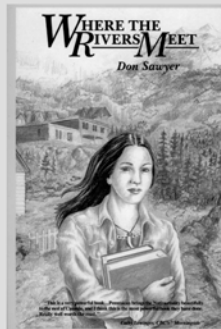
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**Aboriginal Resource and Teacher’s Guide**

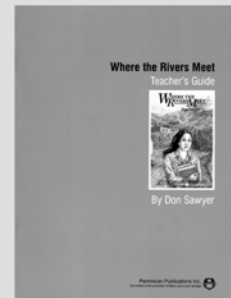
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