Leadership Learning
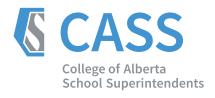## through University & School Authority Partnerships in Alberta

SELECTED EXAMPLES

Cam Oulton
May 2, 2018

CASS
College of Alberta
School Superintendents

CONTENTS

OVERVIEW

In August 2017, The College of Alberta School Superintendents (CASS) commissioned active research in learning about leadership development programs in Alberta and in school authorities beyond our borders. Commissioning this research proved prescient as Alberta Education announced on February 7th, 2018 that, "Alberta will now be the first province to have professional practice standards aligned across all professional educator roles, (Alberta Education, 2018)[1]." This report is part of three current and connected research initiatives by CASS, of which this is the third portion. The research is in support of four stated objectives in the CASS Strategic Plan that support Goal 2 "Leadership capacity is built and supported."

1 Focus on systemic improvement to improve the learning environment in all schools for all students.

2 Lead the implementation of the Superintendent Leadership Quality Standard, Principal Leadership Quality Standard and the Teaching Quality Standard.

3 Support School authorities in their efforts to refine system leader succession plans and school leader development programs.

4 Champion research on educational matters to help inform policy, decision-making and practice.[2]

In examining leadership capacity, CASS commissioned three interrelated research projects to be shared with all CASS members. These are:

- A Literature Review of the Best Practices in Leadership Development;
- Review of District Leadership Development Programs and;
- Leadership Learning Through University/School Authority Partnerships.

This portion of the research started as a field research project exploring collaborative leadership learning partnerships funded by the Research Partnership Program (RPP) of Alberta Education[3]. RPP was established with the aim of improving educational outcomes through research partnerships between school authorities, post-secondary institutions, and stakeholder organizations. To gain funding, proposals were aligned to one of three research priorities outlined in RPP. The priority of research alignment "Implementation of Professional Practice Standards for Teachers and Leaders," framed this project. The University of Calgary (UC) and the University of Lethbridge (UL) were the university partners for the twelve school authorities receiving funding. The school authorities were contacted by letter and asked to communicate with the researcher regarding any leadership development initiatives/programs for:

- staff with a teaching certificate,
- certificated staff aspiring to leadership positions, or
- certificated staff currently in leadership positions at the school and/or system level.

1| Alberta Government, Feb 7, 2018, New standards to help build more inclusive schools
https://www.alberta.ca/release.cfm?xID=523706BE2FD5C-04C2-AE72-8C01F26C8A1F2DDB Accessed May 2, 2018

2| College of Alberta School Superintendents, n.d. 2016-2019 CASS Strategic Plan
http://0o.b5z.net/i/u/10063916/f/Strategic_Plan_2016_-_2019_For_Website__17_02_06__No_Directors__Update_Oct_3.pdf Accessed April 30, 2018

3| Alberta Education, n.d. Research Partnership Program
https://education.alberta.ca/research-network/research-partnerships-program/?searchMode=3 Accessed April 30, 2018

Project Design

In its first iteration, this project anticipated requesting reports on leadership learning partnership projects from school authorities engaged with UC or UL. This approach was deemed insufficient, as it would not capture the complexity, unique aspects, and evolution of each partnership. The author consulted with the CASS Executive Director, Barry Litun, and the CASS Past President, Colleen Symyrozum-Watt for guidance. Two changes to the project design were instituted:

- Information would be gathered via personal interviews.
- Research scope would be broadened to include the two partner universities.

Consequently, central services staff from seven of the identified school authorities were interviewed as were professors from UC and UL. Almost all interview participants shared internal reports and artifacts with the researcher. Web-based research was also undertaken to better understand the documents referenced by those interviewed.

Report Structure

Assembling, analyzing and disseminating information about school authority/university partnerships in leadership learning is intended to support CASS members in their work in building and supporting leadership capacity.

The report is structured as follows:

- Examination of four partnership themes
- Advantages of school authority/university partnerships
- Potential stress points in creating and maintaining successful partnerships
- Ways forward—lessons learned and suggestions for additional exploration
- Case studies from seven school authorities and two universities

Interviewees were gracious with their time. With the myriad pressures and demands of senior leadership, participants' commitment to and engagement with both their partnership and this report were readily apparent. With this in mind, the researcher has included active web links to increase accessibility for readers.

Four Partnership Themes

Information was collected from professors at UC and UL, as well as from system leaders within seven school authorities: Calgary Board of Education (CBE), Canadian Rockies Public Schools (CRPS), Chinook's Edge School Division (CESD), Parkland School Division (PSD), Red Deer Public School District (RDPSD), Rocky View Schools (RVS) and Westwind School Division (WSD). Information was gleaned from a range of school authorities—from the largest in Alberta to one of the smallest in terms of population; from urban boards, to suburban and rural boards; from school systems that are seeing marked growth in student population, to those that are struggling with gradual but long-term decline in student populations. All authorities contacted are in collaborative partnerships with a major university and are committed to long-term collaborative research in leadership learning for, and with, school- and system-based leaders.

While there were individual differences in how leadership learning collaboration was designed and delivered in each partnership, there were four common themes mentioned by a majority of interviewees, or noted in follow-up research by the author:

1 Joint research
2 Addressing professional quality standards
3 Supporting leadership teams
4 Graduate degrees

Joint Research

All the partnerships were research based, but remained unique in addressing the needs of a specific school authority, based on the resources of the partnering university. Both UC and UL have developed collaborative research-based inquiry methodologies that facilitate evidence-based conversations among participants. Several interviewees stressed that partnerships grounded in current research increased confidence among participants. As warranted, the methodologies allowed for adaptation within the project. Partnerships between school authorities and university partners appeared to be mutually beneficial. School authorities were provided a strong university-level, research-based leadership learning methodology; university partners gained venues for current field work and validation of their leadership learning methodologies. The case studies that follow this report provide an overview of both the unique aspects of each partnership and the power of leadership learning when it is based on a shared understanding of research methodologies.

Addressing Professional Quality Standards

An organizing principle of the partnership work was to broaden understanding and implementation of professional quality standards for teachers, school and system leaders. Dr. Townsend (2015)[4], in his review of the RDPSD/UL partnership, noted school administrators "...provided evidence of the extent to which their leadership practices met or exceeded the expectations imbedded in Alberta Quality Practice Competencies for School Leaders." In conversation with system leaders, the need to address the (newly mandated) Quality Standard documents was mentioned frequently and issued into action as central services and university facilitators worked with school leaders in jointly assessing and improving leadership competencies. The CESD Guide for Principal Professional Learning is an example of how principal professional practice competencies are embedded in goal setting and growth plans[5].

4 | Townsend, D. (2015). Red Deer Public Schools: Administrative Growth Research and Development Project: Final Report: Year III. Red Deer: Red Deer Public School District.

5 | Chinook's Edge, n.d., Guide for Principal Professional Learning, (internal document)

Supporting Leadership Teams

Respondents stated that having support from university facilitators was essential in starting and maintaining these collaborative partnerships. Both universities provided partner authorities with a structure for leadership learning that was grounded in research. While each partnership was unique in design, the commonality was that all the partnerships served to support leadership teams by providing a structure, or scaffolding, to help each authority move forward. Respondents characterized the assistance provided by university partners as supportive, structured, and providing clear process, or as an incubator. Several respondents made mention of the collaborative nature of planning and implementing the partnerships as, "Being done with, not done to." Dr. Brandon, in conversation, noted that there are two major obstacles in attempting to create sustainable change in education. These are the complexity of the task itself and the challenge of mastering the knowledge needed to create systemic change.

Difficult and long-term initiatives are rendered even more complex by the myriad time pressures facing senior leaders in education. The day-to-day realities of leadership, including budgets, parental concerns, transportation incidents, student trauma, mundane but necessary reports, and many other routine and emergent issues can crowd out good intentions and promises to commit to a robust schedule of regular site-based instructional leadership learning opportunities. Central services respondents stated that it took extraordinary discipline and planning at the start of each school year to keep the monthly school site visit days and the participant meeting days uncompromised. It was mentioned repeatedly that the initial motivation of school-based leadership learners was a desire not to disappoint the university facilitators and the school administrators partnering in the initiatives.

Finding time to support collaborative instructional leadership initiatives was one issue. The second was the learning challenge, or, "what exactly should we do?" In conversations, it was apparent that central services leaders were grateful for the expertise of their university colleagues in sharing and modeling methodologies to increase leadership learning.

Graduate Degrees

The majority of respondents observed that partnerships with universities and the attendant regular contact with university facilitators may have resulted in more lead teachers, aspiring administrators, and school-based administrators enrolling in graduate programs with their partner university. Both CBE and PSD cited specific Master's cohorts created by UC for their jurisdictions as an advantage. UL also has a Master's cohort that was mentioned by two jurisdictions. Three benefits were cited: access to expert advice as a graduate student moved into the research phase; the opportunity to do meaningful research or internships in their jurisdiction; and that cohorts tended to support a culture of cooperation rather than competition as leadership opportunities opened up in an authority.

ADVANTAGES
of School Authority and University Partnerships

In the interviews conducted five advantages of collaboration were mentioned by participants

1 Increased trust

2 Increased credibility

3 Bridging theory and practice

4 Exposure to adult learning practices

5 Focussed external expertise

Increased Trust

Trust is mentioned first as it is the bedrock on which all of the advantages of collaboration depend. Every person contacted for this project mentioned trust in some fashion. The importance of creating and maintaining trust was described in a number of ways and three themes about trust emerged in our conversations.

1

That in initiating these collaborations, basic trust was established when system leaders publicly embraced the process, promised they would be prepared for and make the required regular school visits an immutable priority. Participants noted that following through on these promises, honouring the school leaders and staff by being there and engaged, was the basic foundation for success.

2

There also had to be trust in the process; a shared understanding that partnering in leadership learning at the university level would be valuable in the long haul, although it might be difficult, inconvenient and confusing at the beginning. This trust was based on a shared belief that there was a commitment to the long haul, a promise that when the process got difficult, these initiatives would not be dismissed and derided as another flavour of the month. Conversations showed that participants embraced and followed the process or methodology while committing fully to ensuring that the leadership learning initiative became embedded in jurisdictional professional culture and practice.

3

Trusting relationships matured as school and system leaders became deeply enmeshed in the process by communicating transparently about problems and potential in the journey. The guiding questions, inquiry into progress towards good practice, and working toward personal or school goals appeared to create a culture of safety. Participants stated that school administrators and teachers were not anxious or threatened by system leaders, university staff or off-site school leaders regularly visiting their classrooms. It was understood that these visits represented a collaborative effort to deeply understand and enable the quality standards for teachers and school leaders—to the benefit of students. The essential work of the partnerships and the fierce commitment from staff strengthened the unique and productive culture of each school authority. Trust was the backbone.

Increased Credibility

The term credibility recurred in interviews. Participants felt that credibility was strengthened as school and system leaders demonstrated that they were also learners in working with their university partners and peers in enhancing skills in supporting collaborative leadership learning. Participants noted that system leaders were willing to take risks and didn't assume they were most knowledgeable. In sharing their ignorance, or vulnerability, as they learned from and with others in their organization and the university facilitators, they gained credibility. University partners provided credibility in creating viable frameworks and standards for action research or successful graduate-level research.

Bridging Theory and Practice

Establishing a bridge between theory and practice is seen as critical to successful leadership learning by both school and system leaders and university professors. These collaborations allowed university staff to share current research in leadership and apply it in the course of the collaborative partnership. System level staff reported increasing their ability in questioning techniques and their understanding and confidence in adopting and modeling best practices arising from research. It was mentioned several times that support and guidance from the universities lead to strong collaborative research and assisted in broadening and deepening reflective practices.

Exposure to Current Adult Learning Practices

University facilitators teach adults and were therefore able to model how best to engage adults in learning. Several participants stressed that this learning opportunity was provided with participants rather than being done to them. That is, participants had a voice in their learning and their participation and observations were honoured. Many participants noted that classroom teachers become lead teachers or school administrators and must transition from leading and influencing students to leading and influencing adults. As school teachers, the bulk of available work experience is with students and the transition to working with adults as a leader is often learned on the job. Several respondents felt that the university partnerships taught and modelled adult learning theory and the effectiveness of adult learning practices for school staff.

Focused External Expertise

Participants were clear that the expertise the university partners brought to the jurisdictions was invaluable. University partners provided a model and methodology that was grounded in research practices and were demonstrably capable of inducing transformational change in school-based leadership over a three- to five-year term. With the university sharing the responsibilities for leadership learning, the researcher naively inquired if these partnerships reduced the workload on the system leaders? Central services respondents made it clear that this was a collaborative partnership. Participants were clear that the workload was not reduced in the least, but it was more focused and productive. It was described as a formidable commitment to honour the promises that must be kept: being there, being prepared, and being vulnerable.

POTENTIAL STRESS POINTS
in Creating and Maintaining Successful Partnerships

Several stress points were mentioned by participants in creating and utilizing these partnerships, with most being evident in the first year. Respondents emphasized that a comprehensive communication plan for all staff was essential. Pre-planning the roll-out of this project with school-based staff and university facilitators required meeting in the spring or summer before implementation began. It was helpful if the local council of the Alberta Teachers' Association was well informed of the key components of the initiative.

Senior leaders, administrators and university facilitators needed to be prepared to address the implementation dip that accompanies difficult transformations in education and frequently thwarts them. Knowing that enthusiasm can dwindle and participants may become overwhelmed in the early stages of any major initiative and being prepared to regroup and provide support is essential. Fullan (2011)[6] describes the realities of the implementation dip:

> "For a long time, we have been finding that when organizations try something new, even if there has been some pre-implementation preparation, the first few months are bumpy. How could it be otherwise? New skills and understanding have a learning curve. Once we brought this out in the open, a lot of people immediately felt better knowing that it is normal, and everyone goes through it. This finding led to the realization that we needed to focus on capacity building in this critical stage." (p. 71)

Ensuring that time commitments were honoured was mentioned frequently. Participants mentioned that this was a major stress point as leadership in education is being in the service of others, being responsive to essential but routine tasks, and addressing emergent issues.

Nurturing trust was cited as a potential stress point and was referred to frequently. Trust was strengthened by transparent communication, collaborative agenda setting, shared vulnerability in the learning process, and honouring the time commitments in the partnership process.

Interestingly, although most of these initiatives are, or were, funded by Alberta Education's Research Partnership Program (RPP), respondents did not view the loss of funding that would occur (or had occurred) at the end of a three-year cycle as an obstacle. For those jurisdictions in a funded RPP cycle, it was felt that the transformations in leadership would be embedded in their authority. Those that had ended a funding cycle stated that the partnerships had created sustainable and enduring systemic changes in jurisdictional culture. The seed funding for each authority was valuable in providing initial support, but the lasting changes remained viable and integral when the funding ceased.

6 | Fullan, M. (2011). Change leader: Learning to do what matters most. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass

WAYS FORWARD
Lessons Learned and Suggestions for Additional Exploration

Participants stated that their collaborations lead to a deeper understanding and implementation of professional learning standards and a change in culture, with respect to on-site visits framed by guiding questions and an iterative cycle of asking, action, assessment, and then asking again. Participants felt that the changes made were sustainable due to their value and eventual incorporation into authority culture.

This report was commissioned prior to the mandated Professional Quality Standards; it is a story of seven jurisdictions and two universities in long term partnerships to enhance learning around professional standards for school-based administrators. There will be learning opportunities, symposia and local initiatives put into place prior to the September 2019 mandated date of implementation of the new Professional Practice Standards. As school authority leaders embrace the new Professional Quality Standards, it may be helpful to learn further from the seven authorities and two collaborating universities framed in this research.

However, this research is incomplete. There are Alberta school authorities that have not been interviewed that are (or have been) in partnerships with UC or UL, their experiences should be captured. All formal reports by school authorities and their collaborative university partners should be made available from a central location to inform CASS members.

Stephen Lynch, in his creation of a database of district leadership development programs that comprises the middle of this three-part project, found three jurisdictions that have banded together to work with Newman Theological College, and another authority has engaged a University of Alberta instructor to assist in their leadership learning work. These partnerships are part of the searchable database that he has created, but it would be useful to create case studies on these partnerships and the unique needs they serve.

While still not comprehensive, a partial picture of leadership learning in Alberta with respect to school authority/university collaborative partnerships has emerged. It is a positive portrait, but it is incomplete as school authorities grow and evolve in their approaches to leadership learning. As is to be expected, reporting research always lags current practices.

CASE STUDIES
from Seven School Authorities and Two Universities

1 Calgary Board of Education

2 Canadian Rockies Public Schools

3 Chinook's Edge School Division

4 Parkland School Division

5 Red Deer Public School Division

6 Rocky View Schools

7 Westwind School Division

8 University of Calgary

9 University of Lethbridge

Calgary Board of Education

The Calgary Board of Education, (CBE) is the largest school authority in Alberta. September 2017 enrollment figures from Alberta Education show 121,382 students enrolled from ECS to grade 12.[1] CBE operates 245 schools and is divided into 7 administrative areas, each lead by an area director whose office delivers system level services in assigned schools and provides support in school operations. Each Area Director supports approximately 35 principals.[2]

In Conversation

*In addition to web-based research, the information for this case study was provided by: **Dr. Lori Pamplin**, Director of Leadership and Learning, and **Ann Ard** and **Dallas Wheeler**, System Principals and members of the Leadership and Learning team (CBE)*

With respect to school/authority partnerships that support leadership learning initiatives, Calgary Board of Education (CBE) has a deep and long-term relationship with Werklund School of Education (Werklund) and the Galileo Educational Network (GENA) located at the University of Calgary (UC).

The CBE Leadership and Learning department oversees and coordinates support to provide in-house and external leadership learning initiatives. The size of CBE necessitates partnerships coupled with substantial in-house work to move learning forward among novice teachers, lead teachers, aspirant school leaders, new school leaders, and experienced school leaders.

CBE's partnership with UC has three main avenues.

1 **Collaboration with GENA:** in support of a cohort of approximately 750 certificated staff members in a leadership learning program involving six to seven meetings over the course of the school year.

2 **Werklund Graduate Programs:** CBE cohorts of Master (MEd) and Doctoral (EdD) students enrolled at Werklund.

3 **Research Collaboration:** Community and CBE team-members can access support within the Partner Research Schools network, facilitated by Werklund.

Collaboration with GENA

Although the CBE/UC partnership in facilitating learning with classroom teachers is not strictly within the purview of this report, its scale recommends mention. The teacher induction program serves approximately 450 new and novice teachers. The program is collaboratively designed and delivered by CBE and GENA staff. Participating teachers meet with CBE and GENA facilitators six or seven times over the school year and increase their proficiency in task design and assessment by asking critical questions, utilizing reflective practice, and examining and reporting on three student case studies selected from their own classrooms.

GENA also provides learning opportunities for leadership learners within CBE[3]. Approximately 750 CBE certificated staff are involved with this initiative, meeting six or seven times each school year. CBE participants in this program include lead teachers and aspirants to formal leadership roles who are seeking greater understanding and practice with informal leadership roles.

Werklund Graduate Programs

Werklund School of Education offers both Master and Doctoral level programs. Werklund offers a unique MEd specializing in Leadership created for CBE certificated staff called, "Leading for Learning: Calgary Board of Education, (CBE) Cohort."[4] The Werklund EdD program specializing in senior leadership in K-12 also provides for cohort-based support.[5]

Research Collaboration

Along with ten other school authorities, CBE is involved in the Partner Research Schools initiative facilitated by Werklund. This partnership aids collaboration between university researchers and school authority practitioners to design and conduct research focused on complex problems of practice.[6]

The CBE section of the GENA website showcases video of classroom-based lessons and teacher-lead research projects. Of the lesson exemplars and research projects on the CBE/GENA site, the reader may want to view "Leading Teacher Learning: A Case Study in Professional Learning Communities" which was conducted at Stanley Jones School (CBE) as it exemplifies sharing action research with an audience of peers.[7]

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https://www.cbe.ab.ca/about-us/leadership/Pages/system-support-for-schools.aspx (accessed April 22, 2012)

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Canadian Rockies Public Schools

Canadian Rockies Public Schools (CRPS) serves 2264 students in seven schools located in Banff, Canmore and Exshaw[1]. It is located west of Calgary, set in the Bow Valley, leading to the Canadian Rockies[2]. The CRPS central office is in Canmore, Alberta.

In Conversation

In addition to web-based research, the information for this case study was provided by: **Violet Parsons-Pack, Deputy Superintendent, Learning and Innovation (CRPS)**

Canadian Rockies Public Schools (CRPS) continues in a four-year partnership with Werklund School of Education (Werklund) at the University of Calgary (UC) and with the Galileo Educational Network (GENA). The CRPS Educational Leadership Team (ELT) collaborated with their partners from Werklund and GENA in developing the Nurturing Excellence in Instruction and Leadership (NEIL) inititative[3].

A brief description of the NEIL process:

- An initial conversation between the teacher and administrator during which each identify their own areas of desired growth.

- A pre-observation conversation between the teacher, administrator observers where all roles and goals are defined. The teacher identifies areas of feedback desired from the principal including artifacts for evidence of student learning, then the administrator identifies competencies around which they want feedback from the observing team.

- A classroom observation

- A post-observation conversation during which the principal provides requested feedback to the teacher. During the conversation, the two observers focus on and gather evidence around leadership practices. Observers then provide feedback to the principal regarding practices they demonstrated during the conversation that helped nurture teacher reflection, deepen understanding of instructional excellence and identify the leader's next steps. Teachers also have the opportunity to provide feedback directly to the administrator and the observation team. A teacher debrief conversation where teachers who have been observed meet together with the learning coach to further discuss their NEIL experience. The teachers identify leadership practices they find effective in supporting teacher learning by focusing on improving professional conversations.

- An ELT debrief conversation, where teams use the NEIL round and the teacher debrief feedback as the basis for deeper discussions about leadership practices that support teacher learning and thinking, for example deepening and understanding of the TEF, framing respectful questions, engaging in evidence-informed questions and identifying next steps.

(McPhee, Parsons-Pack, Larson, 2016)[4]

The NEIL initiative continues at Canadian Rockies for the 2017-18 school year. Dr. Jim Brandon and Ms. Candace Saar from Werklund conduct monthly meetings on-site at CRPS to facilitate leadership learning with school and system leaders. The CRPS 2017-2020 Annual Education Results Report[5] focuses on four key leadership competencies for the current school year.

1 **Embodying Visionary Leadership**

2 **Leading a Learning Community**

3 **Providing Instructional Leadership**

4 **Developing Leadership Capacity**

Canadian Rockies partnership with GENA has had a marked effect on teaching staff. GENA provides professional learning opportunities for CRPS teachers. The Teaching Effectiveness Framework (TEF) (Friesen, 2009)[6] is the focal point for professional conversations regarding teaching and learning.

There are five principles of effective teaching practice underlying TEF. These are:

1 Effective teaching practice begins with the thoughtful and intentional design of learning that engages students intellectually and academically.

2 The work that students are asked to undertake is worthy of their time and attention, is personally relevant, and deeply connected to the world in which they live.

3 Assessment practices are clearly focused on improving student learning and guiding teaching decisions and actions.

4 Teachers foster a variety of interdependent relationships in classrooms that promote learning and create a strong culture around learning.

5 Teachers improve their practice in the company of peers.

(Friesen, 2009)[7]

The CRPS website notes that teacher professional learning with respect to the TEF will be provided via a series of evidence-based professional conversations between ELT and CRPS teachers[8]. The first three principles of TEF (above) will be emphasized.

Another significant partnership is CRPS membership in the Partner Research Schools initiative facilitated by Werklund[9]. This partnership aids collaboration between university researchers, communities and school authority practitioners to design and conduct research focused on complex problems of practice. There are currently 11 school authorities involved.

In reflecting on the journey that CRPS has undertaken in their shared vision of instructional leadership, Superintendent Chris McPhee notes: "We are witnessing first-hand a culture of collective efficacy that is en masse throughout the district. It is our belief that what is happening at CRPS can be replicated throughout districts both in and outside Alberta as long as some essential components are maintained—relational trust, consistent and research-based messaging, human resources, and all partners brought to the table in a meaningful way. "[10]

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7 | ibid

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Chinook's Edge School Division

Chinook's Edge serves 11,055 students in 43 schools spread out across central Alberta[1,2]. Their divisional office is located in Innisfail, Alberta.

In Conversation

In addition to web-based research, the information for this case study was provided by: **Dr. Lissa Steele**, *Associate Superintendent of Learning Services (Chinook's Edge School Division)*

Chinook's Edge School Division (CESD) was an early partner with the University of Lethbridge (UL) over a four-year term in furthering leadership learning provincially.

The partnership started with the collaborative development of a professional learning growth plan for school-based leaders and the Central Office Leadership Team (COLT), which was created with assistance from UL faculty. This collaborative development was called the *Principles of Principal's Inquiry (PPI)* and ran for two school years, September 2010 to May 2012, (Adams, 2012)[3]. During the PPI, CESD school administrators sought ways in which to more effectively plan, implement and sustain meaningful professional learning for themselves and their teachers.

The current edition of their growth plans provides for both an individual goal and a team goal, both of which are framed as guiding questions. Strategies for both goals and how success will be measured are decided on and are written down. Specific timelines for meeting each goal are agreed upon and an opportunity for reflection on outcomes is provided. A self-assessment template of professional practice competencies from the Quality Standard documents is also included in the one-page *Guide for Principal Professional Learning*.

The *Guide for Principal Professional Learning* provides an understanding of the role of guiding questions, the use of available resources, and created generative dialogue about the process of improving instruction.

COLT in conjunction with two UL professors, Dr. Townsend and Dr. Adams, embarked on regular monthly school visits across CESD. Given the geographical size of the jurisdiction, this took three days monthly, with each visit taking an hour to an hour and a half. During the site visits the COLT/UL team met with the school-based leaders and discussed the guiding questions that each school leadership team had created, the strategies underway, and what support might be needed from the COLT or UL facilitators before the next site visit. The UL staff modeled asking powerful questions, engaging in generative dialogue, and how to listen carefully during the conversations. Both COLT and school-based leaders refined their skills in inquiry-based leadership learning, adapted these skills, refined further and helped inculcate them throughout the local system.

While the CESD/UL partnership has ended, its legacy is evident in the instructional leadership model that remains in CESD; reflective conversations based on educationally relevant guiding questions issue into concrete actions. COLT continues to make regular scheduled visits, planned a year in advance, and continues to hold that time sacred regardless of internal and external pressures in leading the division. Dr. Steele noted that COLT has a service-based orientation in supporting school leaders during these regular interactions. Two key questions that capture this orientation were asked of school leaders; "What's on your mind?" and, "What support do you need?" as well as specific questions regarding progress in achieving individual and team goals.

CESD has developed a Quality Learning Environment (QLE), a framework of effective instructional practices that is aligned with individual growth plans[4]. The QLE is based on current research and was developed collaboratively with teachers in CESD. The framework and description of the elements of a quality-learning environment are intended to outline high-leverage points around instruction.

Steele (2013)[5] notes that (the QLE) "...first piloted with our school-based administrators and teachers, has evolved to encompass all staff in Chinook's Edge School Division–including support staff, library staff, the maintenance department, and administrative support staff."

Adams, cited in Chaseling, et al, (2016)[6], described the CESD/UL partnership results as having included the following:

1 that superintendents and other central office personnel can impact on the quality of instructional practices in schools and, in various specific ways, on the level of student learning, when they collaborate directly and frequently with school leader teams;

2 the power of a guiding question as a strategy to develop communication skills in a generative dialogue to support the reflective practices of individuals and the organization;

3 the value of re-culturing a central school office model such that these educators spend more, high quality, and purposeful time working with school leaders and teachers to achieve school and system goals; and,

4 the high importance of a competency-based model that links standards with student learning.

(Chaseling, et al, 2016)

Steele (2013)[7] observed three transformational changes over this course of this partnership.

1 The QLE framework assisted school staff in guiding reflection on their areas of strength and future growth.

2 Both COLT and school-based leaders have shown a remarkable commitment to the instructional leadership work that this partnership required. This resulted in the growth of their own skills, which provided further transformation as the leadership learning project evolved.

3 A high degree of trust was seen on the part of CESD teachers as they participated in the instructional leadership process and set goals with respect to the QLE.

The CESD/UL leadership learning initiative has been cited (Chaseling, et.al, 2016)[8] in a collaborative inquiry model of professional learning currently being undertaken in New South Wales, Australia that is heavily relying on the UL collaborative inquiry methodology in it's initial phase.

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Parkland School Division

Parkland School Division (PSD) is located west of Edmonton along Highway 16 and serves 11,053 students in 22 schools. It includes the City of Spruce Grove and the Town of Stony Plain[1,2]. The division office is located in Stony Plain, Alberta.

In Conversation

In addition to web-based research, the information for this case study was provided by: **Shauna Boyce**, *Deputy Superintendent (PSD)*

Parkland School Division (PSD) is in its second year of partnership with the Galileo Education Network (GENA), Werklund School of Education (Werklund) at the University of Calgary (UC). Ms. Boyce notes that the partnership pairs well with the in-house work started in 2015 with the development of a division-wide Quality Learning Framework.

The UC partnership serves two distinct groups:
PSD Administrators
Lead Teachers

The partnership with administrators is facilitated by Dr. Jim Brandon and Ms. Candace Saar. This leadership learning work has been focussed on the Leadership Quality Standard (LQS) competencies. PSD administrators are familiar with John Hattie's Visible Learning meta-analysis of influences, especially those that have the greatest effect size in improving learning. PSD leaders have placed special emphasis on what are considered the big three: Visionary Leadership; Leading a Learning Community; and Instructional Leadership. Vivian Robinson's Student-Centred Leadership is also used extensively by the PSD leadership team as it complements Hattie's work and the Alberta quality standards.

PSD school-based administrators meet with Dr. Brandon and Ms. Saar five times yearly. These meetings increase professional networks and opportunities for collaboration. Ms. Boyce notes that the partnership has had a profound effect in increasing collaboration while reducing silos within the division. Participants apply research in leadership and embark on moving theory into action by creating impact plans that have an audacious one-year goal. Evidence-informed conversations examine the effect of administrative leadership on these plans. Now in their second year of partnership with Werklund, the process has allowed for reflection on insights gained from their work in the previous year, while deepening leadership knowledge and refining leadership skills.

Administrators are well-versed in the Teaching Effectiveness Framework (TEF) (Friesen, 2009)[3]. TEF supports the Teaching Quality Standard (TQS) and provides a common vocabulary with respect to teaching practices that facilitate evidence-based conversations between teachers and administrators.

The UC partnership also supports lead teachers. As the recent Alberta Education Quality Standard documents provide a thorough line of standards for application to teachers, system leaders, and superintendents[4], this partnership with lead teachers is a part of system leadership. PSD principals recruit lead teachers, or master teachers, and ask them to join this learning group where the intent is improving teaching and learning. Teachers in this partnership work with fellow teachers and the school administration in four major ways.

1. They strengthen and support professional relationships in their school and in the larger school community;

2. They support their colleagues in designing tasks that engage students in meaningful work;

3. Strong formative assessment practices are discussed and formulated; and,

4. Collaborative working relationships are created.

This group meets five times yearly and is lead by Chenoa Marcotte, an Education Consultant with GENA.

Because of its relationship with UC, PSD has a cohort of approximately 20 teachers who are completing their Master's degrees. This cohort includes teachers, assistant principals and principals. Coursework is either completed online or in-house. Classroom teachers are enrolled in the Parkland MEd cohort along with assistant principals and principals.

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Red Deer Public School District

The City of Red Deer is the third largest city in Alberta with a population of 100,418 at the 2016 census.[1] Red Deer Public School District (RDPSD) serves 10,777 students within the city boundaries in 28 schools.[2] Students are served by 575 teachers and 385 classified staff.[3]

In Conversation

In addition to web-based research, the information for this case study was provided by: **Della Ruston**, *Associate Superintendent, System Services (RDPSD)*

Red Deer Public School District (RDPSD) entered a three-year, leadership-learning project with the University of Lethbridge (UL). Dr. David Townsend's formal report on the partnership, (September, 2015) has been a valuable source of information.[4] This partnership, the Administrative Growth Project (AGP), was launched September 2012 at a gathering of all principals, associate principals and central services staff. Each participant completed a professional growth plan that was an adaptation of work done by UL's Dr. P. Adams, using the Framework for a Comprehensive and Coordinated Professional Learning Plan.

Participants shared their professional growth plans at an inaugural meeting, modelled and lead by the superintendent at the time, Pieter Langstraat. This set the tone for a long-term relationship between RDPSD and UL that assisted in creating a collaborative, trusting and constructive leading learning culture. The Administrative Growth Project focused on the use of collaborative inquiry to explore guiding questions. This resulted in each school leadership team addressing their professional growth plan goals using the adaptation of the framework created by Dr. Adams.

To facilitate AGP, a schedule of monthly school visits, meetings and workshops was created. Site visits were undertaken at each school by an external team comprised of UL facilitators, central services leaders, and after the first year, a visiting principal or associate principal from another school in the district. At each visit, the school-based leaders demonstrated and discussed the progress made toward selected goals in their professional growth plans. Visits at the sites were videotaped so that leadership learning interactions between school-based leaders and teachers could be studied and reflective feedback provided. The goals, guiding questions, strategies, and evidence collected were discussed. A plan for the next 30 days was created, and written records of the meeting are shared with participants. These records formed the basis of both internal and external team plans for progress to be demonstrated the following month.

Creating transformational system-wide change with this model was a formidable undertaking for all participants. Over the three-year partnership, each school team was visited 23 times. Both the school-based and central services/UL teams were faithful to the tenets of the Administrative Growth Project, while being open to modifications that served to strengthen the model, such as the second-year adaptation that added visiting administrators from other RDPSD schools to the external team to increase intra-school communication and collaboration.

The district's three educational goals stayed consistent throughout the project: enhanced high school completion and transition; inclusion of all students; and improving literacy. RDPSD's current educational priorities, as published in their current three-year education plan, are an evolution from the goals that were in place during the AGP. The current goals (2017-2020) are: Student Success and Completion; Equity; and Literacy and Numeracy[5].

Townsend (2015)[6] notes that there were four positive outcomes as a direct result of the AGP:

1 leadership practices were refined to what can now be described as transformational;

2 leadership teams became more functional;

3 school leaders' capabilities were built; and

4 through the adoption of the collaborative inquiry model, there was a clearer focus on the needs of every student.

The AGP was a substantial undertaking over a three-year term that has left an enduring legacy within the school system with respect to guiding questions, generative dialogue and purposeful, concerted action among leadership learners in addressing professional growth plan goals. This work has had a national impact; UL has embarked on a partnership with the Greater Victoria School District in Victoria, B.C.

The RDPSD AGP has been cited (Chaseling, et.al, 2016)[7] in a collaborative inquiry model of professional learning currently being undertaken in New South Wales, Australia. This work relies heavily on the UL collaborative inquiry methodology in its initial phase.

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Rocky View Schools

Rocky View Schools, (RVS) serves residents to the west, north and east of the City of Calgary. It has schools in the City of Airdrie, the Town of Cochrane, the Town of Chestermere and schools in Rocky View County. It serves urban, suburban and rural populations. The jurisdiction provides educational services to almost 23,744 public students[1] in Kindergarten to Grade 12 through 53 schools. Rocky View Schools is the fifth-largest school board in Alberta, employing over 2,400 staff[2]. RVS is experiencing significant enrolment pressures, as evidenced by an increase of 1,176 students from September 2016 to September of 2017 or an increase of 5%. Mr. Besenski notes that the bulk of this increase is in the early grades, (K-3).

In Conversation

*In addition to web-based research, the information for this case study was provided by: **Murray Besenski**, Associate Superintendent of Schools (RVS)*

Rocky View Schools (RVS) works with several post secondary institutions. University of Calgary (UC) is a key partner, and RVS has academic partnerships with Ambrose University (AU), Mount Royal University (MRU) and the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology (SAIT)[3].

RVS partners with Werklund School of Education (Werklund) in accessing graduate level education for RVS cohorts. Mr. Besenski stated that current administrators must have a completed Master's, although several long-serving administrators have been grandfathered.

Staff seeking entry into the RVS cohort must meet Werklund's admission requirements and have a reference from their current principal. The two-year program meets as a cohort either face-to-face or online. RVS provides modest financial support, but significant release time (three days yearly are provided to work as a cohort).

RVS has created a comprehensive in-house Administrator Leadership Program (ALP). It has three tiers, and is tied to the Leadership Quality Standard.

ALP groups 1 and 2 are for RVS aspirants to leadership. ALP group 3 comprises administrators beginning formal leadership positions with RVS.

ALP-1 provides four half-days of formal instruction from RVS senior leaders and covers the basics of educational leadership.

ALP-2 provides four half-days and four full days of instruction and explores a career in school leadership. RVS teachers in this group are recommended by their principals and/or a central office leader. This group is considered a leadership pool and is comprised of potential associate principals. They are expected to have a Master's prior to entry. They remain in the leadership pool for a maximum of two years.

ALP-3 is for beginning administrators from RVS. It is provided in-house by central office staff. The ALP program is based on a long-term refinement (approximately 13 years) of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) program in educational leadership. Mr. Besenski noted that retirements in RVS have shifted the leadership pool younger, while increasing enrolments has added pressure to staff new schools.

RVS is a member of the Partner Research Schools initiative supported by Werklund[4]. This partnership facilitates collaboration between university researchers, communities, and school authority practitioners to design and conduct research focused on complex problems of practice. Currently, eleven school authorities are members.

RVS teaching staff work and share with the Galileo Educational Network (GENA). RVS has its own in-house portal (Community of Practice) for sharing action research conducted by RVS staff[5]. At the start of each school year, groups of four or more staff members band together in creating a higher-order inquiry question that is meaningful to them. They then assemble data, interpret the data, and engage in professional reflections. Community of practice research and reflections are shared on the RVS website for the benefit of other staff and the public. RVS provides two professional learning days to support Community of Practice work.

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Westwind School Division

Westwind School Division is in the south-western corner of Southern Alberta. It serves 4521 students in 13 community schools and 19 Hutterian Brethren Colony schools, with the biggest community schools in the towns of Cardston, Magrath and Raymond[1,2]. It is a large school division, geographically, spanning 109 km eastward from its western border at Waterton Lakes Provincial Park and north from the Canadian/American border for 66 km[3]. The School Division office is located in Cardston, Alberta.

In Conversation

*In addition to web-based research, the information for this case study was provided by: **John Waterhouse**, Deputy Superintendent (WSD)*

Deputy Superintendent John Waterhouse noted that Westwind School Division (WSD) has an established culture of seeking outside expertise to develop internal competencies. He stated that it is difficult for a small rural division to have the depth of in-house expertise needed to support professional learning among staff without entering into partnerships with external experts. While this case study describes the recently concluded University of Lethbridge (UL) formal partnership, some other examples of partnerships deserve mention as they were instrumental in increasing leadership learning among staff.

These include working with the late Dr. Rick Defour in creating professional learning communities within WSD. Professional Learning Communities (PLC) are still very much a part of the WSD culture. The last Annual Education Results Report (AERR) states that monitoring and nurturing of PLC principles with all teachers and ongoing development and support of PLC cohort lead teachers remains a priority[4]. Among other partnerships, WSD has recently benefited from Dr. Anne Davies' expertise in assisting teachers in understanding and undertaking quality classroom assessment. WSD also has relied on Dr. Robin Bright from UL to support their teachers in conversations and practice in literacy development and assessment during district professional learning days.

While the focus of this report is on University/School Authority partnerships that enhance school and system leadership learning, it is apparent that WSD is experienced at accessing external expertise to assist in building in-house proficiency.

In working with Drs. Adams and Townsend, system- and school-based leaders addressed issues of supervision and evaluation that were tied to the *Teaching Quality Standard* (TQS) and the nascent *Leadership Quality Standard* (LQS) in a joint effort to improve practice. UL facilitators, in partnership with WSD central services leaders, committed to regular visits in classroom with site principals. These visits assisted in building instructional leadership through the process of agreeing on guiding question(s), creating generative dialogue, and nurturing a collaborative inquiry methodology. This process of regular classroom visits was valuable in helping teachers become comfortable with showing off their classrooms, sharing pedagogical skills, and responding to questions about what they are doing and why. Mr. Waterhouse feels that these classroom visits helped change pedagogical practices in WSD, as staff are at ease with visits and feel supported in reflecting on their practices as they work with their students. A culture of robust professional learning is in place and continues to be supported by WSD as noted in the division's 2017-2020 education plan. The plan references monthly Superintendent/Principal consultations and school walk-throughs—for teacher supervision and to build teacher capacity in instructional expertise, differentiated instruction, and embedded formative assessment[5].

Administrators' responsibilities in the current education plan include to "...be actively engaged in teacher supervision to help teachers become more strategic, coherent and purposeful in their work and participate in school and divisional collaborative cohorts—this work involves the cycle

of improvement (clarify learning outcomes, identify high-yield teaching strategies, stronger linkage of assessment to curriculum, intervention strategies, addressing emerging PD needs)."[6]

Mr. Waterhouse stressed that both creating and continuing to nurture the culture at WSD takes an extraordinary commitment from all staff. It is key that central services staff keep the promise to visit schools and work collaboratively with school staff. He noted that success comes as support is provided in context, on content, and in an ongoing manner focused on improving the skills of all participants.

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University of Calgary

The University of Calgary (UC) is a major partner in collaborative leadership learning among Alberta school authorities through the **Werklund School of Education (Werklund)** and the **Galileo Educational Network (GENA).**

Werklund was introduced to the University of Calgary in 2013 following a substantial donation from David Werklund, a Canadian entrepreneur. Werklund has the largest graduate program at the University of Calgary, with over 1300 students enrolled in the Graduate Programs in Education[1].

In Conversation

*In addition to web-based research, the information for this case study was provided by: **Dr. Jim Brandon**, Associate Dean Professional and Community Engagement (Werklund, UC)*

Werklund School of Education

Werklund School of Education (Werklund) has a strong research-based orientation. It facilitates school- and system-level leadership growth and development using inquiry-based professional learning. Werklund provides a full range of graduate programs at the Master and Doctoral levels[2]. It has established unique Master cohorts to serve the needs of partner school authorities of which the CBE cohort[3] and the Parkland cohort are examples[4].

Werklund provides a Peer Mentor program in which experienced graduate students volunteer to provide peer support to incoming graduate students. The program is intended to assist incoming graduate students make a successful transition to graduate level studies[5].

The Partner Research Schools initiative is facilitated by Werklund and has provincial reach. The initiative facilitates collaboration between university researchers, communities and school authority practitioners to design and conduct research focused on complex problems of practice. Currently, there are 11 authorities involved: Foothills School Division, Foundations for the Future Charter Academy, Golden Hills School Division, Rocky View Schools, Westmount Charter School, Calgary Board of Education, Calgary Catholic School District, Calgary Girls' School, Canadian Rockies Public Schools, Connect Charter School and Christ the Redeemer Catholic Schools. Summer conferences to showcase collaborative research projects were jointly planned and delivered by the College of Alberta School Superintendents (CASS), Alberta Education (AbEd) and UC in 2016 and 2017[6].

Galileo Educational Network

The Galileo Educational Network (GENA) provides support in leading and learning for teachers and administrators across Alberta using design-based professional learning. The mission of GENA is to engage with students, teachers, administrators and faculty members to collaborate on:

- Leading and learning;
- Improvement and innovation;
- Research and development[7].

GENA supports and promotes inquiry-based learning among teacher-leaders through enabling collaborative processes both in subject-area groupings and system-wide initiatives. It works with individual teachers and educators in professional learning cohorts to provide system-wide professional learning opportunities with three school authorities: Buffalo Trail Public Schools, Calgary Board of Education and Canadian Rockies Public Schools. The GENA website showcases video of numerous classroom-based lessons and teacher-lead projects[8].

Learning Design

GENA facilitates school- and system-level leadership learning by supporting a strong structure for research-based inquiry with the school authorities it is involved with. Two models supporting leadership learning were referenced by the school-based leaders interviewed. The first was the Teaching Effectiveness Framework (TEF) (Friesen, 2009). The second was the Nurturing Excellence in Instruction and Leadership (NEIL) initiative.

TEF serves as a foundation for conversations with respect to teacher effectiveness in inquiry-based learning. Five core principles provide a foundation for an effective teaching practices framework:

1　Effective teaching practice begins with the thoughtful and intentional design of learning that engages students intellectually and academically.

2　The work that students are asked to undertake is worthy of their time and attention, is personally relevant, and deeply connected to the world in which they live.

3　Assessment practices are clearly focused on improving student learning and guiding teaching decisions and actions.

4　Teachers foster a variety of interdependent relationships in classrooms that promote learning and create a strong culture around learning.

5　Teachers improve their practice in the company of peers.

(Friesen, 2009)[9]

Surrounding these five core principles, and infused into each of them, is the effective use of the technologies of our time for both teaching and learning (Friesen, 2009)[10].

The NEIL initiative has been developed by the Educational Leadership Team at Canadian Rockies Public Schools in concert with Werklund and GENA[11]. NEIL supports collaborative change by providing a structure to facilitate productive evidence-informed conversations and observation reporting between instructional leaders and teachers.

NEIL rounds consist of a continual cycle of conversations and observations between teachers, administrators and central services staff. The NEIL model is unique in that all participants focus on their own growth—not just the teachers.

The NEIL model as used by Canadian Rockies Public Schools and supported by UC, in brief:

Goal Setting: The teacher and principal each identify their own areas of desired growth.

Conversation: A pre-observation meeting between the teacher, principal and central office observers to define all roles and goals. The teacher identifies areas of feedback desired from the principal; the principal identifies competencies for feedback from the observing team.

Observation: Conducted in classroom.

Conversation: A post-observation meeting allows the principal to provide feedback to the teacher. Central office observers gather evidence of leadership practices and then provide feedback to the principal on instructional leadership skills demonstrated during the conversation with the teacher. The teacher may also provide feedback to the principal and observation team.

Conversation: A teacher debrief meeting allows the teacher being observed to meet with a learning coach to discuss their NEIL experience and offer feedback on those leadership practices that were effective in supporting teacher learning.

Conversation: A central services staff debrief meeting is also held using the NEIL round of conversations/observations coupled with teacher feedback as a basis for deeper discussions about leadership practices that support teacher learning and as an opportunity to identify next steps.

Other UC partner authorities use the NEIL initiative in facilitating leadership learning.

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University of Lethbridge

The University of Lethbridge (UL) has over 8,500 students. Of these, there are over 580 graduate students enrolled in over 70 graduate program options.[1]

In Conversation

*In addition to web-based research, the information for this case study was provided by: **Dr. Carmen Mombourquette** and **Dr. Pamela Adams**, Associate Professors (Faculty of Education, UL)*

The University of Lethbridge (UL) conducts four major partnership initiatives with school authorities to support collaborative leadership learning.

1　**Facilitating collaborative inquiry with partner jurisdictions**

2　**Preparation for mandated leader quality standards**

3　**Graduate offerings in educational leadership**

4　**Leadership Skill Development**

Facilitating Collaborative Inquiry With Partner Jurisdictions

UL's collaborative inquiry methodology partnership with school authorities in Alberta arose from the success of the Alberta Initiative for School Improvement (AISI) (2000-2012), which produced a renewed understanding and validation of action research as a method of inquiry into improving educational practice. Townsend and Adams (2014)[2] note that AISI-supported action research evolved into the practice of collaborative inquiry where teams of educators are provided time and support to explore and answer urgent questions regarding professional practice. Effective collaborative inquiry methodology is a hard-won skill that requires group commitment to key guiding question(s), observations, and reflection. This is followed by further questioning of changes wrought from the previous cycle of questions, observations and reflection. Guiding and supporting school and system leaders as partners in conducting collaborative inquiry is a key emphasis of UL Faculty of Education as is cultivating and conserving a service mindset that supports school and jurisdictional partners over longer timeframes.

These school authority/UL partnerships are based on a mutual three-year process of learning and working together. This long-term relationship is demanding; it requires complete commitment from all participants in creating and sustaining a collaborative, trusting and productive professional learning culture. To start, school and system leaders create professional growth plans. These incorporate selected elements from the relevant quality standard and are shared and discussed among participants. Then monthly school visits are undertaken with each participating school in the district. The external visiting team consists of two UL facilitators, central services leaders, and may include a principal from another school. At each school monthly meeting, the school-based leaders demonstrate and discuss what progress has been made toward selected goals in the professional growth plan. The goals, guiding questions, strategies, and evidence collected are discussed. Records of the meeting are created and shared with participants and the external team. A plan for the next 30 days is created, detailing how the external team can help the school team meet its goals for the next month. In a larger school authority, these meetings may require three days of

school visits a month to allow the external team to meet with every school-based leadership team.

Chinook's Edge School Division, Red Deer Public School District, Connect Charter School, and Westwind School Division entered into a three-year collaborative partnership with UL with the first being in 2009. Currently the UL team is in partnership with the Northern Lights School District and the Greater Victoria School District in Victoria, BC in facilitating collaborative inquiry-based leadership learning.

Preparation for Mandated Leader Quality Standards

Through a provincial research grant members of the UL Faculty of Education were provided the opportunity to work with three visionary school districts in the spring of 2017. These districts were seeking facilitated assistance in understanding and preparing for the mandated competencies of school system leaders. UL has designed a three-year program of exploration with Grande Prairie Public School District, Foothills School Division, and Lethbridge School District.

To facilitate and support an in-depth understanding of the competencies UL professors have designed, and are delivering, a program of inquiry-based learning that addresses the required competencies. This involves intensive three-day meetings with each jurisdiction on a regular basis. The first two days they visit every school for a meeting with school-based leaders to support learning of the competencies. Each school leadership team meeting is approximately 90 minutes long. On the morning of the third day, all school-based leaders assemble in a central location for facilitated discussion of the Leadership Quality Standard. In the afternoon the UL team meets with system-level leaders to discuss progress and next steps in preparing for the mandated standards.

Graduate Program in Educational Leadership

Dr. Mombourquette stated that the UL Master of Education (Educational Leadership) program is unique in that it has a significant practical component as well as theoretical learning[3]. The program requires two major cooperative internships and formal classwork. The program ends in a culminating activity: a thesis, project or capstone. Graduate students are usually working in the field while enrolled in the program. A cohort of approximately 20 students created each July work together with UL staff as well as a leader-mentor from the school (usually the Principal) over the course of their studies. The program is 25 months in duration and provides for a year and a half to two years of active mentorship.

No release time is expected from the leadership learners' school jurisdictions for those in the Master program or the cooperative internships. The intent of the internships is to provide participants an opportunity to meld inquiry-based practical leadership initiatives with theoretical underpinnings[4]. The internship projects conducted are aligned to the indicators of professional practice competencies as outlined in the Leadership Quality Standards (LQS). Dr. Adams noted that graduates in this program have a good understanding of the global core competencies of being an educational leader. System leaders then teach participants the unique local needs and procedures of their jurisdiction; the core essential learnings of the LQS have already been addressed. UL also offers a cohort-based fulltime Doctor of Philosophy in Education with concentrations in Leading, Teaching and Curriculum, Formal and Distributive Leadership, or Counselling Psychology.[5]

Leadership Skill Development

Leadership skill development workshops are led by UL staff at the request of school jurisdictions. Participants are typically aspiring school leaders, usually referred to as a *leadership pool*. The LQS are examined, as are the indicators of professional practice competencies. Dr. Adams noted that gaining an understanding of the theoretical perspective underlying the LQS gave participants a sense of efficacy and a feeling of confidence as they investigated whether a career in school-based leadership was something they wanted to explore further.

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