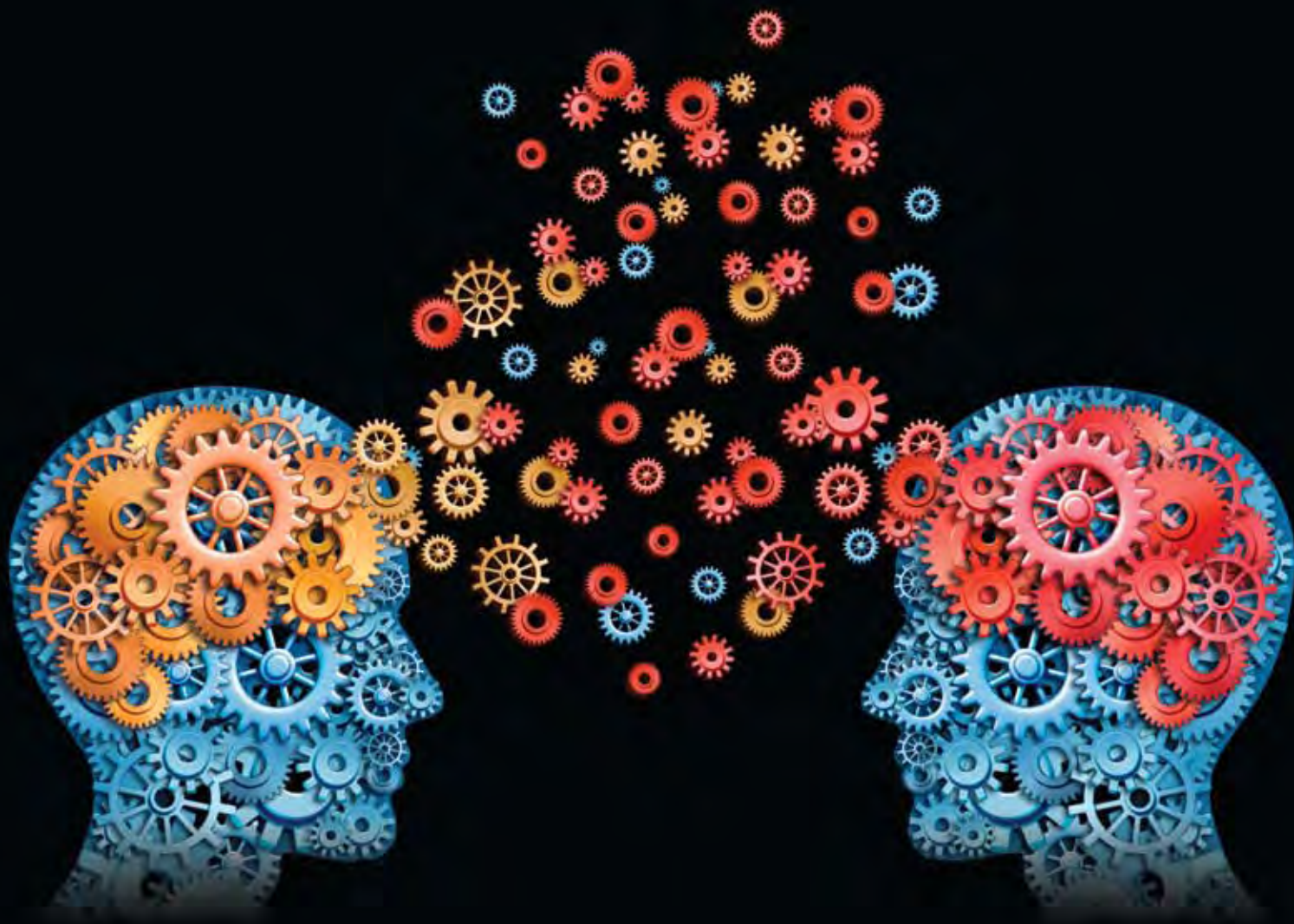


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the CASS CONNECTION

Fall 2012

The official magazine for the College of Alberta School Superintendents



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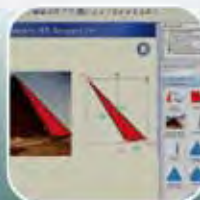
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Message from the Minister of Education

The Honourable Jeff Johnson | Minister of Education

So how do we, the people who make up the education system, ensure we live up to this standard? I believe the answer lies in communication and collaboration.

Over the last several months since being named Minister, I have met many of the people who make up Alberta's education community and have had countless conversations about the future of education in our province. These connections are invaluable to me.

Our education system is less of a system and more of a collection of people and ideas. When we talk about "the system," what we are really talking about is a network of thousands of people across the province. We are all united by our dedication to the importance of learning and to helping the children of Alberta reach their full potential.

How can we ensure the education system meets those expectations? Through *Inspiring Education* and many other public and stakeholder engagement efforts, the answer is consistent: children must be the centre of *all* decisions related to learning and the overall education system. So how do we, the people who make up the education system, ensure we live up to this standard? I believe the answer lies in communication and collaboration.

Every student, classroom, school and community faces different challenges. By sharing these challenges with our colleagues throughout the system, we can tap into a wealth of experience, advice and information that can be adapted to benefit a specific student or an entire district. By sharing our experiences and knowledge with each other and applying

student-centred solutions in our areas of influence, we can act as leaders in our own communities and in the education system as a whole.

Leadership is not about standing alone, especially when it comes to education. We can all act as leaders in our education system by leading our students, schools and communities into the future. By engaging our partners, including students and their families, teachers and support staff, administrators and elected officials, community leaders, post-secondary institutions and the business community, we strengthen our education system. Reaching out to our partners can help ensure the best ideas are applied in Alberta classrooms. That, in turn, benefits our entire education system and, by extension, our province.

I have always said that I was born with two ears and one mouth and I try to use them in proportion. I believe that leadership starts with listening – only with the best information can we make the best decisions. As leaders in your districts, I encourage you to strengthen your perspective by listening to ideas, big and small, positive and negative, from your community partners. In turn, I encourage you to share your ideas with each other and with me. Every perspective and idea I hear strengthens my ability to make the right decisions for Alberta's children.

By collaborating with our partners, making the student the centre of all decisions and sharing our knowledge with each other, we can all act as leaders in our education system. ■

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The Government of Alberta has launched an online *Back to School Toolkit* featuring a collection of resources and important information to help students, parents and education professionals gear up for a successful school year. The toolkit can be found at: www.education.alberta.ca/backtoschool.

Students, parents and educators will find helpful tools in the kit. For Alberta's teachers, school administrators and support staff, in particular, subjects include the curriculum implementation schedule, employment opportunities such as the Northern Student Teachers Bursary Program and ideas to increase levels of high school completion in Alberta schools.

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President's Message

Craig Foley

President

College of Alberta School Superintendents

Alberta school jurisdictions are facing new and complex challenges and they cannot address them in isolation

Alberta school jurisdictions are facing new and complex challenges and they cannot address them in isolation. This is why collaboration, consensus, team building, and shared leadership and decision making are concepts that are encouraged in the province of Alberta as we continue to provide opportunities for student success and excellence.

We are facing issues related to health, safety, the environment, socioeconomic conditions, technology, immigration, family—and the list goes on. These interdependent challenges require unique strategies to address and provide opportunities for a variety of partners to share expertise to enhance student learning.

There are several forces that contribute to the need for strong partnerships in education. First, the task at hand is enormous. As mentioned previously, the issues that have fallen into the realm of schools and education have

dramatically increased over the years, as have the demands of the public. Second, schools are multi-functional. We provide transportation, food, security, health care, counseling, after school care and more. Our responsibilities go far beyond academic instruction. Finally, the resources, both financial and human, are not readily available to address all the demands being placed on schools and school districts. Partnerships provide opportunities for accessing resources that would not otherwise be available.

Strong partnerships display specific characteristics. They are interdependent, empower each partner, are long-term, have a vision, display trust, have complementary resources and shared leadership, and have mutual benefits.

Like school jurisdictions, The College of Alberta School Superintendents requires solid relationships with key stakeholder organizations in Alberta to be effective champions for

student success. These include the Government of Alberta, the Alberta School Boards Association and the Alberta Teachers Association, as well as other partners. We have worked together on a variety of projects, respecting each organization's unique expertise, to address complex issues in order to improve teaching and learning in the province of Alberta. These relationships display the characteristics of solid partnerships. We indeed are fortunate to live in a province where we are prepared to work to build futures together.

Benjamin Zander, the conductor for the Boston Philharmonic Orchestra, has written a book called "The Art of Possibility". He speaks to thinking beyond the challenges to the possibilities, if people are engaged, empowered and feel that their unique gifts contribute to the collective good. Strong partnerships in education are strategies of the present and the future, for system leaders to realize the possibilities. ■

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Community-Based Teacher Education Program:

Partnering to Increase the Number of First Nations, Métis and Inuit Teachers in Northern Alberta Schools

By Lucinda Jenkins, Paula Carson and Anna Nadirova

Northern Alberta communities experience extensive challenges to meet the needs of K-12 students, including improving teacher retention rates and increasing the number of educators possessing skills and knowledge to enhance the sense of belonging and relevance of education for student populations that are primarily First Nations, Métis and Inuit (FNMI). Educating greater numbers of local, mostly FNMI teachers would facilitate appreciation of students' cultural backgrounds and the infusion of FNMI perspectives in the curriculum and pedagogy. Retaining program graduates as teachers in the community schools would contribute to more stable learning environments for students and enduring school-family-community connections.

Paraprofessionals who work in local schools, many of whom are of FNMI descent, could become excellent teachers and would be likely to stay employed in their communities due to strong family and community ties. Family commitments, difficulties relocating to university campuses and loss of income are significant barriers to pursuing a traditional Bachelor of Education degree.

The Community-Based Teacher Education Program (CBTEP) launched in 2009, is an innovative, far-reaching partnership directed at overcoming the mentioned barriers by making it possible for paraprofessionals to complete the entire B.Ed. program without leaving their communities.

The partners include: Northern Lakes College, the University of Alberta, High Prairie School Division, Northland School Division, Northern Lights School Division, Peace Wapiti School Division, Bigstone Cree Nation Education Authority, Grande Prairie School Division, District Catholic Schools, Holy Family Catholic Regional School Division, Alberta Education, Alberta Enterprise, and Advanced Education (formerly Advanced Education and Technology).

While Alberta Education and school authorities developed cost-sharing agreements to cover the program costs for 30 to 40 participants, Enterprise and Advanced Education provided program operating grants to the college and university to support the distance and face-to-face program delivery.

"When this opportunity came, this was my chance"

Interviews with student teachers reveal that potential system-wide benefits of the CBTEP go hand in hand with great personal and community impact. The CBTEP students unequivocally reiterated that if the program was not available locally, they would not be able to participate. Many indicated that this was a once in a lifetime opportunity to fulfill long-term dreams:

- "I wanted to do this all my life."
- "I am really very fortunate that the program came into the community..."
- "Talked about getting a teaching degree for years. And then this opportunity came..."
- "I am a natural teacher for all my life."

However, the CBTEP participants who responded to the survey at the end of their second-year of study rated helping FNMI students succeed, being a positive role model for FNMI youth and contributing to local schools higher than personal career interests (Figure 1).

Program delivery: taking an uncharted road

Delivering a four-year degree program into 16 small communities across the extensive northern Alberta geography posed unique challenges. The content of some courses: Drama, Music and Physical Education require face-to-face instruction. Traditionally, education courses have relied on group interactions to promote and enhance the philosophy and strategies required of pre-service teachers. However, keeping students in or near their communities was important, despite limited access to the internet.

In the following paragraphs, we highlight the experience of Northern Lakes College (NLC), which hosts course delivery for the CBTEP students who access their learning through Community Learning Centres sites (CLC).

Distance course delivery during fall and winter terms is provided through a combination of synchronous and asynchronous methods using Blackboard Collaborate and Moodle platforms. Scheduling courses in weekly three-hour blocks minimizes travel to CLC sites and provides opportunities for group work and presentations. Instructors are skilled in

effective teaching strategies using technology. Many students are familiar with these methods of delivery, having completed other courses or programs with NLC.

In spring term, all students come together at two sites for face-to-face instruction. Instructors can integrate subjects and demonstrate avenues for infusion of FNMI perspectives, knowledge, culture and traditional ceremony into learning and activities. Students experience firsthand how culture can easily be an integral part of curriculum.

NLC delivers the first two years of coursework and students then apply for admission into the University of Alberta's Bachelor of Education - Aboriginal Teacher Education Program for the third and

fourth program years. Courses continue to be distance-delivered at NLC CLC sites, with instruction by the university faculty. The course content is identical to content delivered on the university campus but has the advantage of demonstrating and using information technology strategies and applications.

Students quickly see the benefits and opportunities for transferring these skills to their future classrooms. For example, using webcams students can demonstrate their understanding of mathematical concepts and models to an instructor many kilometers distant, and share and collaborate with their counterparts in other communities. Online forums allow students to discuss

topics and synthesize course content to their educational experiences and situations. Because the students have been working in schools, they bring a wealth of observation, knowledge and prior experience to the courses, enriching mutual educational experiences.

NLC provides a diversified support network for students. Tutors, available in all campuses, provide a link between students and distant instructors and offer seminars in topics such as research and paper formatting and exam-taking strategies. Online tutorials are available for help with Blackboard, Moodle and library access.

When students enroll in the U of A, they continue to have access to all NLC services and supports as courses are delivered in NLC sites. A locally-based university program coordinator serves as a liaison between the U of A, students and the college. These supports are essential to the success of the program and give students the help and encouragement they require throughout the program. As students develop skills and confidence, they may utilize the tutors less frequently but the support is there if required.

There are challenges to distance delivery. While the interactive nature of the delivery platforms permits good communication, being able to read body language and see the instructor has advantages. The power of using distance delivery for the CBTEP is that it makes an education degree possible and accessible for qualified individuals who would not have the opportunity any other way. The delivery model helps to overcome barriers and assist students to achieve their goals and dreams.

Maturity, dedication, endurance

Maturity and dedication are fair descriptors of the CBTEP student cohort. The candidates have school-based experience and strong interest in working with children, and many are also parents. As to their dedication to the program, the facts speak for themselves. Life adversities and personal issues typically are not deterrents to participation. Traveling long distances to access college facilities, to complete group assignments, or to practicum sites are perceived as manageable challenges.

Figure 1. Note: Although the survey response scale comprised five answer choices ranging from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree," none of the 22 survey respondents chose "Disagree" or "Strongly Disagree."

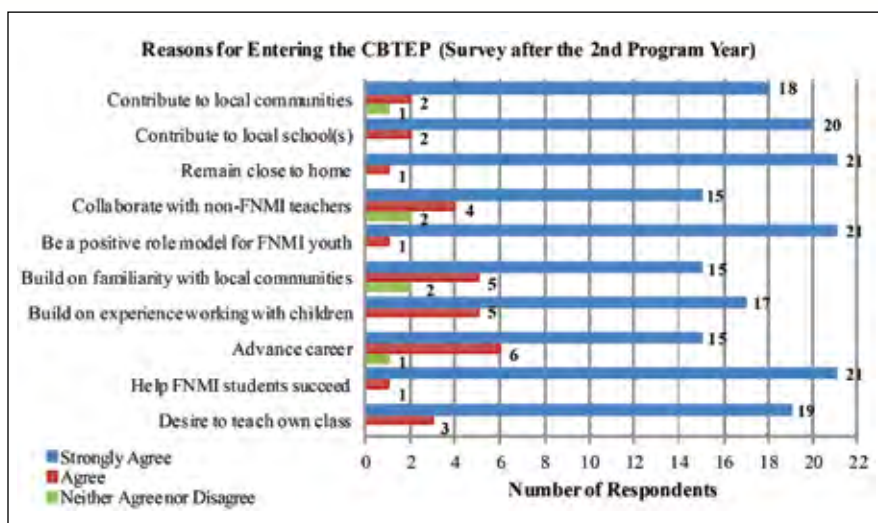
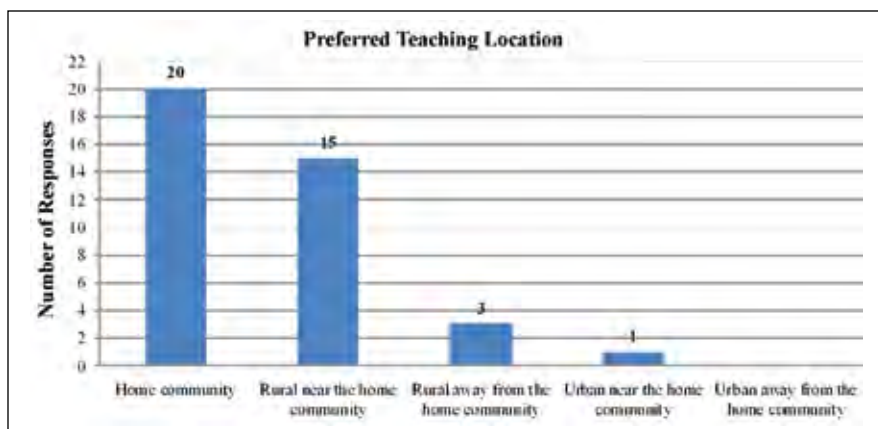


Figure 2. Note: Twenty two student teachers responded to the survey, which incorporated more than one answer choice for the question on where they would prefer to teach following their graduation.



Relationships, relationships, relationships

The CBTEP is a vivid example of how critical the relationships are in a distant program delivery environment so that the participants do not feel isolated. “We are like a family” has been a recurring message from the students, who have been supporting and helping each other academically and personally in a variety of ways. Collaborating in person and via social networks or e-mail on resources and assignments as well as “pushing each other” and “not allowing” a student to quit during tough times are examples of strong kinship and mutual supports.

Positive change agents in the schools and communities

There are indicators of the upcoming successful integration of the student teachers into the local education system and resultant constructive community impacts. Positive accounts from interviewed students regarding their first practicum experiences and continued support and encouragement from the schools where they were employed prior to joining the CBTEP, indicate the possibility of a seamless blend back into the local education system after graduation. The overwhelming majority

of the second year survey respondents preferred to be locally employed (Figure 2).

According to the interviewed student teachers, they “...know the communities... the dynamics of each single family in the community,” and feel “... excited to get them (K-12 students) prepared for life after school, find careers...”. “Knowing community will help understand the child, where he/she comes from, would help support them, bring understanding, caring.”

The CBTEP students describe the program as not only “an eye opener” in terms of putting teaching into perspective as a FNMI teacher but also as enhancing understanding of their communities through the prism of learned Aboriginal history. Finding this type of understanding is important for helping FNMI K-12 students in search of their cultural identity and helping all school students realize that, “...other cultures exist and have something to offer. Teaching with this understanding can reach many students—they need to respect other cultures, not just acquire knowledge.” The expected long-term general impact could be gradual reclaiming of the historical and cultural self-concept and language in the broader communities.

Following completion of their third program year the student teachers are excited, looking forward to the last, fourth year and getting their degrees in 2013. They have been very appreciative to the CBTEP partners for the opportunity but also convey that their communities and families have been an integral part of their success. ■

This paper would not be possible without extensive feedback and insights from the student teachers participating in the Community-Based Teacher Education Program. The authors highly appreciate their contribution. The views expressed in this paper are those of the authors and not necessarily their employing organizations.

Paula Carson is the Director of University Studies at Northern Lakes College. Lucinda Jenkins is the Coordinator of University Studies at Northern Lakes College. Anna Nadirova is a School Improvement Research Officer at Alberta Education.

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The Calgary Learning Village Collaborative: Community Building Through School-based Partnerships

By Joy Pavelich, Nicole Genereux and Philip Tuck

Schools are characteristically thought of as places of great learning—where countless opportunities can manifest that will directly impact and change the course of the lives of those who pass through its doors. In the case of the Calgary Learning Village Collaborative (CLVC), that view of learning and how it best presents opportunities broadens substantially to include an entire neighbourhood and is truly representative of how when a community comes together to work towards a common goal, great things can happen.

The CLVC was established in 2003 but really started to make huge inroads in the city in 2007. The collaborative was created when a few schools and communities sought a new model to support families by addressing children's physical, social, emotional and cognitive development through a school-based strategic partnership.

Twelve partner organizations play a variety of key roles within the CLVC. For example, two school boards provide free space in six schools for Family Places, where partners and other service providers can host free or low-cost programming. CLVC staff are employed by three different partner organizations and the United Way, through UpStart, serves as the fiscal principal. Five of the partners—the

Calgary Board of Education (CBE), the Calgary Catholic School District (CCSD), Boys and Girls Club, and Aspen and Calgary Family Services—form the governance committee. Today, the 12 partner organizations and agencies successfully deliver front-line services to families in Calgary's Greater Forest Lawn (GFL) area.

The core components of the CLVC are the Family Places, Family Connectors, and Recreation Connectors and Family Fun Fairs. Family Places are located in six of the GFL area schools where they host programming, services and events. Programs include those for new parents with their babies, literacy and language skills for pre-school aged children, adult literacy and money management, babysitting and first-aid training, among others. There are even after school programs that include cooking skills, arts, nature adventures and self-esteem building. During parent-teacher interview nights there is an opportunity for local agencies and service providers to attend and connect with school families, which helps parents engage better in their children's school and learning.

Family Connectors offer one-on-one support for families to help them access different

community services and supports, usually through an initial referral from the school staff. Assistance comes in many forms, for instance, they might help with finding housing assistance or emergency food resources as well as counseling, education and employment resources and even parenting support, after-school programs and newcomer services. Between October 2010 and September 2011, the CLVC Family Connectors assisted almost 500 individuals with family challenges that ranged from financial concerns to an inability to access basic needs.

The Recreation Connectors and the Family Fun Fairs provide an opportunity for families and children to access and participate in recreation opportunities. The Recreation Connectors work with the families to find fun and exciting recreation opportunities for the children and then help them through the registration paperwork and process. When needed, they also help families access fee subsidies. This one-on-one approach builds understanding, nurtures trust and reduces barriers such as language, financial or transportation related issues that families may face when accessing activities for their children.

Cheryl Doherty, Executive Director of Boys and Girls Clubs of Calgary, says that this particular program meets an important need in the community by helping children and youth get active who most likely would not have



Over 625 people attended and learned about recreation, arts, music and summer camp opportunities at the CLVC's Spring Family Fun Fair in April 2012.



that opportunity otherwise. "For instance, three-quarters of the families assisted by the Recreation Connectors were newcomers to Canada, so, as a result, language has been identified as a barrier to accessing recreation programs. Further, finances have been identified as a barrier for 95 per cent of the

families we assisted. We were able to address this by referring families to fee assistance providers; 161 families were helped this last year through fee subsidies."

Further supporting families with recreation activities are the Family Fun Fairs. These free community events are held twice a year within area schools and include activities, entertainment, food, sports equipment giveaways and draw prizes. Service providers and local agencies attend with information about sports, camp, art and music activities, many of which children can register for on the spot. Many of the programs are provided for free or at very low cost. Through the two Family Fun Fairs last year, more than 1,300 adults and children participated and as a result, more than 500 children registered for various recreation programs and activities.

Darlene Selby of the Calgary Board of Education states that the true strength of the collaborative is how it is based on trusted relationships. "There is recognition in the community that lends credibility to the programs being offered. Families look



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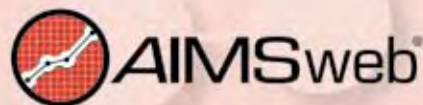
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for the program guide to arrive in the mail. The rec and family connectors gain more and more clients through word of mouth in the community as opposed to how they used to through the schools. And, school staff wants the CLVC involved in their schools, because they value not only the resources they bring but the relationships that have been built.”

An interesting and unexpected outcome of the work of the collaborative has been how partners are taking the learning and applying them to their own work. For instance, elements such as the recreation and family connector roles have been applied in other contexts based on what has been successful. There is now a community connector in place at a school outside of the Greater Forest Lawn area. And, the collaboration

model is being applied at United Way in the Intergenerational Trauma Project.

UpStart director Phil Carlton says the collective impact model of true partnership and true collaboration evidenced in the CLVC is an ideal framework which can work in any jurisdiction. Carlton adds that his hope is the model can be replicated in other areas throughout Calgary to build stronger families in a way that maximizes the strengths of the community and helps build the assets of the people who need some extra support. He says schools are the perfect environment for providing those supports and accessing families who might not be easily reachable in traditional ways. ■

Joy Pavelich is the Communications Specialist, Nicole Genereux is the Strategy

Lead and Philip Tuck is the Team Manager, for UpStart, United Way of Calgary and Area. UpStart is an initiative of the United Way of Calgary and a fiscal agent for funding to support the CLVC through a generous donation from the Riddell Family.

Award Winning

The CLVC was recognized for their work in community by United Way Canada - Centraide with the 2011 Community Builder Award. The award recognizes a group project that impacts communities in Canada that are based on inclusive, participatory and consensus-building approaches.

CLVC Partners:

- Alberta Health Services
- Aspen Family and Community Network Society
- Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Calgary and Area
- Boys and Girls Clubs of Calgary
- Calgary Board of Education
- Calgary Bridge Foundation for Youth
- Calgary Catholic School District
- Calgary Family Services
- Calgary YMCA
- City of Calgary - Community & Neighbourhood Services
- Hull Child and Family Services
- United Way of Calgary and Area through UpStart

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Rethinking Leadership Through International Partnerships

By Dr. J-C Couture

While Alberta continues to show promise as a high performing jurisdiction, our successes may prove short-lived and ephemeral given the courageous leadership demonstrated in other countries committed to ramping up investment in human development and networks of innovation. This article outlines how networks of innovation between schools in Finland and Alberta promise to advance the transformation of Alberta's K-12 sector through the "internationalization of education" (Sahlberg, 2011) to address commonly shared "wicked problems" (Murgatroyd, 2010).

In the fall, 2010, the Alberta Teachers' Association, in collaboration with the Finnish Board of Education, the Centre for International Mobility and Alberta Education, initiated the Finland-Alberta (FINAL) international partnership, with the following goal: "Education partners in Finland and Alberta advance international educational and policy development through a shared commitment to provide a great school for all students."

The partnership was officially launched at the international symposium, *Educational Futures: International Perspectives on Innovation from the Inside Out*, and the follow-up symposium, November 2011, focused on curriculum redesign with Finnish ministry officials as lead speakers.

FINAL is driven by the principle that transformation is best enabled by educational systems that support local innovation. Finland is an exemplar of this approach because the

locus of control in Finland is at the school-community level.

As a counter-weight to the current reliance on grandiose "system reform" driven by the global education movement (GERM), FINAL has demonstrated how international partnerships can be a way to sustain local innovation and creativity at the school level while disseminating and scaling innovation throughout the system. This is a key conclusion of the external research team that has monitored the progress of the partnership to date (Shirley and Lam, 2012).

Transformation from the inside/out, while a seeming paradox, is best understood by viewing school development as part of a the internationalization of educational development achieved through three bold strategies

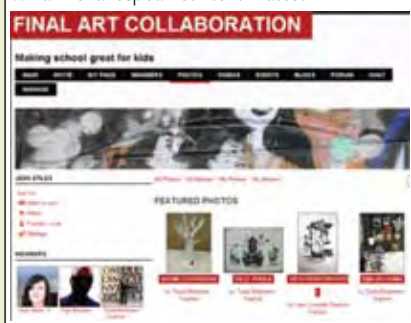
reviewed at the FINAL Summit held in Helsinki, May 3 - 4, 2012:

1. **Thinking ahead:** Being boldly committed to the values of equity, community and responsibility while being visionary and forward-thinking in aspiring to create a great school for all students;
2. **Delivering within:** Sustained support for local innovation while avoiding "the perniciousness of the present" (Hargreaves, 2009) and the privileging of inappropriate technology as a driver of school reform; and
3. **Leading across:** Principals, teachers and students reaching across, crossing school and other jurisdictional and political boundaries to learn from each other.

These three strategies, developed as part of the *Transformation Leaders Framework* (Figure 1)



Conversations are posted on the blog/chat site (Figure 2) for both teachers and students to see. <http://finalart.ning.com/photo/moonlight-william-shakespeare?context=latest>



1), were developed in collaboration with Pasi Sahlberg, executive director of one of our partner organizations, the Centre for International Mobility.

Linked together, these three leadership strategies illustrate the ongoing design challenge of the FINAL partnership: how to sustain the work of transformational leaders in high performing schools across the globe. In this regard, one key requirement involves shifting to a culture of trust (illustrated in the outer circle of Figure 1) that sustains principal, teacher and student leadership in

the daily work of risk-taking and innovation while remaining focussed on the need to nurture human relationships. Further, the *Transformation Leadership Framework* recognizes the political, social, economic and global trends and pressures that impact the work of school development.

Trust building that builds collaborative professional autonomy focussed on quality teaching practice is evidenced in many of the ongoing initiatives within the FINAL partnership. For example, teachers participating in the FINAL Art Collaboration regularly share and exchange ideas strategies related to their teaching practice. They post conversations on their blog and chat site (Figure 2). Both teachers and students are able to see all these posts and participate in the dialogue.

For the FINAL partnership, *thinking ahead* and *leading across* involve activities focused on big-picture policy issues aimed at bringing about structural reforms and long-term strategic shifts in our two jurisdictions. For example, the Finnish government is currently overhauling its basic education sector to deal with the growing challenges of globalization and economic instability. Its work with Alberta over the past two years has examined schools sharing promising practices in re-visioning what we mean by student engagement, innovation and global citizenship. FINAL initiatives include projects that examine art education, student leadership, school assessment, establishing and maintaining a healthy school culture, literacy initiatives, and literature and film studies, between students, teachers and principals.

Delivering within and *leading across* involves school-based leadership activities school reform from the inside out by linking students, teachers and principals as agents of transformation. Some examples include:

- Two student-produced videos profiling the FINAL partnership: **Changing Landscapes 2012:** <https://vimeo.com/38657681> / **FINAL Network:** <https://vimeo.com/41102958>
- School improvement projects in 12 schools (5 in Alberta and 7 in Finland).
- Videoconferencing to discuss and debate global issues.
- Alberta students discussing global economics and the possibilities of providing free lunch in schools.

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The FINAL partnership is not about simplistically copying policies and practices from exotic locales and shoe-horning them into a patchwork of reform. Rather, the FINAL partners are now proposing widening the principle of the internationalization of educational development to expand the partnership with a number of high performing jurisdictions who share an interest in both Finland and Alberta. For example, Singapore has worked extensively with the Finns and thanks to the work of Dennis Shirley and Karen Lam, the FINAL research team, officials from Singapore have expressed an interest in joining the work.

The nascent FINAL partnership has garnered international attention and has been profiled at a number of international conferences and publications (Shirley, 2011). As Denis Shirley and Karen Lam have observed

in their assessment of FINAL at the May 3-4, 2012, Helsinki Summit, “Ultimately, FINAL is neither about Finland nor Alberta. It is about the internationalization of education in order for two high performing jurisdictions to learn and grow together.”

The leadership strategies of *thinking ahead, delivering within* and *reaching across*, show that international partnerships can be a catalyst and source of sustainability for transformation (Alberta Teachers’ Association, 2012). Furthermore, such partnerships remind us that meaningful transformation

is advanced when we are mindful of the complex interplay of political, social, economic and global forces that impact schools every day.

Innovation focussed on optimizing the human potential of our citizens is the driving force behind educational transformation in both Finland and Alberta. Leadership from the inside-out will continue to be the focus of the FINAL partnership. ■

Dr. J-C Couture is Associate Co-ordinator, Research with the Alberta Teachers’ Association.

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Our portion of the project evolved in three parts:

Firstly, Leighton McCarthy, Carr McLean's western manager, undertook a complete assessment of the existing services offered in Carstairs relative to collection, user facilities and staff needs. Through the use of library standards and best practices, we determined what the library should be providing to its community currently and extrapolated out fifteen years.

Secondly, Mr. McCarthy worked with the Architecture firm *Workun Garrick Partnership*, who were handling the project. Once drawings for the library/@ learning space were established, the task of accommodating the recommended

shelving and equipment placement was undertaken. Revisions and modifications were determined through consultation with the client, to arrive at the best plan for the facility.

Thirdly, in conjunction with the Library Building Committee, the architect and Carr McLean, a listing of needed products and equipment to fulfil the plan was determined and ordered for the project, when the construction phase had been completed.

The work done on futuring and the selection of long-wearing, attractive products has resulted in a library that works well in its community. It is a focal point for residents in every demographic of the population, as well as the students of the high school.

The Carstairs Library is one of many such institutional projects that Carr McLean and Leighton McCarthy have been involved with. These have included public libraries of all sizes, as well as libraries and resource centres in colleges, universities, schools and private businesses.



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Every Door is the Right Door with Lethbridge Youth Hub

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed, citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.” ~ Margaret Mead

By Amber Darroch

In the spring of 2010, a small and diverse group of leaders of community based organizations, municipal and provincial services, and regional police met to address the question: How can we work together to eliminate youth homelessness in our community? As each participant described the rich services his or her agency provided, the room became hushed with awe. If there were so many opportunities, what was going wrong?

Looking closer, each agency could articulate stringent parameters around which youth could access which service, be it age, student

status, housing status, income (or lack of), or requirements for consent. The gaps between services were actually huge potholes easy to get stuck in. More complex youth were navigating such rough roads that the wheels were “coming off the vehicle” altogether.

The discussion opened the group’s eyes about opening *doors*, and the Lethbridge Youth Hub Steering Committee emerged. Knowing that our most at risk youth are likely not savvy in their systems navigation skills, all partners around the table acknowledged it would ideal if “every door was the right door”. That became our mantra.

Having discovered this challenge, the group met it head on, continuing discussions from week to week and month to month. Soon, partners were self-identifying internal structures that were not client-friendly. A realization that cumbersome referral and program models were in place due to the sheer number of clients served prompted many partners to designate key front line staff to serve as entry points. Having front line staff attuned to the great challenges these unique youth face was vital.

Age of eligibility became a key determinant of which service would step in. The

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Youth Hub target demographic was defined as homeless or at risk of homelessness youth ages 13 to 24. The Canadian Mental Health Association Community Outreach Team became the key outreach for youth 18 or older, while Southwest Alberta Child and Family Services purposefully designated a specific case worker to work with under-age youth.

The strength of the Steering Committee came from having the right people at the table. Regional organizational leaders had the decision-making authority to re-deploy staff and resources in innovative ways, while also being sensitive to local contextual factors. Having educators at the table assured that the broad range of issues facing youth in school was understood. Every member of the Youth Hub team received a thorough education about community youth-serving agencies and organizations!

As the momentum picked up, the agents of change were unstoppable. A strengthened, responsive network formed, and Youth Hub partners started to change the way they did business. Simultaneously, the Steering Committee also identified two foundational approaches that complement the shared vision.

“Housing First” is based on the philosophical shift from just managing homelessness to ending it. It is based on the belief that individuals should be moved from homelessness directly into stable, independent housing rather than into shelters or transitional housing. Follow-up is integral to the success of Housing First and a dedicated team of professionals coordinate wrap around services specifically designed for the individual. Adopted by a number of urban cities across Canada and the United States, the Housing First approach is not contingent on the person overcoming other difficulties such as addictions or mental health issues in order to qualify. In the context of the Youth Hub, priority is placed on family reconciliation, if appropriate, and/or Housing First.

Coming from a holistic perspective, the Search Institute’s *40 Developmental Assets* were being promoted through the City of Lethbridge, Community Services and provided the strength-based perspective so critical to this work. The *40 Developmental Assets*

are a set of descriptors – or personal qualities – that provide the ideal combination of protective factors for a young person. The more *Assets* a youth possesses, the more success they are likely to experience in school, the community and personal health and well-being. Having fewer *Developmental Assets* reduces a youth’s ability to avoid high risk behaviours and influences. The Youth Hub’s work is intended to identify assets a youth has, and expand them from there.

In order to identify strengths and priority areas for further development, front line Hub affiliate staff use the Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (SPDAT). This assessment considers all aspects of a client’s health and well being and helps in the development of a strategic plan for supports. Working on a model of intensive case management, youth have been housed, while front-line staff from the organization most involved follow through for up to 18 months to help ensure stabilization and further supported referrals as necessary.

Within a school jurisdiction context, staff awareness of community services varies from school to school. Having two education reps on the Hub Steering Committee served as a conduit to students needing assistance. For example, when a youth who is “couch surfing” (moving from home to home, wherever space is offered) or staying at the youth homeless shelter tries to register at a school, he or she may not be able to identify a legal guardian, nor provide proof of permanent address. Lethbridge School District #51 secondary schools were alerted to contact the district liaison worker if they encountered youth in these types of critical circumstances.

Within the school jurisdiction, schools use a consultative process to put high risk youth on the district radar. When dealing with a critical situation where a student’s personal concerns are well beyond the influence of a school, the youth may be identified as a potential Youth Hub client. If the district liaison determines that a Hub referral needs to be made, a supported referral occurs to the Community Outreach or Child and Family Services key Hub workers. If family reconciliation is not possible, the wheels of the Hub start to turn; sustainable funding and housing solutions are explored.

Schools systems work tirelessly to nurture collaborative relationships and to invite partners into schools. The origins of the Lethbridge Youth Hub began when public education partners were invited to join a conversation around a community concern. In taking up this cause, not only have the specific needs of students been represented at the table, but powerful alliances have developed. Unexpected spin offs have occurred with the opportunity to promote the amazing capacity of public education in Alberta to our partners, as well as the desire of these partners to seek invitations to work within school communities in new ways. At risk students have a greater likelihood of staying in school when the world around them is stabilized. The Youth Hub reaches youth who have dropped out of school and enables them to engage in learning, once again.

To date, the work of the Hub has been shared through cross-ministerial meetings with Assistant Deputy Ministers and shared with the Minister of Human Services, Dave Hancock, in his recent visit to Lethbridge. The group is advocating that youth-focused provincial services be aligned in a single, silo-free cluster of services. While it is satisfying to see this approach gain a provincial profile, huge inspiration comes from seeing how youth get the chance to alter the course of their lives. From a teen mom who gets to provide a safe home for her child and return to school herself, to a young man who transitions from a correctional institution to independent living and an apprenticeship program, the Hub partnerships enable each agency to meet its highest mandate in making a difference.

In the beginning, the Steering Committee talked about the actual storefront for locating the Lethbridge Youth Hub. As the work of getting to know one another's services and bridging the gaps ensued, youth began to access the coordinated services they required despite the lack of a physical locale. Capital funding and the ideal location continue to be elusive, but the *virtual* Youth Hub is alive and well. Nothing has impeded the progress the Hub has made so far, nor the systemic changes we have made from sector to sector. Until the day when the Youth Hub opens its permanent doors in a Lethbridge location, *every* door continues to be the right door... and that is where the power to change lives lies. ■

Amber Darroch serves as Director of Learning with Palliser Regional Schools, and is a member of the Lethbridge Youth Hub Steering Committee.

PARTNERS:

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- Alberta Justice and Solicitor General
- Alberta Health Services – Addictions and Mental Health
- Alberta Human Service – Alberta Works
- Persons with Developmental Disabilities
- Southwest Alberta Child and Family Services Authority
- Lethbridge School District #51
- Palliser Regional Schools
- Aboriginal Council - Youth Homelessness
- Canadian Mental Health Association – Community Outreach
- City of Lethbridge Housing First
- Lethbridge Regional Police Service
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How do Principals Improve their Practice as Instructional Leaders?

By Alexis Holstead

Educational research has identified the quality of classroom instruction as the single most important factor in student achievement. Along with the University of Calgary, Wild Rose Public School leaders are developing a shared understanding of what constitutes high-quality instruction that is consistent across the division. Through an inquiry-based approach to instructional rounds, our educational leaders are constructing a common view of what powerful teaching and learning in classrooms looks like and how they can best support it.

The idea for instructional rounds in education came from the medical model of hospital rounds. In medicine, teams of physicians work together in an effort to deepen their understanding and problem solve about the most effective practices for improving the health of their patients. The medical rounds process allows physicians to develop their knowledge of practice and build the norms for practice. In the same way that health care professionals deepen their knowledge, we as leaders in education can also do this.

"Principals need to move past traditional administrative roles and become instructional leaders." – Graczewski, Knudson and Holtzman (2009)

Supporting principals in their work as instructional leaders has taken on a greater focus in Wild Rose School Division (WRSD). This process encourages educational leaders to develop a network approach for improving teaching and learning across all levels of the school division.

Working collaboratively as a team of educational professionals, WRSD instructional leaders, along with Candace Saar from the University of Calgary, have begun work to develop a shared understanding of what high quality instruction looks like and what they can do to support effective instruction in WRSD classrooms.

"Leadership is the practice of improvement." – Richard Elmore, 2009

During the 2011/12 school years, every school in our division hosted the inquiry leadership teams as they worked through

the instructional rounds process. These instructional rounds are facilitated by Candace Saar and their primary purpose is to deepen the professional learning of school leaders. They will be learning to differentiate and understand the specific practices that engage, challenge and result in powerful student learning from those that do not. Leaders will also learn how to support these practices.

As preparation for the instructional rounds, our leadership team met with Candace four times during the 2009/10 school year to develop an understanding of inquiry learning. At the beginning of the 2011/12 school year, the inquiry leadership team met with Candace for a day of knowledge building. The process of instructional rounds was reviewed and the concept of observation without judgement was practiced and reflected on. Participating administrators were divided into two teams of 12. Each team visited four schools in 2011 and four in 2012, to improve their skills and engage in reflection with their colleagues.

"In order to improve instruction, school systems need to find ways to change fundamentally what happens in classrooms." – McKinsey and Company, 2007, p.30

The school being visited identified a problem of practice that focused on the instructional core and was observable. This problem is identified from within the goals that have been developed by staff in the school. The term problem was looked at as a neutral term—a scientific problem to be observed. An example of a problem of practice to do with assessment would be: How do teachers know what students know during the lessons you observe? Do students know what they are expected to know and why it matters? Do students have ideas about what they might do to improve? What would students know and be able to do from the lesson you observed?

On the day that the inquiry leadership team visited a school, participants first partnered up and observed in three or four different classrooms for 20 minutes. School leaders were asked to pay attention to the instructional core (teacher, student, content), look

"The instructional rounds are an effective way to walk the talk of 21st century learning where administrators are working actively and collaboratively. The learning is deep and meaningful." John Proctor, Vice Principal

for evidence related to the problem of practice, stay in the descriptive mode, and to focus on students, not the teacher.

They then returned to a group meeting area and individually read through notes and identified observations relevant to the problem of practice. Working with their partner, they shared observations and helped each other stay in the descriptive (not evaluative) voice: "What did you see/hear that makes you think that?" They then worked to identify patterns and or insights about effective teaching practices based on evidence observed. Then, as a whole group, they compared and contrasted what groups have discovered and what patterns they saw.

As a participant, I have found the observations and conversations that took place to be deep and focused on learning. Being able to observe, reflect and discuss with other instructional leaders stretches my thinking.

With so many administrators in the schools at the same time, this process can be intimidating to classroom teachers and was a concern for some. Principals in each school were asked to spend time describing the process to their teachers and emphasize that the purpose was to increase the skill level of instructional leaders not to evaluate teachers.

When the inquiry leadership team went into a school, the principal, vice-principal and one teacher on staff were asked to be part of



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the team for the day. Teachers were given the option of participating. An emphasis on the observation of learning and recording what the students were doing and saying when effective learning was taking place, has resulted in discussions about what is going well in classrooms and the school. The process has had a positive side effect in that it has led to increased levels of confidence and trust in some of the schools the teams have worked in.

The work our educational leaders do in our schools is not easy. Finding a balance between managing and leading is challenging. We hope that this process of inquiry will support common understanding about effective practice and how to support it as well as support learning in all our schools.

"The idea behind instructional rounds is that everyone involved is working on their practice, everyone is obliged to be knowledgeable about the common task of instructional improvement, and everyone's practice should be subject to scrutiny, critique, and improvement." – City 2009 ■

Alexis Holstead earned her M. Ed. in Curriculum and Leadership through the University of Calgary and works as the District Administrator for Wild Rose Public Schools in Rocky Mountain House, Alberta. She can be reached at alexis.holstead@wrsd.ca.

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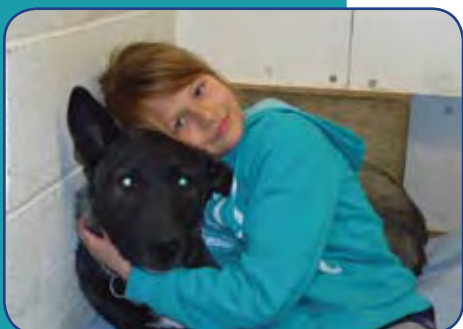
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Students with the local Junior A hockey team's mascot.



Brooks Animal Protection Society volunteers.



Engaging Partners: A Story of Success in Grasslands, the City of Brooks and the Surrounding Communities

By Susan Chomistek and Kathy Irwin

We are blessed to live in a very generous and caring community. From the service groups, to the business community, to the schools and our partner agencies, our experience has been that individuals will open their minds and their hearts to be of service to others and to help students and their families.

Engaging partners can occur in many different ways. Early in our journey, we found there were some issues with the sharing of information. This created difficulties because some of the most sensitive information needed to be shared so that everyone could do their part to solve a problem.

Five years ago, we set up a session where personnel from the Children and Family Services Authority went through their sharing information protocol and we went through ours. What we found was that sensitive information could be shared as long as it was pertinent to the discussion, was given on a need to know basis and was kept in confidence within the group. We have not had any issues with this in the past five years and we have found that sharing the information has been of immeasurable benefit.

To illustrate one example of the success that was achieved, I would like to relate the story of one family within Grasslands. The family, which consisted of a mom and three children, was struggling. They had no permanent home. Attendance for the children was not regular and there were other

challenges that the family was dealing with. Concerned with the welfare of the children, the case was taken to an Attendance Board. There were over 20 people at the table, including teachers, principals, Student Support Services, Children's Services, a home support counselor, a member of our Mental Health Innovations team, a representative from Alberta Health Services Addiction and Mental Health, the probation officer, someone from Grasslands' Central Office and the School Resource Officer.

Until the group got together and individually gave their piece of the puzzle, the composite picture was not clear. Once the severity of the situation was evident, the solution also became evident. Major changes were made, and many of the agencies and personnel at that meeting took responsibility for how they could be of benefit to the family. Three years later, there have been extremely positive changes for the children. Without having the meeting where information was shared freely, these three young people were destined to a very difficult life and the outcome could have been far different. The mother's life has changed in a positive fashion, too. When communities, agencies and the school system work together for the greater good, there are often positive results.

Another example of effectively engaging partners is with our business community. In the generous area of Brooks and the surrounding communities, often businesses or

individuals just need to be asked and they will give. One example of this generosity occurred during the winter months. A family had been without a hot water heater for several months. They had been saving money to replace it, a little at a time. When the Innovations team found out about this, they went to a local business and asked if that business could assist them. The business went to the home the next day and installed the hot water heater. When the father gave them the portion of the money that he had been saving, the owner thanked him and then returned the money to the father so that he could buy gifts for the children for Christmas. With tears in his eyes because of the great generosity, the father had a far different idea of what support in his chosen country was like.

Many other examples of generosity exist. In our community, we had over 60 students sponsored in a single year through the Canadian Tire Jump Start program. The kids were able to participate in sports programs, summer activity programs, dance, horseback riding, fitness clubs and a variety of other opportunities that help students be physically active or active in the fine arts. As information spreads on the numbers of students who have opportunities to participate and the variety of activities for which they are sponsored, donations to Jump Start grow. Another example occurred this past summer when three alumni hosted two volleyball camps for students in Grades 7 through 12, and all of the proceeds, which amounted to \$2,950, were donated to the Jump Start program.

The community helps in other ways. Businesses sponsor our breakfast and lunch programs so students at school are not hungry. Additionally, families are supported to be part of a Fresh Food Club, where, for a minimal amount of money, they receive a large basket of fresh fruit and vegetables once a month. This program is available for any person within Brooks and the area. Another agency with which we have a very close partnership, the SPEC Association for Children and Families, provides a variety of services that help children and their parents from the time the child is born, through any and every period where support is needed.

Innovative and responsive to the needs of the community, the programs through SPEC are ever-changing and developing, and the support this agency gives is phenomenal.

Donations are not always financial. Positive role models and mentors can make a significant difference in a child's life and our community supports our students with this. A partnership with the local Alberta Junior Hockey League team, the Brooks Bandits, has been phenomenal. Bandit players visit our schools and, while there, they interact with the students by reading stories, playing games with the students, participating in the physical education classes, and by providing tickets so that every student in the school can attend a game. They also sign autographs while there!

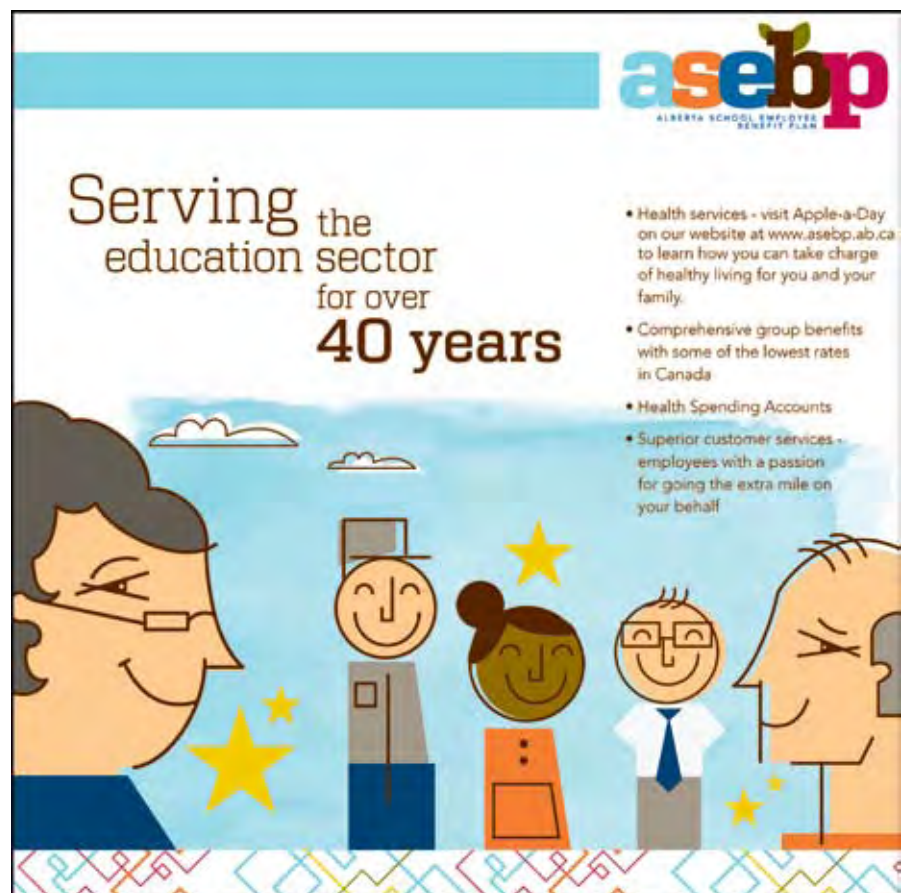
The impact of philanthropy within the community is contagious. With many of our corporate sponsors, once they know what is happening with the students and their families, their support grows. An example of this is with the support given to families at Christmas. Individual schools have Adopt-a-Family programs and when

several companies found out about this, they wanted to join in and their support enabled the schools to adopt an additional fifteen families so they could have a nice meal, gifts, clothes and the knowledge that they were cared for by the larger community. This same generosity occurs when a family needs anything from furniture to baby clothes to appliances.

Working together and supporting one another is an immensely successful model in Grasslands and within the City of Brooks and surrounding communities. The students and their families benefit from the incredible generosity of spirit that exists and flourishes. ■

Susan Chomistek is the superintendent of Grasslands Regional Division in Southern Alberta.

Kathy Irwin is the project coordinator for the Alberta Mental Health Innovations project in Brooks, Alberta. For more information, please contact Susan at (403) 793-6700 / susan.chomistek@grasslands.ab.ca or Kathy at 403-363-1790 / kathy.iriwn@grasslands.ab.ca.





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Innovation Learning Technologies: Engaging Stakeholders to Enrich the Work

By Stephen Brown, BSc, MEd; Shafina Dharamsi, BA, BEd.; and Joanne Lambrinoudis, MEd

Engaging formal partners and other stakeholders is a key element in the CBE's (Calgary Board of Education's) Three Year Plan. The Innovation and Learning Technology (ILT) Team has made it a priority to weave this element into almost all initiatives and undertakings.

Engaging partners and stakeholders is proving to bring tremendous benefits. These include valuable input and guidance in the process of setting direction and making decisions. The partners and stakeholders represent a wide variety of expertise from: industry, technology support, information technology, education, post-secondary, parents, students and others. This article explores how engaging partners is a critical factor in the success of three initiatives: ETAG (Educational Technology Advisory Group), ETRAF (Educational Technology Risk Assessment Framework) and CORE (Collaborative Online Resource Environment).

ETAG (Educational Technology Advisory Group)

The ILT team strives to support schools pursuing the personalization of learning, including the work of advocating for student voice, student choice and student agency, as well as ensuring a menu of technology-related tools are available for schools. One initiative that supports and advances this kind of work is ETAG. ETAG brings together a multifaceted group of people who bring a broad base of expertise and perspectives as they provide advice in relation to the team's strategic direction.

The value of bringing in representatives from various companies and

organizations as part of an advisory group allows the CBE to learn about what others do in terms of processes or decision-making that have similarities to the undertakings of the CBE. The CBE can also learn from the work and experiences of other organizations in terms of successes and experiences. Furthermore, having students participate as key players within this advisory group and having them work alongside stakeholders and partners ensures the dialogue is diverse in perspective and is also reflective and responsive to the interests of students.

ETRAF (Educational Technology Risk Assessment Framework)

The second initiative involves the creation of an Educational Technology Risk Assessment Framework. This initiative arose from a proposal to Alberta Education for support creating a scalable and replicable framework that could assist schools and system leaders in decision-making that involves weighing the benefits to learners of a technology against the risks of using that technology. Information about ETRAF can be found at: www.etraf.ca.

The engagement of partner districts is providing the assurance that the framework is responsive to the diverse contexts in which school jurisdictions operate. It offers boards or districts the ability to personalize according to their needs and specific situations. This collaboration gives ETRAF a foundation for ensuring it is of value to users as well as helping build an initial user base that can help build broad-based awareness in what the framework offers to those who choose to use it.

CORE (Collaborative Online Resource Environment)

CORE is a web-based environment where teachers and students can explore, use, share and provide feedback on licensed and open digital learning resources. CORE provides high quality student and staff created resources to be shared along side the externally produced resources. This initiative is the first of its kind in Alberta that demonstrates the ability of multiple jurisdictions to collaborate on the acquisition of digital resources; the building of the digital environment; and sharing of internally produced content with each other. The decentralizing of control of digital resources and crowd sourcing the evaluation and assessment of those resources results in greater authenticity of resource evaluation in the hands of users.

The scope, depth and research aspects of this initiative have been enhanced substantially because of the collaboration of the five founding boards. The goal is to establish a provincial prototype of what could be a key element in the creation of a working, collaborative provincial learning network. The initiative is driven forward at a strategic level through the work of a Steering Committee made up of system leaders from each of the jurisdictions. The tactical effort is advanced through a multi-jurisdictional working team made up of educators and IT specialists.

There is guest access to CORE (www.albertacore.com) that gives anyone external to the five jurisdictions access to the harvested free Open Educational Resources. CORE is still in its infancy and we hope that we will see the same richness and value that

Group Discussion. The essential role that student voice plays in ETAG.



working with external partners can bring. You can follow the journey at www.albertacore.info.

There is something to be said about working and collaborating with other boards, stakeholders and partners from across our province. By working together to solve similar problems, collaborating and communicating with one another we have found that the initiatives are much richer, grounded and supported. ■

Stephen Brown is an Educational Specialist in learning innovation. He has a Secondary background and a Masters of Education in Educational Technology. Shafina Dharamsi is a teacher of Secondary Social Studies and currently works as a Learning Specialist with Innovation and Learning Technology at the Calgary Board of Education. She has a BA in Development Studies and a B.Ed. Joanne Lambrinoudis is an Educational Specialist with Learning Innovation in the Calgary Board of Education. She has an elementary background and has her Masters of Education in Curriculum Teaching and Learning.

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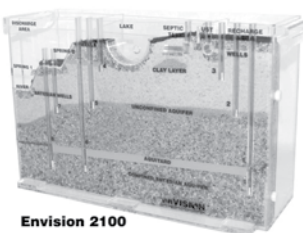
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High School Completion is Everybody's Business!

Education is not just the responsibility of school leaders and teachers. We need our stakeholders—parents, alumni, school management or advisory committees, community organisations, media and private corporations—to partner with schools in the education endeavour. – Editorial Team, Contact: The Teachers' Digest

By Dana Antayá-Moore

High school completion is everybody's business and we, at Alberta Education, know that ensuring a successful high school experience for all students begins long before they reach grade 10. Through the *High School Completion Strategic Framework*, Alberta Education engages with a variety of partners in its efforts to support more students in completing high school. The range of projects is exciting: we've chosen to highlight three of them.

Advancing Adolescent Reading Initiative

The Advancing Adolescent Reading Initiative (AARI) is a comprehensive professional development program being developed by the J.P. Das Centre at the University of Alberta. Funded by Alberta Education, AARI addresses the urgency of adolescents' literacy needs and the distinct challenges posed by those needs for teachers.

Two cohorts of Alberta educators teaching in Grades 7 to 12 are involved in this four-year research and capacity-building initiative. These teachers have the opportunity to learn from some of the leading North American experts in adolescent literacy. They meet face-to-face at Summer Institutes and Weekends with the Experts. In between these learning opportunities, they come together as an online learning community.

As part of the pilot requirements, these teachers are providing the J.P. Das Centre with valuable feedback that will shape the final version of the program being rolled out in September 2014. By providing them with varying types of support over the two years of the program, the teachers'

"Now I can help to be part of the solution by building my capacity in addressing literacy needs and also teaching in their focus area." – AARI cohort 1 teacher

jurisdictions are playing an important role in setting these teachers, and their students, up for success.

Action on High School Success and Engaging All Learners

Action on High School Success and Engaging All Learners are two projects coming out of the High School Completion Strategic Framework. Action on High School Success is a partnership with Northern Lights School Division and the College of Alberta School Superintendents (CASS); while Engaging all Learners is a partnership with the Calgary Board of Education and Galileo Educational Network. These two schools, situated in very different local contexts several hundred kilometers apart, share the common goal of increasing their high school completion rates. They also share similar challenges in achieving this goal.

Leaders in both schools expressed an interest in connecting with colleagues involved in similar work so they could exchange and discuss learnings. In the spring of 2012, that opportunity was made available through an inter-visitation. During their time together, the principals and teachers talked about the work they are doing, the successes they have achieved and the challenges they are working to overcome. They shared insights and ideas that informed each other's work and built new

connections that can lead to further conversations and learning. As well, it is hoped that these learnings will inform CASS and Galileo in their work across the province with other jurisdictions and schools.

Conclusion

At the core, the goal of the *High School Completion Strategic Framework* is to ensure that more students have a successful high school experience and, in turn, more students complete high school. At Alberta Education, we know that this is complex work and it cannot be accomplished in isolation; it requires the willingness of all stakeholders to work together in partnership and to accept responsibility for their role in the work. Partnerships are also critical in sustaining this work, building our collective wisdom and sharing our learnings. When these things happen, we know that school success for all students is possible. ■

Dana Antayá-Moore has worked as a teacher and supervisor with Edmonton Public Schools since 1990. She is currently seconded to Alberta Education as an Education Manager with the High School Completion team. Source of quote at beginning of the article: www3.moe.edu.sg/corporate/contactprint/pdf/contact_jan06.pdf



Start Smart Stay Safe

By The S4 Team, which includes Susan Westenberger, Kristen Duke, Teila Reynolds, Darlene Pevach, Karen Sadler, Renee Mikkelsen and Matt Schorr

The “Start Smart Stay Safe” Project is a collaborative partnership between Calgary Police Service (CPS), Mount Royal University, Calgary Catholic School District and Calgary Board of Education. Start Smart Stay Safe is a strengths-based educational resource utilized by police officers, teachers and schools in building resiliency and capacity in children and their families.

Using a collaborative delivery model, this resource intentionally builds skills and knowledge that supports students in successfully navigating through challenging situations like bullying, cyber-safety, pressure to engage in substance abuse or any high-risk behaviour. These models are delivered through affirming messaging, engaging activities and fostering positive relationships between police officers, school communities and families. Diverse community collaboration is an essential element of Start Smart Stay Safe, moving education and law enforcement toward a progressive, research-informed model of ethical citizenship.

Partners

The Start Smart Stay Safe Project is the first of its kind bringing together partnerships between police, schools and a university to focus on a universal model that can be used with all children and families as a proactive, educational, prevention-based program.

The **Calgary Police Service** has a mission to “maximize public safety in Calgary”. This is achieved through engaging the entire community in a collaborative and cooperative way to work together to keep our community safe. To achieve this, the CPS continues to embrace community policing and develop the Crime Prevention and Reduction Continuum, a plan to focus on education and

early intervention as ways to prevent crime and risk of victimization.

The **Calgary Board of Education** upholds the values that students come first and that student learning is its central purpose. The Calgary Board of Education believes that public education serves the common good and is essential for a vibrant democracy. The Start Smart Stay Safe Children and Family Projects support strategies outlined in the Calgary Board of Education’s Three-Year Education Plan; deepening understanding in the areas of strengths-based approaches to education and community engagement.

The **Calgary Catholic School District** believes that all members of the community are sacred and must be treated with dignity and respect. The district supports schools to create a stronger sense of community based on a shared Catholic faith by creating an environment that shares the responsibility to support each member of the community.

The **Mount Royal Faculty of Health and Community Studies** aims to inspire students to make a difference through advancing and applying knowledge through teaching, scholarships and engagement with the community. **Mount Royal’s Centre for Child Well-Being** aims to investigate, promote and enhance factors that influence child well-being by providing opportunities for student involvement in the development of the project.

Collaboration

Although the partner organizations have a long-standing, positive history of working together, this is the first time that these partners have come together in a creative, evidence-based initiative. The innovation in Start Smart Stay Safe is demonstrated by the level of collaboration

involved in this initiative from start to completion. Resources and contribution from each of the partners’ were utilized throughout the development of the project. All stakeholders, including principals, teachers, students, families, community members and partners, are also given the opportunity to provide input and take an active role in the development, delivery and ongoing revision of the school and family resources.

Successes

Part of the innovation of these unique partners coming together to create a common vision for the first time is the degree of commitment from all levels of leadership within these organizations required to make the collaboration successful. The ongoing commitment to inter-agency cooperation through focused communication has created opportunities for Start Smart Stay Safe to accomplish more than what any organization could do alone.

The collaborative approach allows each partner, and the project as a whole, to benefit by capitalizing on each organization’s specific skill sets. Through combined resources and input from each partner, the project has been able to reach a greater breadth of people and create a larger impact for this audience. To align itself with current governmental shifts, the intention of Start Smart Stay Safe is to reduce the opportunity for the “silo effect” by working together collaboratively among organizations.

For more information, go to the newly-created website: www.startsmartstaysafe.ca ■

Sergeant Susan Westenberger is the “Start Smart, Stay Safe” Lead with the Community & Youth Services Section of the Calgary Police Service. She can be reached at (403) 428-8326 or by emailing swestenberger@calgarypolice.ca.

Partnership to Promote 21st Century Learning



Technology takes centre stage. Photos from elementary, junior high, English and French Immersion classes in Aspen View School Division.



By Dermod Madden

Aspen View School division is currently piloting a number of educational initiatives with Athabasca University, which we believe will better prepare our students and staff for the demands of 21st century learning. There are currently nine pilot projects in place ranging in grade level from kindergarten through high school. All pilots focus on the utility of blended learning environments in regular classroom settings, using android tablets. Tablets will be used to create blended learning environments for teachers and students, within the regular classroom setting. It is hoped that the proper use of this technology will assist in promoting the development of those Information and Communication Technology (ICT) skills necessary for 21st century learners.

These proposals have been initiated by classroom teachers who have indicated a willingness to consider the serious questions facing K to 12 education for the foreseeable future. This requires a commitment to changes in instructional methodology, incorporating such concepts as authentic learning, cognitive apprenticeship, cognitive scaffolding, generative learning, constructivist pedagogy, inquiry-

based learning, problem-based learning, as well as situated learning.

Each pilot is a synthesis of 21st-century learning skills designed to promote the following:

- Literacy;
- ICT skills;
- The development of independent self-directed students who are problem solvers and critical thinkers capable of higher order thinking skills;
- The development of social skills ethical, responsible and accountable students and teachers; and
- Social intelligence, sense-making, novel and adaptive thinking, new media literacy, computational thinking, cross-cultural competency and virtual collaboration.

It should be noted that the teachers in this pilot project are volunteers. They are all educators who understand inclusive practice and who are committed to making the necessary changes in their own practices to accommodate inclusion. Some of the underlying premises of the project include a focus on attainment-based instruction rather than time-based instruction;

customized instruction that meets the needs of individual learners; a shift from a content focused approach to a focus on the needs of the learner; and the understanding that learning is first and foremost a social process which incorporates both independent learning and collaboration. It is our hope that a learner focused approach will facilitate a natural shift in the teacher's role from purveyor of content to facilitator of learning.

Aspen View is also involved in two additional research projects that focus on student transitioning. The first is a quantitative and qualitative study on the significance of blended learning environments and teacher practice on Grade 9 students transitioning into high school. The second is a similar project involving postsecondary transitioning for high school students working in blended learning environments. Both of these projects utilize android platform tablets. ■

Dermod Madden is Associate-Superintendent for Aspen View School Division No.19. Aspen View is a rural school district situated north of the city of Edmonton.

A Calgary Partnership for Leadership Learning

By Jim Brandon, PhD; Ronna Mosher, PhD; and Tim Stensland, MA

The Calgary Board of Education (CBE) and the University of Calgary (UofC) are working in partnership to provide evidence-informed and contextually responsive graduate learning programs for leaders and aspiring leaders in Western Canada's largest school district.

Since its establishment in the fall of 2011, the partnership has launched two significant leadership learning initiatives. An Educational Doctorate (EdD) program in *Senior Educational Leadership* got underway in January 2012 with 11 participants, and a *Leadership for Learning* Masters of Education (MEd) program involving 23 students started in July. Both programs reflect Levin's (2008) notion that leadership preparation should pay attention to both general and more specific leadership competencies.

On the general leadership development side, the UofC's new practice-focused graduate programs at both the MEd and EdD levels are well grounded in the academic literature and were developed through extensive engagement with the College of Alberta School Superintendents (CASS). The *Leadership for Learning* MEd program is designed to reflect the seven leadership dimensions itemized in the province's *Principal Quality Practice Guideline* (Alberta Education, 2009). At the doctoral level, the *CASS Framework for School System Success* (Morrow and Schmold, 2009) was extensively utilized in the program development phase.

From the more specific CBE perspective, both leadership preparation (participation in graduate degree programs) and leadership development (participation in district initiatives) are seen as critical to enhancing leadership capacity and providing for sustainability in the school district. Through ongoing collaboration and shared planning, the partnership is aligning leadership preparation with district needs. In the past, conventional graduate leadership preparation programs provided

Collaboration is occurring on an ongoing basis through such means as shared dialogue about the courses selected to make up each program; modification of existing programs to align more tightly with district requirements for leaders' understandings; and enhancing the cohort learning experience by building upon the joint leadership understandings developed through the partnership.

for very little connection between universities and school districts (Orr, King & LaPointe, 2010).

For the CBE, it was important to build a university partnership to specifically address its unique context as a very large urban board serving an increasingly diverse community. It was also important to align leadership preparation efforts with the district's current Three-Year Education Plan. Supporting multiple forms of professional learning that focus on authentic and current "problems of practice" was another key program consideration from the district's point of view.

Orr et al., (2010) found that school districts typically take one of three approaches to working with universities. In some instances, districts become more discerning customers of university services. In other situations, they become competitors to universities. In yet other circumstances, they become collaborators. The approach between the U of C and CBE is best described as collaboration.

Collaboration is occurring on an ongoing basis through such means as shared dialogue about the courses selected to make up each program; modification of existing programs to align more tightly with district requirements for leaders' understandings; and enhancing the cohort learning experience by building upon the joint leadership understandings developed through the partnership.

At this early stage in the partnership, it is too soon to definitively evaluate program effectiveness. However, initial observations and conversations indicate that progress is being

made toward greater alignment and coherence between leadership preparation programming and district leadership learning. Other positive indicators include: a nexus of strong theoretical understandings and practical orientations; a renewed emphasis on scholarship among district leaders; and the integration of the research insights into leadership conversations throughout the organization. ■

Jim Brandon, PhD, is the Director of Professional Programs with the Faculty of Education, University of Calgary. Ronna Mosher, PhD, is Director, Office of the Chief Superintendent, with the Calgary Board of Education. Tim Stensland, MA, is Coordinator, People Development, with the Calgary Board of Education.

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Healthy People, Healthy Workplace News



Partner Engagement for Healthy Workplaces

The Alberta School Employee Benefit Plan (ASEBP) is a health and welfare trust governed by ten Trustees—five from the Alberta Teachers' Association and five from the Alberta School Boards Association. ASEBP offers a wide variety of health benefits and promotes programs that sustain healthy lifestyles and workplaces for over 56,000 covered members in almost 60 school jurisdictions across the province. Working with the education sector has provided many insights and opportunities for growth that they are pleased to share in their regular column in CASS Connection.

Building a healthy workplace is something that more employers are striving for and it's about more than just providing healthy snack options! Processes, models and resources are all needed to move an organization into a healthier space but where do you begin? Because organizations typically don't possess all of the required skill sets and expertise to offer all of the components of a healthy workplace program themselves, building strategic partnerships within your community can provide valuable support and contribute to the program's success.

Healthy workplaces consist of three major components: a safe work environment, employee health promotion and the overall health of the organization (Government of British Columbia, 2009). So, engaging health care specialists such as nutritionists, fitness experts and mental health professionals, along with ergonomists, environmental practitioners and career counsellors, can help you build a program that not only touches on the traditional meaning of a healthy workplace—physical and emotional health—but one that also touches on safety and employee contributions and success.

Building partnerships with external organizations and professionals who specialize in

areas that you may be looking to build on will help ensure a high level of success. While your organization may be able to offer an effective program with beneficial services, it might be improved if you brought in external partners to complement the program you've already established or want to begin.

For example, if a school jurisdiction has created an environment of healthy eating and overall wellness with recipe sharing programs and a workout buddy system that helps keep everyone motivated, the program may benefit even more if, once a month, a nutritionist or fitness expert was invited to give a presentation. This mixture of organization and external partners supports employees' efforts in achieving their goals and, in turn, your program's goals. The shared commitment of building a healthy workplace with external partners will provide meaningful resources to employees, which will encourage participation in the program.

Looking outside your organization for the expertise you need to enhance your program will reinforce in employees' minds that you're committed to building a healthy workplace. This leadership engagement is key to contributing to workplace health and enabling employees to work more effectively (Government of British Columbia, 2009). In fact,

research shows that between 50 to 70 per cent of employees believe their leaders are responsible for fostering a healthy workplace (Government of British Columbia, 2009). The more committed you are to the program as a leader, the more serious employees around you will take it.

So, how can you start building these partnerships? Partnerships can arise from many different places, employee interactions with service providers; enhanced utilization of a vendor you're already working with; recommendations from other professionals. Partnerships can also take many forms: sponsorships, grants, volunteering, donations, mentoring and expert advice or a combination of methods (AICPG, 2012). The best way to begin is to simply reach out to your community and find organizations that can support the goals you are trying to achieve. Remember that partners can also help you develop your healthy workplace program, so engage them as early as possible.

The Alberta School Employee Benefit Plan (ASEBP) has a number of programs and resources available to its covered member school jurisdictions that can help them achieve their healthy workplace goals—we can even assist in the establishment of these programs.

Here is a sample of a few of the programs and services we offer that can be utilized as part of a healthy workplace program:

Apple-a-Day

If you are in need of health-related material be sure to check out the Apple-a-Day resource on our website, www.asebp.ab.ca. Apple-a-Day is a partnership between ASEBP and Organizational Health Inc., which offers a number of credible healthy living resources, from articles to health tools.

For Your Health

This is another online resource provided on the ASEBP website, which provides articles on specific health-related topics as they relate to your emotional, nutritional and physical well-being. There are new articles and tip sheets each month which cover a wide variety of topics and links to external resources.

Health Advisors

ASEBP Health Advisors are your connection to a wealth of health-related information and guidance. The team, which consist of a registered nurse, a dietitian and a certified fitness professional, are available to answer your questions, deliver presentations about healthy living choices, and coordinate health assessments for employees. They also run a number of programs, like the Chronic Disease Prevention Program, that complement healthy workplace initiatives.

If you are interested in engaging ASEBP's expertise in developing or complementing your healthy workplace program, please contact one of our Health Advisors at (888) 431-5875 or via email at health@asebp.ab.ca. ■

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92% of dietitians say that people are more likely to maintain a balanced lifestyle when they don't deprive themselves of treats².

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British Medical Journal Research: The study, involving more than 114,000 people, showed that higher consumption levels of all types of chocolate, was significantly associated with a reduced risk of cardiometabolic disorders. This beneficial association was significant for cardiovascular disease (37% reduction), diabetes (31%) and stroke (29%)³. Chocolate might be a viable instrument in the prevention of cardiometabolic disorders if consumed in moderation.

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¹ September 2020 Ipsos poll of 1,004 adults (including 200 parents of children aged 4-11)

² Survey of Nutrition Professionals: An online survey of 410 registered dietitians (2011) by The Academy of Nutrition & Dietetics

³ "British Medical Journal", chocolate consumption and cardiovascular mortality: results from the European Prospective Investigation into Cancer (EPIC) study