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Spring 2012



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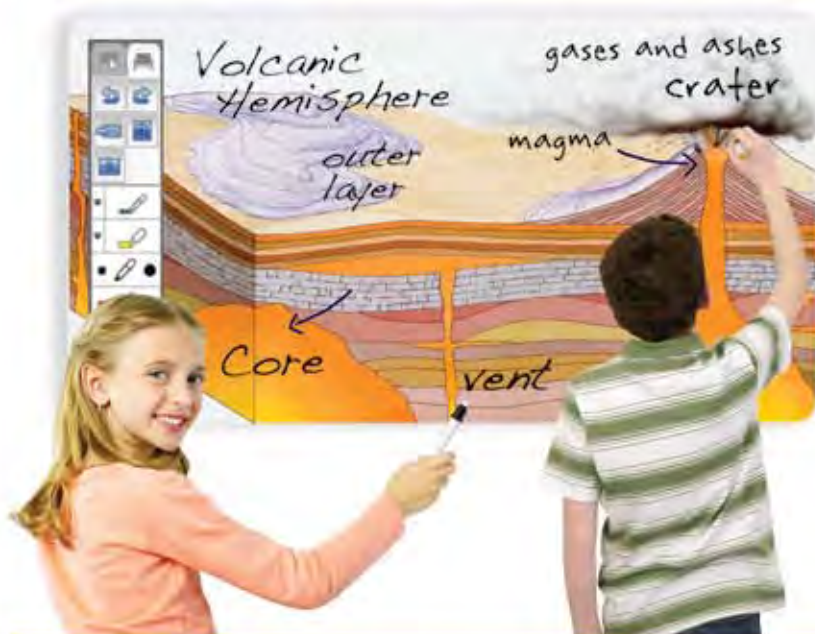
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The official magazine for the College of  
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Spring 2012

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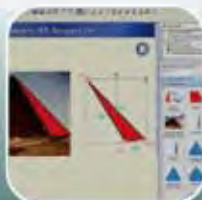
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# Message from the Minister of Education

The Honourable Thomas A. Lukaszuk | Minister of Education

Preparing students for the future is what education is about and each education partner must be open to a continuous, in-depth discussion about how we can make effective changes to support this goal.

**E**ngaging our partners in education has never been more important than it is today. Ongoing engagement is critical if we are to make significant and lasting changes to our education system.

Our educational partners include many stakeholders—students, parents, teachers, school staff, administrators, elected officials, businesses, organizations and institutions. An effective relationship requires the active involvement of all education partners, including government, to collaborate in new ways in order to sustain continuous improvement.

In Alberta, we are fundamentally shifting the focus from the system to the student. Preparing students for the future is what education is about and each education partner must be open to a continuous, in-depth discussion about how we can make effective changes to support this goal.

A partnership requires that all parties work together toward a shared purpose.

When partnerships are created, power and control issues can arise. Reciprocal listening, understanding and sharing may be uncomfortable at times. However, the effort leads to results that are important for student success.

Building connections between students, schools, parents and the broader community can lead to more extensive learning experiences for our students. They benefit because they begin to see themselves within a bigger context, as potential leaders and as contributing members of their local communities. Students can also benefit from exposure to areas of study and interest that might not otherwise be available to them on a first-hand basis.

School administrators are a valued partner since they often forge partnerships with other stakeholders or help to create the conditions for others. For example, school administrators can support teachers with professional development related to community engagement. Such professional

development is a critical part of building effective partnerships.

For administrators, engaging in effective partnerships with community groups and organizations assists in shaping and ultimately realizing jurisdiction goals and policies based on real needs and strengths, not perceived ones. This also contributes to the learning environment at a grassroots level when other education partners clearly see how they contribute to the education system.

As we all move forward together to strengthen our education system, we must challenge ourselves to reach out to others beyond the education community to help us shape a system that is inclusive, flexible and fosters success for our students. I am extremely proud of what we have accomplished so far and we must continue to strengthen our education system by working together in new and better ways. Based upon our shared commitment to student excellence, I know we will. ■

## Minister's Parent Advisory Council provides another opportunity for parents to be involved in education

A new council means parents have another opportunity to contribute their ideas and perspectives about education to the provincial government. "We recognize that when parents are actively involved in their child's education it leads to improved student learning," said Education Minister Thomas Lukaszuk. "Establishing the Minister of Education's Parent Advisory Council provides an additional channel to share information more directly with parents and to hear more directly from them."

The council will consist of 20 parents of different backgrounds and perspectives from across Alberta. They will engage with other

parents to share information and solicit feedback on education priorities. They will also meet with the minister a few times each year to share their thoughts about what they have heard at the local level.

The Alberta government recognizes the Alberta School Councils' Association (ASCA) as the official voice for parents in the public education system. This new council complements the work of the ASCA around parent engagement.

Applications for volunteer members are being accepted for the 2012-2013 council. Interested parents can find the terms of reference and apply online under Parents - Have your say at [www.education.alberta.ca](http://www.education.alberta.ca).





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# President's Message

**Roger Nippard**

President

College of Alberta School Superintendents

Today, school cultures have become much more collaborative and the community has increased opportunities to become active participants in the learning process.

Receiving a letter of appreciation from the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers (CAPP) was the impetus I needed to reflect on and begin the process of composing my thoughts for this introduction to the Spring edition of our magazine, with its theme *Engaging Partners in Student Programming*.

CAPP was the 2011-12 recipient of the Alberta School Boards Association (ASBA) *Friends of Education Award*, presented annually as a tangible way of recognizing the tremendous contributions partner organizations make to the field of education. The CAPP nomination was spearheaded by my board as this association makes numerous contributions to schools in Alberta and across Canada. Most of us would be familiar with their programs, including *Energy in Action*, where 60 member companies dedicate their resources, time and services in-kind to implement environmental stewardship projects as a way of giving back to communities and creating long-lasting connections between industry and the communities they serve.

In 2011 my board introduced its own *Friends of Education* awards in honour of retiring trustee Heather Welwood, who was passionate about forging strong relationships and partnerships with the community in order to enhance learning opportunities for students. She also believed strongly that the division needed to recognize those people and organizations that give their time, money and support to help students excel.

The inaugural recipients of the awards were the Kikino Métis Settlement Council for its long-term commitment to education;

the Municipal District of Bonnyville for implementing and continuing our School Resource Officer program since 2009; Devon Canada Corporation for its continued support of a variety of projects including Green Learning, Seeds Water Challenge, Quest Theatre workshops, and Ducks Unlimited kits. This year Devon is the primary corporate sponsor of the Division Science Fair. Finally, Cold Lake Family and Community Support Services (FCSS) was recognized for its contribution to Saddle-Up, our equestrian program, as well as its support of a variety of pre-school, parent education programs. These awards highlight only a few of the successful partnerships that our division currently has underway.

One of the primary themes emerging from our provincial *Inspiring Education* dialogue is the need to more deeply embed schools into the fabric of their communities in conjunction with a higher degree of involvement of the community in the life of the school. While we have traditionally thought of learning occurring primarily within the physical walls of schools during regular school hours and within a defined school year, that image is becoming increasingly blurred. Today, school cultures have become much more collaborative and the

community has increased opportunities to become active participants in the learning process.

The recently introduced new *Education Act - Bill 2* highlights the importance of partnerships in its preamble noting "education is a shared responsibility and requires the collaboration, engagement, and empowerment of all partners in the education system, as necessary, to ensure that all students achieve their potential."

In our global society and information age the opportunities that arise to more fully engage the community in the life of the school, as well as position our schools to play a broader role in their communities, are virtually endless. It's worthwhile to note that the response from colleagues to this theme was so overwhelming in terms of the articles submitted, the "Partners" theme will continue in the Fall edition as well, in order to accommodate the membership.

On behalf of the CASS executive, I would like to thank all the contributors profiled for providing us with your stories. We all learn from each other and I appreciate you for taking the time to share and contribute towards building the lateral capacity of the College.

Enjoy the read!





# Success

## for First Nations, Métis and Inuit Students:

### Engaging Stakeholders who Insist on Thinking Outside the Box

By J. Paul Stewart, EdD and Alger J.C. Libby

It was over 40 years ago that Chief Smallboy led approximately 140 people off the Ermineskin Reserve for a better life on the Kootenay Plains, east of the Rocky Mountains. Chief Smallboy left Hobbema in 1968. Conditions on the reserve at that time included insufficient housing, an indifference towards education, unemployment and a disregard for cultural traditions. Chief Smallboy and his followers were seeking a return to traditional Aboriginal values (Bottling, 2005).

The Smallboy Camp continues to exist about an hour's drive northwest of Nordegg. It remains inhabited by First Nations people who believe in a more traditional way of life and who, for the most part, reject the modern vices that have so easily beset their brethren on federal reserves. The people of the Smallboy Camp have independence and tenacity in their blood;

they come from a long line of leaders who have insisted on taking matters into their own hands. They reject the status quo and feel confident that they alone are responsible for establishing a more meaningful destiny for their descendants.

In this spirit, members of the Smallboy Camp approached Red Deer Catholic Regional Schools for assistance in educating their children. Education has always been a primary concern for the Camp since its inception. A schoolroom was a part of the original cluster of tepees in 1968. However, educating the youth has always been fraught with problems. Few modern teachers can tolerate the rustic nature and the remoteness. Educational models presented to the elders were often based on a traditional European model, which does not work well with traditional First Nation culture and values. The First Nations worldview

considers life as sacred with all life forms interconnected (AB Ed, 2010). The inclusion of culture and learning in their own community contributes to the success of the student and allows for a connection to the land and a relationship with the community.

Interested members of the Camp approached Red Deer Catholic Regional Schools with their ideas framed in both collaboration and innovation. Success for their students would be dependent upon new ways of thinking, non-traditional curricula delivery and more meaningful learning experiences. In one sense, geographic location forces such parameters; the nearest Red Deer Catholic Schools to the Camp are situated 200 kilometres away, in Rocky Mountain House.

Anxious to apply inventive ways to meet goal three of the Government of Alberta's



Education Plan *Success for First Nations, Métis, Inuit Students*, Red Deer Catholic Regional Schools gave permission for its two Rocky Mountain House Schools, St. Matthew's pre-Kindergarten to Grade 8 School and St. Dominic's Grades 9 to 12 High School, to dialogue with the elders about how to educate the Camp's children. The two groups came together to develop a means to provide an education, accessible at all levels, that is responsive to the needs of the students within their culture and also meets Alberta Education requirements. With the Camp, situated at such a distance from the schools, engaging these stakeholders required unique approaches and ideas.

The first meeting between Rocky Mountain House teachers and 11 Smallboy students, from Grade 1 to high school, took place in Nordegg, a tiny mountain village that is half-way between the two locations. A Métis social worker who lives close to Nordegg—and who operates a small hair salon in the village—consented to allowing her shop to be used by the two groups as a makeshift schoolroom.

The initial meeting was set up for teachers and students to meet and to enable the teachers to get some idea about the pedagogical needs of the students. At this first meeting it was also decided that the Nordegg Hair Salon would not suffice as a schoolhouse. Conversations ensued and eventually it was suggested that the Nordegg Library, just two doors down from the salon, would be a more suitable school venue. This was fitting considering the Nordegg Library had once been that community's original one-room schoolhouse.

Much to the delight of both the teachers and the Smallboy parents, the Nordegg librarian was only too happy to see her facility, unused during the day, revert to its original purpose. Now, once a week, Red Deer Catholic teachers from Rocky Mountain House take the hour-long journey west to Nordegg, while the Smallboy group takes a similar-length journey south and east. Using the Nordegg Library once again for educational purposes, the descendants of Chief Smallboy continue his legacy of proud and independent ways of achieving success for Aboriginal peoples.

The weekly school meetings have taken on a rich life of their own. Since everyone present has spent some time traveling, the session starts with a shared meal that includes not only the teachers and their students, but also the students' families. The teachers from Rocky Mountain House bring sandwiches and cookies, conscious not only of the fact that the provincial funding mechanism makes them the host but that hospitality is such an important component of Aboriginal life.

After appetites are satisfied, the learning focuses primarily on literacy and numeracy, with plans to integrate other curricula as these fundamentals are mastered. Following the lead of the Alberta social studies curriculum, the Rocky Mountain House teachers wanted to ensure that all curricula are infused with Aboriginal perspectives. Teachers give the students daily work to complete at home but they ensure that such work is practical and relatively brief. The teachers are mindful of the fact that what they teach is only a part of the entire First Nation educative process. What the students learn from their elders about traditional spirituality, their cultural legacy and survival in the wilderness is equally, if not more, important. By working together with elders and leaders within the Smallboy community, all partners came together to ensure First Nations students have high quality learning opportunities that enable the students to grow in their culture and language.

There are no clear answers to the question of success for First Nations, Métis and Inuit students, but if we can learn anything from the people of the Smallboy Camp, it is that solutions can only be found when Aboriginal stakeholders are given some autonomy, when they are free to set some parameters and when the educational model is adjusted to suit Aboriginal perspectives on how life should be lived. For too long, we have measured success for First Nations by how much they conform to our system of learning. The people of the Smallboy Camp teach us that education must be dramatically tempered by the unique needs of a distinctive stakeholder group. ■

*Paul Stewart is Associate Superintendent with Red Deer Catholic Regional Schools. He is a past Turtle Award winner for his contributions to Aboriginal education.*

*Alger J.C. Libby is currently the principal of St. Matthew Catholic School in Rocky Mountain House and teaches the Smallboy students in divisions one through three. Métis himself, Al Libby has long been interested in issues surrounding Aboriginal education.*

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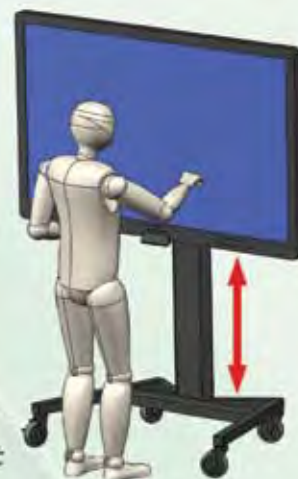
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# Engaging Partners is "BEST" at Edmonton Catholic Schools



*By Carol Durnford, B.Ed., M.Ed.*

**W**hat about a conference for boys? The question came to mind while sitting at the Choices Conference for girls last year. The Choices conference, since its inception in 1991, is an annual all girls science conference that brings hundreds of Grade 6 girls together to explore science, engineering and technology, and is organized the by WISEST group. WISEST is a University of Alberta organization that coordinates a number of initiatives to encourage women in scholarship, engineering, science and technology.

While I sat in on the opening session, I could see the excitement of the room full of girls as they were getting ready to embark on a day of learning outside their regular classrooms and in the comforting company of other girls their age. I began to think about what a group of boys would be like learning together for a day and being actively engaged in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) activities. By the way, I have always added a second component to the "E" in STEM, to include the environment.

Whereas we often think of boys being naturally inclined to these fields, this might not always be the case as research shows that by the time students reach fourth grade, a third of boys and girls have lost an interest in science. By eighth grade, almost 50 percent have lost interest or deemed it irrelevant to their education or future plans (Murphy, 2011). Therefore, it seems that boys should be equally encouraged and have opportunities to explore these fields, too.

Thus, the idea for a STE/EM conference for Edmonton Catholic School District (ECSD) boys in Grades 4 to 6 was born: the BEST Conference (Boys Exploring Science Together—with technology, engineering, the environment and math). However, bringing any new venture to life is a challenge in education. The WISEST group relies on the collaboration of industry, government and academia as well as a large array of volunteers to bring to life their programming initiatives. The U of A provides the platform for these initiatives but it is the larger community that enables the initiatives to be offered.

21<sup>st</sup> century learning environments suggests a movement outside the traditional "four walls" of a classroom to a connection to the community—local, provincial, national and global. The classroom will be expanded to include the greater community as students have the opportunity to learn from experts in the field (21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools, 2010). Not only will students access expertise but also there is a growing need and interest for the community to invest and support learning in the classroom.

This partnership paradigm that brings together a number of partners from the private and public sector is one that will continue to be more and more valuable to support programming at all school levels. As testament, in order to bring the BEST conference to life for ECSD, several partnerships had to be engaged.

ECSD provided the platform and St.



James Elementary School, a school already exploring the concept of boys learning together, provided the venue to host the event. The work of establishing partnerships needed to begin. We looked at what community groups we would need to support the goals of the BEST conference, partners that would not only engage and benefit the learners but for whom participation in this educational venture would also complement their own organizational goals and mandates. We looked for the “win-win” opportunities. In addition, we considered what partnerships might already be in place with ECSD that would be a strong fit for this particular initiative, and how we might nurture and grow a current partnership in this new direction.

In considering our current partnerships, we looked at our formal partnership with Association of Professional Engineers, Geologists, and Geophysicists of Alberta (APEGGA). This was a natural fit for the BEST conference and having a new initiative that APEGGA could support would further nurture the current partnership. APEGGA became the major sponsor for the conference and committed to three years of incremental support. In addition, APEGGA provided significant prizes to be drawn for the conference delegates.

A second partnership we have in place is a less formal partnership with “Let’s Talk Science” from the University of Alberta (U of A). Let’s Talk Science is a group of graduate students in the faculty of science who volunteer to support school programs, encouraging young students to consider the value of scientific fields of study. Let’s Talk Science became one of the presenting groups for the conference.

We also looked to groups that have supported ECSD programming in the past and asked for their support of the BEST conference. Edmonton Science Outreach Network (ESON), through their network of scientific partners, contacted MacEwan University to provide us with a keynote presenter, Dr. Lucio Gelmini. In addition, ESON indicated their interest in supporting this event in the future. The U of A, a current partner, provided a second keynote session, with speakers from the Autonomous Robotic Vehicle Project (ARVP) from the Mechanical Engineering faculty willing to share their work in robotics with our students. The TELUS World of Science is often utilized by ECSD to support classroom programs and they were able to bring in their Science-in-Motion program for one the session offerings.

New partnerships were also explored and provided sessions toward the conference. Scouts Canada, through a local Scout group (182<sup>nd</sup> Riverbend), utilized their network to find materials to support various sessions and also provided a session presenter for simple machines and the trebuchet. The Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) provided materials and session speakers for the conference on design and building materials.

We even initiated a partnership between schools, in which an ECSD high school science club from Archbishop Macdonald High School hosted a conference session for the students. This was a great chance for older students to impart their love of science to younger students.

These session and keynote partnerships were offered primarily free of charge. In the end, over 200 ECSD boys in Grades 4 to 6, along with their teachers and parents, came

together on a Saturday to explore science, technology, engineering, the environment and math. To say they were engaged is an understatement! Students were enthusiastically immersed for the entire day, as they experienced sonic booms during the morning keynote then transitioned to break-out sessions to experience many diverse offerings such as geo-caching and building terrariums. The students developed new understandings and interest in these fields and, in the process, were also introduced to a number of organizations in our own city that are part of these disciplinary fields. The feedback from the participants was extremely positive.

The conference ignited interest in the students but also a sense of sharing and pride from the partnering groups in attendance. In the end, engaging partners in education is a win-win situation and is “BEST!” ■

*Carol Durnford, B.Ed., M.Ed. is an AISI Inquiry Consultant for Edmonton Catholic School District (ECSD).*

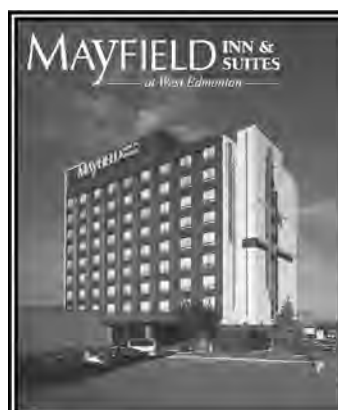
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## Carstairs Library: Consulting and Provision of Equipment and Furnishings

### Project:

The Town of Carstairs and the Library Board formulated a plan to locate their library into a new space, adjacent to a new high school project, in that community. Bell Canada became involved, as they agreed to fund an additional @ learning centre, connected to and managed by the library.

### 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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# Campus Calgary/Open Minds: Building Community Partnerships

By Cathy Faber and Trish Savill

Corporate and community partnerships between the Calgary Board of Education (CBE) and Calgary Catholic School District (CCSD) were pioneered by educators and community minded leaders who were asking critical questions about the future of learning:

- How can students experience their community and develop the competencies for citizenship within a local and global society?
- How is experiential knowledge created and shared within and beyond the classroom?
- How can relationships be fostered that create a sense of place and participation for each student?

Calgary Board of Education has led the development of Campus Calgary/Open Minds (CC/OM), a dynamic learning experience that takes students into the community and connects them to experts who are committed and passionate about experiential learning.

Research pertaining to experiential learning, as well as specific studies regarding results of the CC/OM, support the notion that education can and should take place in a variety of settings and in collaboration with experts in the community: "The opportunities for long-term exploration, student ownership and social construction of knowledge, inquiry and on-going journal writing provided within the context of the CC/OM program have a significant impact on student writing performance," (Cochrane, 2002).

The CC/OM program encourages teaching practice to become personalized; aligned with student strengths, interests and needs. The result is that "each student will possess the knowledge, skills and attitudes required for academic success and be effectively prepared for life, work and further learning."

There are currently 14 sites across Calgary that support 260 teachers and more than 7,500 students in Calgary annually (Figure 1). Campus Calgary/Open Minds creates opportunities for students and teachers to move their



Figure 1.

classroom into the community for an entire week. Working with partners, students and teachers design and experience fascinating, educationally rich environments that engage students in exploration and discovery. Each of the sites offers a unique lens with which to examine the curriculum.

At the site, students are involved in hands-on learning and spend extended periods of time observing and reflecting within an authentic setting. They have the opportunity to make informed choices about their learning, which allows them to be active participants in their educational experiences. These opportunities deepen student appreciation and play a significant role in helping to foster attitudes and understandings of cultural awareness, civic pride, community responsibility and stewardship.

Corporate partners are proud to be involved in CC/OM programs, often referred to as "flag ship" initiatives. Campus Calgary/Open Minds offers innovative ways for corporations to be involved directly with the community and Calgary's youth. Employees are energized about working with students and take ownership of the program. Public relations for the funder are enhanced as employees share their CC/OM experiences with colleagues.

Funding partners, along with site facilitators and teachers, collectively share the responsibility and privilege of ensuring that the philosophical tenants of the program are

upheld. These groups are inextricably linked such that if one group wants to make a change, the ripples of that change are felt by the others. Open communication between all members of the collaboration is essential.

## We all have a part to play in public education

Campus Calgary/Open Minds exemplifies the role of partnerships across the community and provides evidence of student success and engagement in the annual reports that are published each year from each of the sites. Through their annual reports, sponsors, facilitators, educators, parents and students share their experiences and look at the impact the program is having on student achievement, parent involvement, teacher instructional practice and partnership support.

Most importantly, through partnerships across the community, opportunities are developed that foster student appreciation, attitudes and understandings of cultural awareness, civic pride, community responsibility and stewardship. The CC/OM experience truly opens the minds of students, giving them a clearer idea of how they fit into the big picture and the role they play within it. They become an informed and involved member of their community. Once back in the classroom, students apply their learning when they take up current issues which push their understandings

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beyond their local setting to national and global communities.

Creating new partnerships and getting involved in Campus Calgary/Open Minds is actively encouraged and supported through the CC/OM Program Co-ordinator, Trish Savill. A full "Getting Started Guide" is available online, <http://ccom.cbe.ab.ca/misc/startinganewsite.pdf> and provides detailed information regarding the range of partnerships and opportunities that are available through this program. The open door concept of CC/OM encourages the community to look at possibilities that are limitless. ■

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*Cathy Faber is the Superintendent of Learning Innovation and CIO with the Calgary Board of Education. She leads a team encompassing information technologies services, innovation and learning technology, corporate partnerships and student records systems.*

*Trish Savill is the Calgary Board of Education's Coordinator of Campus Calgary/Open Minds. She shares a common vision with business, community and education partners who are committed to innovation and excellence in learning together in the community.*





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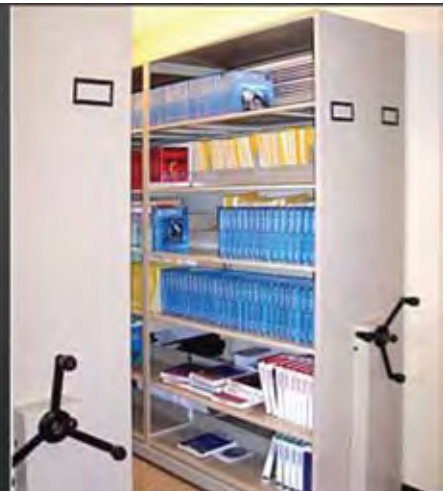
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# Ready, Fire, Aim...

## A Strategic Direction

By Kathy Murch

**//** Those kids! Every school and system has them, the ones that do not fit nicely into the system. In the past, we have “done the best possible” within the finite resources of education systems but that often failed to meet their needs and they often drifted out of the system without completing their programs. In today’s changing educational climate, though, in which it is increasingly expected that every student will be successful, this state of affairs is increasingly unacceptable. It is necessary to find new answers. Such was the challenge facing Wild Rose Public Schools. The response was to create a truly community-based wrap-around service.

When confronted with such challenging cases, a “ready, fire, aim” approach can be very beneficial and keeping “what’s good for kids” as the guiding compass may be all the direction that is needed. In Wild Rose Public Schools, encouraging teachers and leaders to focus on children and youth rather than on test results has resulted in the willingness of staff to think outside the box and come up with creative solutions when faced with the challenges of such students. This was the case when a Grade 8 student with severe behavioural challenges was facing expulsion from school. “Make this look different” was the direction given to the Student Services department.

Historically, students placed on home study programs through the expulsion process were provided with modules from Alberta Distance Learning Center to work on independently at home. Although this met the requirements of the School Act in providing alternate programming, this approach

had been less than successful since completing these modules required students to work independently and to be self motivated, two of many skills that are often lacking in such students. In light of the directive given, this time, the approach taken by Student Services was somewhat different.

Information was solicited from the family in terms of the student’s interests, hobbies and extracurricular activities. Pets, air cadets, hockey and computers were some of the areas of interest identified. A meeting was convened involving various community and school stakeholders including representatives from the school, district office, High School Outreach, Mental Health, Mental Health Capacity Building pilot, Family Wellness Worker, FCSS Mentor

Connector and the parents. These stakeholders demonstrated a high-level of commitment and great synergy and the result was an excellent example of what “wrap around” services could, and should, look like.

The resulting program was multi-faceted and included: a teaching assistant accompanying the student to the outreach school to work on curricular work under the supervision of the outreach teacher; if the student’s anxiety level elevated during the day, arrangements were put in place to access work experience at the local pet shop; daily physical activity was provided by the MHCB Coordinator who met the student every morning to work out in the local gym; a division trustee secured the support of a local pilot who agreed to take the student on weekly flights; social connections were maintained with a specific peer who met the student to work on a collaborative project.

The Mental Health worker advised the Family Wellness Worker and outreach staff on how to prepare other students for working alongside this explosive student. The Mental Health worker also continued to support both the student and the family on an ongoing basis. Finally, the mother of this student agreed to attend the outreach to provide support in the afternoon if this need arose.

Although it wasn’t without its challenges, this “community” approach to providing support for a student in need allowed the student to complete the Grade 8 curriculum while remaining semi-engaged and connected to his school and community.





His anxiety level was maintained at an acceptable level and the student's overall outlook became increasingly positive. Social connections, which were always difficult for this student, continued to be challenging as social interactions had been reduced from involving an entire grade down to one select student, along with a handful of adults and older students. While he still struggles with behavioural challenges, the student has since reintegrated into his home school on a part time basis and his mother reports a much more positive personal and home life.

In the end, this collaborative, community-based support program was not perfect, but it certainly managed to engage and support one high risk student and ensure he completed his course work while offsite. Community engagement and commitment supported the school by making available resources that the school would not normally be able to access. Working together and maintaining commitment was not as difficult as initially anticipated. By focussing on "the right things," collectively accepting responsibility for our youth and committing to making it work, the community was able to

provide effective and meaningful supports for one student who otherwise stood a very good chance of being lost. ■

*Kathy Murch has been an educator since 1983 and is passionate about kids.*

*Throughout her career, she has been a teacher, vice principal, PUF Coordinator and is currently the Director of Student Services for Wild Rose Public Schools. She is presently working on a M.Ed. in Special Education.*



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# Collaboration to Enhance Students' Future Endeavours

By Cheryl Shinkaruk

**E**dmonton Catholic Schools has embarked on a journey to engage various community partners in the implementation of the Career and Technology Studies Health Pathways courses. Career and Technology Studies (CTS) is a complementary program designed for Alberta's secondary school students through which they have the opportunity to develop skills that can be applied to their daily lives, both now and in their future endeavours. Students are able to enhance their employability skills and build on their various areas of interest as they transition into their community, work place or continuing their education. Educational engagement with our partners allows for sharing of expertise, which is one of the main contributing factors of the success of our CTS Health Pathways course delivery.

Students from across the city travel to St. Joseph High School to pursue their interests in the health care field and take advantage of the opportunity under the CTS course cluster: health, recreation and human services (HRH), to further their interests and skills in pursuing a career in a health care profession. Through a strong partnership with NorQuest College and Covenant Health, we are enabling our students to graduate from high school with both their high school diploma and post-secondary qualifications.

Students who are able to demonstrate the attitudes, skills, knowledge and values required by NorQuest receive their Health Care Aide certificate while completing CTS courses from the Health Pathways strand that applies to their high school completion.

Our partnership with Covenant Health allows students to complete their practical experience caring for patients within a Catholic setting. As a Catholic organization, they support the same values of serving people with compassion, respect, collaboration and integrity that Edmonton Catholic Schools supports in the educational experiences of our students.

In addition, the University of Alberta Hope Foundation provides students with guidance, so they can learn to understand how important it is for patients to have the feeling of hope within them. Students complete hope-based projects that provide opportunities for translating their learning about hope into effective programming and action for their patients while they work as a Health Care Aide.

Upon completion of the program, a student is able to explore employment options in continuing care facilities, group homes, day programs and hospitals. Students have enjoyed their experience in the program and some have decided to further their education by continuing on to the Practical Nurse Diploma Program.

In the area of recreation, students from eight of our high schools are developing skills

useful for coaching, fitness leadership, sport performance, athletic therapy and leading recreational activities. Through courses such as Injury Management I / 2 and Technical Foundations for Injury Management, students are able to explore the exciting occupation of an athletic therapist or a physiotherapist.

Through hands-on activities, such as taping and strapping, students can receive an Athletic Injury Management Certificate from the Sport Medicine Council of Alberta. Our partnership with this Council is one of collaboration and support, which allows our teachers to receive the necessary training to instruct their students and grant students certificates of completion. These certificates of course completion have proven to be an important aspect of acquiring credentials that students can have on their resume for future employment. An area of popular interest is the Nutrition for Recreation



Activities and Sport, where students learn about the role of food and nutrients related to physical performance in recreational and athletic activities. One student shared: "It is not just about training your body, it is also about what you put into your body that counts."

Many students participate in a variety of sports, ranging from volleyball, soccer, basketball and hockey and hope to continue sharing their gifts and talents with younger children through a coaching role. The National Coaching Association has given teachers the tools they need to instruct their students in the Level

1 / 2 National Coaching Certification Program. Students are excited to be able to receive their Coaching certification so they can plan practices and teach children about the proper movement skills necessary for participation in their sport.

Students can also explore the area of officiating by enrolling in the Recreation 3130 course on officiating and then continuing on to a practicum course, which students develop in collaboration with their teacher, to receive their volleyball or basketball officiating certificate. The Edmonton

Basketball Officials Association and the Edmonton Volleyball Association work with our students to give them the skills necessary to officiate in their sport and receive payment for their service of officiating a game. What a great opportunity for students to enjoy what they do and earn a bit of spending money for their service!

Knowing the importance of being physically active, students may pursue the area of fitness training and leadership through courses such as Foundations for Training or Fitness Leadership. They can go on to lead a group of children in a fitness class, at a pool as an aquatic leader or a fitness leader for the older adult. The Alberta Provincial Fitness Unit provides our teachers with training and support to assist them in sharing with their students the skills they need to become a leader in the area of fitness and physical activity. Partnerships with all these diverse community agencies help foster innovative and creative opportunities for students to receive credentials and learn lifelong skills that they can use today and in the future.

At a district level, CTS Health Pathways is a vital part of encouraging students to explore their interests and develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to pursue various areas of interest. The value of creating strong and collaborative partnerships is a benefit for the students in our schools. They are able to get hands-on, authentic, transferable experiences from which they will benefit for the rest of their lives.

The value of our partnership with Second Chance CPR and First Aid can never be underestimated. Can you imagine saving the life of a person you know because you received your First Aid with AED Certificate while you were in high school? Wow!

Each of these options allows Edmonton Catholic Schools' students to pursue areas of interest and potential career directions. This is only possible through the fabulous partnerships that we have formed that support teacher and student learning! ■

*Cheryl Shinkaruk is a Consultant with Edmonton Catholic Schools: Learning Services Innovation and coordinates the Career and Technology Health Pathways Projects for the district.*

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# The High School Flexibility Enhancement Project: Engaging Key Players in the Re-thinking of High School

*I suspect that the majority of teachers who feel stuck would like to remain teachers, but they don't know how to reconcile their inner vision of good teaching and learning with the realities that surround them. For these people, there are two requirements for getting themselves unstuck. Both are essential, but they differ in emphasis. One is to see this quest as a personal and professional challenge. The second is to view the process as also a social and political one, to recognize that, as is true of so many other aspects of good teaching, you can't do this alone.*

**—Robert L. Fried in *The Game of School***

By Gerry Fijal

Since September 2009, the High School Flexibility Enhancement Project has been bringing principals, school planning teams and teachers of 16 high schools together to engage in a collective analysis of high school practice in Alberta. In providing an opportunity for participating schools to organize for learning and teaching outside of the current requirement that student have face-to-face access to 25-hours per credit, an expected focus on participating jurisdictions might have been the desire to change timetables and other organizational structures.

However, feedback from participants indicates that the project has had its greatest impact in shifting culture and pedagogy. As best expressed by a participating principal: “The Carnegie Unit created practices and traditions in schools that, over time, have built up a way of thinking. It has created a template and pattern for schools to follow. By removing the restriction, schools have been encouraged to think about what they want, could and should be doing. The Flex Project has validated that we have permission to use our professional judgment and expertise to personalize our school to become places that reflect our students’ needs.”

Perhaps the most important hallmark of successful change in the High School Flexibility Enhancement Project has been the influence of engaging the community in redesigning the high school experience. Participants in the project were provided

a literature review which was built around seven foundational principles:

1. Mastery learning;
2. Rigorous and relevant curriculum;
3. Personalization;
4. Flexible learning environments;
5. Educator roles and professional development;
6. Meaningful relationships; and
7. Home and community involvement (see <http://ideas.education.alberta.ca/hsc/current-projects/flexibility-enhancement-pilot>).

Participating principals were encouraged to reflect upon these foundational principles, engage key stakeholders in an examination of them and build an implementation plan based on the input provided by their communities. Alberta Education did not ask principals to replicate any “proven model,” rather it was anticipated that meaningful redesign would emerge from the community’s collective vision and desire to transform.

The project began in April 2009 with a two-day symposium that brought together principals and planning teams from the participating schools to engage in conversations around themes addressed in the literature review. These conversations encouraged participants to introduce their ideas about moving a school forward through change and helped establish the foundations for establishing a community of practice dedicated to high school redesign.

Over the 2009/2010 school year,

principals engaged students, teachers, parents and community members in formulating an implementation plan that would address the emerging vision of redesign among stakeholders. Principals were expected to submit a plan to Alberta Education that outlined the general goals of the project, identified strategies to meet these goals and named measures that the school would use to assure their stakeholders that progress was being made. These plans were shared with the Ministry and served as the community’s commitment to its redesign efforts. Most importantly, the plans became the starting point for continued conversations between the Ministry and planning teams as the project entered its implementation phase.

To support continued collaboration amongst the principals and planning teams, key members of each school were brought together to share the experiences and findings that arose as schools worked with their communities. Naturally, a good part of the conversations at these early meetings focused on the planned strategies at each school and this led to a vibrant sharing of ideas, intended purposes and experiences.

This early commitment to regular sharing amongst principals and planning teams soon became one of the most popular features of the High School Flexibility Enhancement Project. Principals were eager to learn from one another and turned to each other for support as they experienced some of the real struggles that occur when



the change agenda is intentional. Principals consistently reported that the collaboration among colleagues dedicated to a shared vision of high school redesign was extremely valuable—even though approaches at each school were different.

September 2010 saw the project moving into its first year of full implementation. Schools and planning teams now focused their efforts on implementing the strategies that their communities had designed to better meet the needs of students and teachers in their schools. As the project became more focused on the school-based work of teachers in schools, the first Teacher-to-Teacher collaborative was held, bringing over 80 teachers from the 16 schools together to meet and share experiences. Again, this event was seen by principals and teachers alike as a powerful way to share ideas and gain a sense of a collective effort in transforming practice.

The power of these collaborations is best expressed by a participating principal:

“As for the impact of other participating schools, there is nothing directly to point to as a specific source for our methods or agenda for change. But the power of alliance of similarly-minded participants who reference a common world of educational thought is not to be underestimated. There can be no private language and the common voice we have is made infinitely stronger. The gatherings, meetings, collaboration, etc. are the lifeblood for energizing and expanding the work we do.”

As the project moves into its final two years of implementation, it is clear that the time and resources dedicated to engaging participants in collaborative conversations has been priceless. It is also evident that the approach to collaborative engagement among participating principals and teachers has led to very similar shifts in the day-to-day practice at the schools themselves.

For example, student voice has become a critical source of information in the evolution of redesign in project schools. Principals are reporting that teachers are forming informal and formal collaborative

partnerships for planning and delivery. Principals are reporting that the redesign effort in their community has led to a reinvigoration of interest by parents as they increasingly show they want to be engaged in conversations about the optimum conditions for learning for their children. What began as an opportunity to redesign the structure of 16 high schools in Alberta has evolved into a deep and meaningful engagement of the key players in the education community. ■

*Gerry Fijal has worked as a teacher and administrator with the Calgary Catholic School District since 1980. He is currently seconded to Alberta Education as the Project Manager of the High School Flexibility Enhancement Project.*

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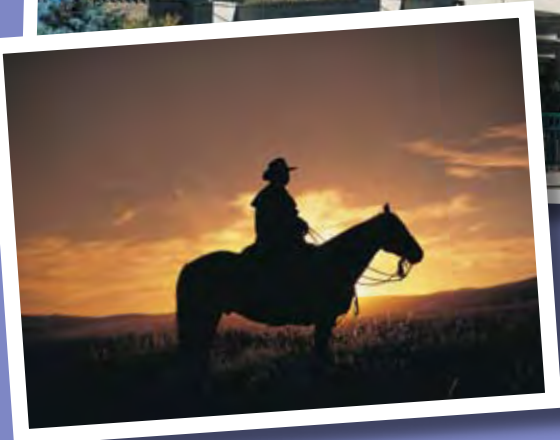
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# Trades in Motion:

## A Community Approach to Preparing Students Today for a Workforce Tomorrow

By Dean Bischke, B.Ed, M.Ed

**W**hat do you do when local community industry is facing a trades-based labour shortage, when many schools lack adequate facilities and equipment to provide that kind of programming and when parents and students are demanding more hands-on trades awareness and training opportunities?

That was the dilemma facing the community of Northern Lights School Division No. 69, located in the heart of Alberta's booming oil sands. A career pathways survey done in 2007-2008 indicated 65 per cent of high school students wanted more trades training opportunities. Feedback from other community stakeholders received during development of the division's strategic plan, *It's About the Future, And It's About Time*, also indicated the need for more trades training options. Feedback and research also showed a strong need to expose middle school students to trades and the pathway to pursuing a career in the trades.

Ruth Isley, Northern Lights School Division Partnership Facilitator, worked to secure various community partners to collaborate in developing a program to address these needs. The answer for the 5,800 students in 27 schools stretching from Cold Lake to Wandering River, was the Mobile Trades Foundation Program. The Trades in Motion lab is an industrial trailer that expands to become a fully functioning metal fabrication facility and can be used at any of the division's middle or high schools.

"The mobile lab allows us to offer more students the opportunity to gain hands-on experience in the trades, particularly at our schools that may have been limited in what they could offer before due to their size and location," explains Superintendent Roger Nipard. "We want every student in the division



to have access to trades awareness and training opportunities and the lab is integral to helping us do that."

Northern Lights School Division collaborated with local industry, The Rural Alberta Development Fund, Portage College and Kikino Métis Settlement to create the community based program. The Rural Alberta Development Fund recognized the potential of the project as a means to strengthen community sustainability, approving a three-year grant for the division to develop programming and share what it learned with other jurisdictions and communities in the province. Several community partners offered financial assistance and resources to help purchase the lab and to develop programming. Community partners include Shell Canada, Canadian Natural Resources, Devon Canada Corporation, Imperial Oil, Kwiksilver and Alberta Motor Dealers' Association.

"The Mobile Trades Foundation Program provides students an introduction to trades and apprenticeship, an authentic hands on trades experience, experience with workplace practices and expectations, and awareness of training and employment opportunities," explains Mobile Trades Lab Co-ordinator Dean Bischke. "Students learn that they can

start building their futures today and how high school is an integral component of that building process."

Grade 8 student Ty Thompson spent time in the lab while it was at Kikino School in 2011. He said he really liked that every time he went to the lab he got to try something new. "It makes me want to come to school every day and not miss it," he says. "You get to do things that adults get to do. If you like it, you can do it when you're older."

The mobile trades lab allows students to see the connection between what they are learning in school and their lives after high school graduation and helps build relationships between students, future potential employers, and post secondary institutions. The program is an example of community working together to develop its potential from within. ■

*Dean Bischke, B.Ed., M.Ed., has worked with Northern Lights School Division as a teacher, administrator and Mobile Trades Foundation Program Coordinator. Recent work has focussed on collaborating with community and post secondary institutions with respect to trades-based programming for middle and high school students.*



# Calgary Catholic Partners with Destination Conservation

By Trinity Ayres and David Gowans

Calgary Catholic School District (CCSD), in collaboration with Destination Conservation, is working towards making our students and communities more aware environmental stewards. Students, parents and teachers were challenged to find creative and successful ways to reduce energy use, conserve water and to minimize waste over the next three years. Our stewards are currently in their first year with the focus being the reduction of electrical energy use. With an increased understanding and awareness of their own personal environmental impact, provided in part by the workshops offered by Destination Conservation, students and their respective schools have created action plans reflecting the needs of their own communities' energy use.

The first workshop focussed on energy investigations in which students discovered where most of Alberta's electrical energy is produced. Students, along with their parents and teachers, also learned about electrical consumption within their schools. The focus was working to find ways to reduce each schools' electrical energy use. The students, parents and teachers from different schools collaborated, strategized and created engaging initiatives to be utilized by the entire school.

The workshop participants also participated in energy games to gain a deeper understanding of how energy is produced and often wasted. The second workshop looked at world energy production challenges and focussed on improving the participants' knowledge of renewable energy technologies. Each school was given the opportunity to learn more about renewable energy and to discuss the current research.

Many schools left this workshop with the goal of bringing renewable energy sources to their buildings. The development of these plans has allowed students, parents and

teachers to collaborate and problem solve ways to reduce electrical consumption in their own schools' and lives. Calgary Catholic currently has 18 schools participating and embraces the knowledge that this partnership will only continue to grow.

At St. Bede Elementary School there were a number of initiatives generated by the students with one being half-light Fridays in which the school powered down half the lights in each room. A second initiative to help reduce electrical consumption was to organize a group of students to locate rooms with lights on and report if nobody was present within the room. The offending parties were then warned and offered support to make sure it did not happen again.

St. Albert the Great Elementary and Junior High School implemented a successful reward program that also focused on finding classrooms that only have half the lights on for Fridays. In addition, the students have embraced "Ugly Sweater Days," which allowed the school to turn down the temperature and save energy. Our Lady of Peace Elementary and Junior High School took a unique approach with one of their initiatives in which they had a "Dine in the Dark" lunch in the gym on Halloween. Another success was "Operation Phantom Buster" in which students turned off all of the computer power bars on Fridays and re-started them again on Monday's. This was also done for all holidays. Their goal was to reduce the

amount of "phantom electricity" being used by computers on the days that students are not in school.

At the end of this energy year our Destination Conservation schools will come together to celebrate their electrical use reductions. At this time, they will share all their successful energy campaigns in a symposium format. The schools and supporting parents will also be treated to a wonderful theatre experience provided by EverGreen Theatre Company. ■

*Trinity Ayres and David Gowans are the science consultants for Calgary Catholic School District. Both Trinity and David are growing as Environmental Stewards aided by the district's partnership with Destination Conservation.*



# iPads and Skype Ensure Students Have Access to an SLP

By Irmgard Raubenheimer and Michelle Dargis

**//** *I like your dress Mrs. Gardner!* “Shayla, do you want to play on the iPad with me?” These simple statements may seem like child’s play, and they are; however, for those children who have speech or language delays, communicating even the simplest of sentences can be difficult. The ability to communicate is the foundation on which children build friendships, self-esteem and confidence. This basic task can often be taken for granted by some, while others must constantly work to improve their communication skills.

Lakeland Catholic School District No. 150, in collaboration with Health First Physiotherapy and Speech and Language, has developed a one-year pilot project focused on meeting the needs of preschool and kindergarten students with severe language delays. The goal of this project is to provide an inclusive wraparound model using iPads and select apps to enhance the language learning experience for students.

Initial feedback on this innovative project from students, parents and staff has been extremely positive. There are currently 26 students in four schools receiving privately contracted services from Health First. These early learning students (with a Code 47) are also supported in the classroom by seven full-time equivalent student assistants.

Irmgard Raubenheimer, Speech Language Pathologist (SLP) with Health First has not only integrated this electronic tool to make learning fun and interactive, but she has also engaged the most reluctant learner and brought learning to life individually and in group settings. These skills are then transferred to the playground, library, home and community.

Securing and accessing speech language services for the Program Unit Funded (PUF) students in Lakeland Catholic has always been a challenge, with the added barrier of travel costs to get a SLP to the communities we serve. Lakeland Catholic has found that PUF students progress on IPP goals at

a faster rate when supplied with two SLP sessions each month. The use of iPads and Skype has allowed the SLP to be physically present in one school, with the unanticipated bonus of being able to provide her services to students in another. Thanks to this joint partnership with Health

First, PUF students are now receiving one session in person and one through Skype each month, which maintains the level of success of our SLP program with these students, while simultaneously saving costs to ultimately help more children.

In order to facilitate these Skype sessions, each elementary school was supplied with iPads with apps that enhance vocabulary development and stimulate oral language. Implementing Skype videoconferencing has increased the accessibility to treatment and has removed all tethers allowing the SLP to observe the child in their natural learning environment. Additional programs have been downloaded to serve as a means of transferring programming suggestions between the SLP and the school staff: “Dropbox” allows for easy access and sharing of child specific individual programs. There are plans for future learning videos, prepared by the SLP, to be shared with staff as a means of building staff capacity in working with not only language delayed students but the class as a whole.

Lakeland Catholic continues to be a leader in engaging partnerships with the community, as we believe collaboration amongst multiple stakeholders is crucial



to student success. iPad training for teachers, student assistants, parents and special education coordinators has taken place to assure continuity of success through multiple stages of education. This inclusive wraparound approach ensures learning is expanded beyond the classroom and permeates all phases of students’ lives, as they become critical thinkers and problem solvers equipped with the right communication skills to be responsible, productive and ethical citizens in our communities. ■

*Irmgard Raubenheimer holds a masters degree in Speech Language Pathology and has worked at Health First Physiotherapy for eight years. Over her 20-year career, she has worked in the Health and School systems in direct and consultative capacities, collaborating and training parents, families, teachers and support personnel.*

*Michelle Dargis co-ordinates the Early Learning and Assistive Technology initiatives for Lakeland Catholic School District. She has worked in the area of Special Education for over 10 years at both the middle school and elementary levels. Previous to her work in Special Education, she taught kindergarten for 12 years.*



# Redefining Pedagogical Partnerships for Change

By Kristin Dahl and  
Jennifer George

**A** personalized education for all students requires a data-driven, solutions-based approach that redefines partnerships between students, families, teachers, administrators and outside agencies. In the Calgary Board of Education (CBE), our vision for the personalization of learning is a highly intentional and responsive process whereby teachers, students and content are engaged in a way that all students can participate, progress and achieve.

Foundational to this work is the understanding that “all students” means *each and every student*, and that all partners in a student’s learning make and impact instructional decisions.

Alberta Education’s priority of inclusive education requires reciprocal shifts between the work of the province, school jurisdictions and ultimately all educators, students and stakeholders. As a change agent in Alberta Education’s focus on inclusive learning, the CBE has undertaken the development of a web-based instructional design and assessment framework that will support change on scale in relation to inclusive practices that focus on the instructional core, assessment for learning and the strategic use of data across the system.

This online, collaborative workspace will help illustrate the thought processes required to make sound, research-supported assessment decisions and will help ensure that the many sources of data available in our system are accessible in ways that help teachers teach and students learn. Teachers, administrators and students will be able to view and use data in multiple ways in order to support the complex task of personalizing learning for all, with a focus on making the through-line of



high quality teaching and learning visible throughout the system.

The suite of applications brings together three essential components.

## Student learning plans

Student learning plans are evolving documents that change as students mature and move through their learning experiences. In keeping with the desire to involve students as active participants in their learning and assessment, students will come to know themselves as learners, articulate and work towards learning goals, provide evidence of their learning, and work with their teachers to design strategies for enrichment and support through their learning plans.

## Learner profiles

The learner profile provides a means for educators to document and work with many forms of student learning data. Information from multiple measures (quantitative and qualitative data, discipline specific learning outcomes, Alberta Education competencies, learning plans, classroom and specialized assessments) will be consolidated within the learner profile, providing teachers with access to the best, current information they need to effectively personalize instruction for individuals and groups of learners.

## Workspaces for teachers and administrators

Instructional designers and leaders play pivotal roles in promoting the learning and success of all students. The last two components of the application support the personalization of ongoing professional growth within our system. By coordinating system documents, research and multiple forms of data, the workspace will support the design of assessment and instruction that will have direct impact on student learning. By modeling research-supported pedagogy and by providing multiple, flexible opportunities for collaboration with colleagues and students, both teachers and administrators will have actionable means by which to tailor instruction for and with each student.

## Conclusion

As we develop student learning plans, learner profiles and online workspaces, we are continuing to build new skills, capacities, resources and processes that contribute to our collective organizational intelligence. The integrated and cohesive nature of this web-based application provides us insight into the strongest versions of our work. It invites us to consider our pedagogical priorities and existing organizational structures, as well as develop the confidence to release some of our previous ways of working. It facilitates holistic, collaborative partnerships between students, colleagues, families and local and provincial stakeholders.

Most importantly, it enables us to fundamentally redefine what school is and what it could be, for each student, every day, without exception. ■

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*Kristin Dahl and Jennifer George are Specialists in Instructional Design and Assessment for Learning Services at the Calgary Board of Education. They have been part of the initial team involved in the conceptual and technical development of the instructional design and assessment framework.*



## Engaging Partnerships in Student Programming

*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.*

Students actively participating in the development and assessment of their curriculum, providing ideas and insights into how the education system can better suit their needs, suggesting ways to bring their interests outside of school productively into the classroom—sounds like a student-run utopia, doesn't it? Well, for some, this is becoming the norm.

### 21st century education

Engaging students, teachers and other working professionals in the development and outcome of student programming, especially at a secondary school level, is the next phase in Canada's education system. Gabriel Bran Lopez, a Fellow with Ashoka Canada—a global organization dedicated to social entrepreneurship and “individuals with system-changing solutions for

the world's most urgent social problems,” (Ashoka Canada, 2011)—feels that in order for our education system to successfully engage students at all levels, we must find what interests them and build curriculum around it.

Gabriel “meets directly with students, starting with the least engaged, and asks them what they are interested in. [He] then builds programming in the schools to match these interests. The programming is delivered by post-secondary students and recent graduates [and] is funded by universities, businesses and COs,” (Ashoka Canada, 2011). Establishing programs in this collaborative fashion allows students to get what they need (new skills) in a way that is engaging and relevant to the real world, without placing any additional strain on the participating school's budget.

Gabriel is currently running programs

in a number of Quebec schools, where one school attributes this engaging partnership approach to helping them reduce their drop-out rate by 10.2 per cent.

### Home-grown solutions

As the thought of joint partnerships in education spreads across the country, even places here at home in Alberta are finding ways to better support student success through active engagement.

The government of Alberta, through its education ministry, has developed the *High School Completion Strategic Framework* as a tool to better equip Alberta school jurisdictions with the ideas, strategies and resources needed to encourage students to complete secondary education. Based on five strategic areas—student engagement, successful transitions, collaborative partnerships, positive connections and tracking



process—Alberta Education has built a roadmap to student success.

This framework has initiated the development of a number of engagement-driven approaches in the province, including *Engaging Learners in Forest Lawn High School* which, “is a partnership initiative between Alberta Education, Calgary Board of Education (CBE) Area III leadership, Forest Lawn High School (FLHS) administrators, and Galileo Educational Network staff” (High School Completion, 2012). Partner, Galileo, which, “is an independent, charitable organization that...creates, promotes and disseminates innovative teaching and learning practices through research, professional learning and fostering external collaborations” (Galileo Educational Network, 2012), worked with teachers to create a specialized “vision of learning” that would engage students and enhance their learning capabilities. During the 2011-2012 school year, FLHS will start to implement some of the key elements of this collaborative plan.

### How you can start today

Starting to actively seek out engagement opportunities like the ones discussed above may seem like a daunting task, but like every seemingly impossible feat, all it takes is a few small steps.

Start speaking with your students and try to get a better understanding of what they want and what they feel might be missing from their current programs—engaging the very ones that these strategies will ultimately affect shows that you’re not only serious about encouraging them to do well, but that you value their opinions. As part of the High School Completion program, Alberta Education offers students the opportunity to complete an online student survey that allows them to provide feedback on engagement and their school’s programming. These survey results are available for participating school jurisdictions to review, so this may be a great place to start.

Once you’ve identified some gaps, start by implementing one small change. For example, if student feedback suggests that they don’t feel like the school offers enough opportunities for physical activity, create a fitness committee

made up of interested students and staff that can help come up with cost-effective ideas to help incorporate more activity into students’ days. One small change, even every year, will help students recognize that they’re being listened to and will promote more active participation in their school and ultimately their learning. ■

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# TEACH don't BAN

*Chocolate fundraisers support the spirit of school food and beverage policies. Here's why...*

**Teaching works, banning doesn't.**

**91% of adults** agree that teaching about how treats fit into a healthy lifestyle is better than banning chocolate fundraising<sup>1</sup>.

**Common sense and behavioural science support that treats are part of a healthy active lifestyle.**

**92% of dietitians** say that people are more likely to maintain a balanced lifestyle when they don't deprive themselves of treats<sup>2</sup>.

**In the world of treats, chocolate is one of the healthier options.**

A robust study reported in the British Medical Journal showed that higher levels of chocolate consumption were significantly associated with a reduced risk of cardiometabolic disorders – a **37%** reduction in cardiovascular disease, diabetes **31%** and stroke **29%**.<sup>3</sup>

*The launch of a chocolate fundraiser is an opportunity to teach kids about healthy lifestyles and World's Finest® Chocolate can help:*

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**Teaching materials to help educate children on the importance of portion control and physical activity. Available with each fundraising campaign:**

- Brochures with simple portion control graphics
- Posters promoting eating right and staying fit
- An educational video with an original song and fitness dance

**A chocolate fundraiser supports active lifestyles, not unhealthy eating.**

This annual or semi-annual event helps pay for school activities and equipment like playground equipment, sports equipment, bussing and school trips that support healthy, active lifestyles.

**For more information call 1.800.461.1957**



<sup>1</sup> September 2015 Ipsos Reid poll of 1,000+ adults (including 500 parents of children aged 4-13)

<sup>2</sup> Survey of Registered Professionals: An online survey of 450 registered dietitians (2011) by the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics

<sup>3</sup> "British Medical Journal", the above consumption and cardiovascular disorders. 7 studies, involving 111,000 people. Studies up to Oct. 10/11