Assurance Framework:
Evidence-Informed Decision-Making: Local Context and Measures – Know Your School Authority

The intent of a CASS Learning Guide is to apply research, deepen understanding and enhance professional practice within the Alberta context. With a focus on optimum learning for all students, a Learning Guide provides an opportunity to grow system leader knowledge, resulting in quality school leadership and quality teaching throughout Alberta.

Local Context and Measures – Know Your School Authority:
System Leaders shared their stories of practice to address the intent of the assurance framework. Local context and measures are the DNA of your school authority and community story [Watch full recording here.](#)

Fort McMurray Public Schools

Superintendent Jennifer Turner and Assistant Superintendent Annalee Nutter shared a part of their assurance journey focusing on supporting teaching and leadership quality as a major component of their continuous improvement cycle. The assurance framework has provided the new leadership team an exciting opportunity to come together to learn more about their local community, division, and context. Work began by bringing together leaders, the board, and school council network representatives to build understanding around the required broad assurance components as well as identify local needs. The system leadership team then explored the division data and built an achievement binder based on all the school's data, for each site to review using the following four questions:

- What areas of strength do you see in your achievement data? What actions, resources, capacity building contributed to this success?
- What areas of need do you see in your achievement data? What actions, resources, capacity building do you have in place to address these areas of need?
- What contextual factors are important or unique to your school?
- Next steps. How can we assist?

Thoughtful inquiry provided insight into what the current story was and what story the data was not telling. The next step was developing comprehensive professional learning plans by individual teachers, each school, and the division that would focus on building capacity based on student learning needs evident in the data. FMPSD's work was based on and informed by the: TQS or LQS, the professional growth plan (adapted from the CASS practice profile), and the annual professional learning planning cycle. School planning involves data

analysis, establishing school goals aligned to the division goals and completion of the professional learning planning cycle addressing system and local context. Finally, and coherently,

FMPSD builds an annual Collaborative Learning Cycle, a comprehensive professional learning plan, based on the required local component of supporting teacher and leaders' capacity.

Superintendent Turner emphasized the importance of reflecting regularly and public reporting. Evaluation source information is collected on professional learning days, from regularly scheduled monitoring meetings, and annual exit tickets completed by leaders. Consistent questions are asked targeting instructional and teaching practice reflection. Infographics capture stakeholder feedback related to what FMPSD's educators are gaining, how their goals are being supported and where the growth opportunities and gaps are. Jennifer Turner jennifer.turner@fmpsd.ab.ca and Annalee Nutter annalee.nutter@fmpsd.ab.ca (Timestamp 5:45 on recording.)

Elk Island Catholic Schools — Seeing Christ in Everyone

Superintendent Shawn Haggarty emphasizes the importance of anchoring stakeholder understanding of the fundamental shifts from accountability to the assurance framework at the onset of the process. For example, the assurance framework provides autonomy to use local measures. The process is cyclical so there is no right or wrong spot to start and there are multiple entry points to leading assurance.

While EICS are data driven, Haggarty states, "It is not about the data, it is about the process to engage which is the critical

From Accountability to Assurance

Provincial Management and Administration	→	Local Autonomy and Responsibility
Provincial Measures - Upward focus	→	Provincial and Local Measures Upward and down
Narrow Stakeholder Input - Gr 4,7,10	→	Broad Stakeholder Input - All Parents, Staff, Students
Provincial Priorities - Education Plan Template	→	Local Priorities - Flexible Education Plan
Provincial Reports	→	Public Dashboard
Fall Planning for current school year	→	Spring Planning for following year
Reactive Engagement and Timeline	→	Responsive Engagement and Timeline
Provincial - Jurisdiction - School Disconnect	→	Provincial - Jurisdiction - School Coherence

difference between assurance and accountability." He cites that involving administrators in categorizing engagement feedback was a powerful experience resulting in four key school authority goals and contributed to each administrator fully understanding the 'why' and the 'how.' This engagement process will be replicated in November 2021 when EICS embarks on their next four-year assurance plan which aligns with the election of a new Board. High level inquiry questions will be posed: What are we doing well and what can we celebrate? What can we do better? Are there any other things we should be considering?

The process of engagement is continuous. EICS Assistant Superintendents meet every six weeks with each school administrator to discuss their one-page assurance plan which

links to the division plan. These on-going conversations focus on identifying the evidence that what schools have chosen to do is working or not working. The plans are organic and can be adapted as circumstances occur (e.g., Covid). For example, PAT and DIP data are not available this year but schools can use collaborative learning and instructional walk-through data as evidence that the plan is making a difference to students, staff, and the community. These on-going conversations are replicated by principals asking their staff, "What are our milestones in our assurance plan? Do we need to do something different?" creating alignment from the division to the classroom highlighting a focus on local school and community context.

EICS sends their assurance survey out in January and each school has their results in March. Central Office leaders work with school administrators to understand their data and remind us that, "It is important to tell the data narrative, do not make it personal, just work with it and move forward." Staff complete a Staff Assurance Developmental Plan which focuses on the professional learning they need to support student learning based on the data available. The School Assurance Plan links to the EICS Assurance Plan which creates coherence across the system. The process is annual, cyclical, and ongoing, driving continuous improvement in Elk Island Catholic Schools. Shawn Haggarty shawnh@eics.ab.ca and Thérèse deChamplain-Good Therese.decgood@eics.ab.ca (Timestamp 22:02 on recording.)

Connections with the Alberta Context

Quality superintendent leadership occurs when the superintendent's on-going analysis of context, and the superintendent's decisions about what leadership knowledge abilities to apply result in quality school leadership, quality teaching and optimum learning for all students. There is a direct alignment with the SLQS professional practice standard and the 5 domains of the assurance framework. Specific examples of this alignment are Leading Learning and Modelling Commitment to Professional Learning. These competencies require superintendents to lead ongoing engagement processes and report successes, growth and gaps to their public to guide continuous improvement and support teacher and leader capacity.

Research to Practice

Questions for reflection and dialogue within your context.

1. How do you describe your unique local and societal context? How do you identify local needs as a result?
2. Based on your local needs what data do you collect for your local measures? How do you assure your community that the local context is being addressed?
3. What process will you develop to continuously improve (explore, develop, take action, evaluate) your local measures?
4. How do you build coherence from the classroom to the school, to the division?

Additional Supports for System Leadership Capacity

CASS Professional Learning outcome is to: Create assurance framework resources for school authorities to support SLQS growth. Resources created based on this learning opportunity focused on Creating a Data Culture:

- Slide deck
- Padlet (Online repository) of System Authority, Alberta Education and CASS resources
- A Guide to Support Implementation: Essential Conditions and Comprehensive Professional Learning
- CASS resource library including additional Assurance Framework Learning Guides

✓ Modeling Commitment to Professional Learning
✓ Visionary Leadership
✓ Leading Learning