

Volume 17, Issue 1

the CASS CONNECTION

Spring 2021

The official magazine for the College of Alberta School Superintendents

Looking Back, Moving Forward:

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The official magazine for the College of
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Spring 2021

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Message from the Minister of Education

Adriana LaGrange | Alberta Minister of Education

As I look back over the past year, I am in awe and I feel immense gratitude. The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted our work and personal lives more than we could have imagined. From the time the first health measures were established to keep Albertans safe, we understood we were all in this together.

While the pandemic has created uncertainties, I believe it has also strengthened our partnership with superintendents and school authorities. With your leadership and advice, we have collaborated on plans and taken action to keep our school communities safe while students continue learning.

You have stepped up and led by example. Through unwavering dedication and resolve, superintendents have instilled confidence and calm within your schools and communities. You have modelled the way in problem-solving and flexibility. "Pivot" has become a key word in your lexicon. I have seen you adapt quickly to unique local situations and circumstances. For all of this, I am truly grateful. Your guidance has enabled our students, parents, and staff to quickly adjust to extensive health measures and new ways of learning.

I am proud of our work together to ensure students have continued their learning at home or in classrooms throughout this unprecedented time. Our ongoing collaboration will be essential to address new challenges that will arise. I assure you, the safety of our students and staff will always be our main priority. We will listen to your input and rely on advice from Alberta's Chief Medical Officer of Health to balance the benefits of in-person learning against the risk of COVID-19 transmission. As always, we will be ready to adjust at any point based on new information and evidence.

Dealing with the pandemic and constant change has put a strain on students' and families' mental health and emotional well-being. To make it easier for Albertans to access mental health supports and referrals from anywhere, Alberta's government provided more than \$53 million to expand the Kids Help Phone, the Mental Health Helpline, and the Addiction Helpline. We were also able to partner with Jack.org to create a resource hub for youth mental health. This funding is in addition to a \$556 million Specialized Learning Support Grant for schools under the new funding model, which includes a core component for mental health programming.

Even with the pandemic taking priority, we have made progress on several commitments to strengthen the education system. For example, partnerships with Enriched Academy and Junior Achievement's Alberta chapters are providing more students in Grade 3 to 12 with access to online and experiential programs that help improve financial literacy and prepare them for work and life. A partnership with Shad Canada empowers Grade 10 and 11 students to take part in a science, technology, engineering, arts, math (STEAM) and entrepreneurship summer program.

As you know, we have continued taking steps to renew curriculum. In December, with your support, 102 teachers participated in a Kindergarten to Grade 6 (K-6) Curriculum Working Group. They reviewed the draft K-6 curriculum based on their discipline, subject knowledge and classroom perspective. The same month, we received advice and recommendations

from approximately 30 faculty of education deans and professors from Alberta's post-secondary institutions.

This year, I look forward to discussing the draft K-6 curriculum with you, other education partners and all Albertans. Albertans will have the opportunity to provide feedback through new.LearnAlberta.ca.

As we prepare for the classroom validation process, which is targeted to begin in September, we will be working closely with many of you. Participating schools will help us understand the learning and teaching resources needed to support school authorities and teachers in implementing the new curriculum. We anticipate all elementary students will be learning from a new K-6 curriculum during the 2022-23 school year.

Although COVID-19 prevention and response still have precedence, I want to assure you the government remains committed to building excellence into the education system. Moving forward, we will continue engaging with you to evolve standards and practices that shape Kindergarten to Grade 12 education in Alberta. Together, we will ensure our students receive a world-class education that prepares them for successful and fulfilling lives.

Adriana LaGrange
Minister of Education

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Message from the President

Bevan Daverne | College of Alberta School Superintendents

We are coming up to almost a full year now having lived under the shadow of the COVID-19 pandemic. These past months have presented a number of challenges in our classrooms, schools, and school divisions across the province. To be sure, many of these challenges were expected, but we have all experienced a number of unanticipated situations as well. Everyone in education has been stretched thin over this past year; however, while we would not wish this to go on much longer or to repeat it, this past year has not been without its benefits.

Sir Winston Churchill has been credited for once saying, “Never let a good crisis go to waste.” It is this kind of thinking that allows us to look for the silver lining in the midst of an unprecedented year in education. While we all have no trouble identifying areas we might view negatively, recognizing some of the benefits of this past year has advantages for us as

As leaders, making the best of the here and now is critical. While we are doing that, the ability to recognize and help others to see the unexpected benefits is no less important.

leaders as we work to augment the vision we have for teaching and learning in our organizations.

I’ve found many of the conversations that I’ve had with teachers, school leaders, and other system leaders to be quite encouraging. Invariably, there is always some sharing about current challenges and future uncertainty, but as you discuss the solutions people have found and the previously untested strategies they tried in order to cope—that is when the real gems emerge. In almost every conversation, you hear about a temporary work around or other relatively unused approach that has borne unanticipated fruit. As we discuss a return to a

more normal operation, those new-found skills and strategies are touted as a potential improvement and benefit for our students and our organizations.

As leaders, making the best of the here and now is critical. While we are doing that, the ability to recognize and help others to see the unexpected benefits is no less important. Identifying those silver linings—those new potential best practices—finding those as they emerge is the job for visionary leaders in the challenging times of our current reality.

Bevan Daverne

College of Alberta School Superintendents

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David Keohane
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Message from the Executive Director

David Keohane | College of Alberta School Superintendents

By the date of this publication, we will have run the course of an entire calendar year responding to a pandemic that has significantly impacted the operations of our school jurisdictions. Reliance on remote learning and a reduced scope of program implementation and interventions to support individual student needs have contributed to less than desirable outcomes for our learning system. Attending to COVID-19 management protocols within schools, authorities created a myriad of additional responsibilities for staff, detracted from personalized learning, and contributed to the reduction of social interaction opportunities that constitute the heartbeat of our schools. For reasons related to these previous statements, we are all too aware of the toll that the pandemic has taken on the well-being of students, their families, and staff.

As the enclosed articles that showcase the dedication and innovation of school authorities through a pandemic indicate, leading through change and challenge is a great teacher. When lessons learned are brought to life for others, we discover approaches that can predict lasting impact.

As the storytellers within this edition of *The CASS Connection* show, focusing intently on stakeholder well-being, knowing how to be nimble in responding to needs through virtual exchanges and leveraging problem solving skills, finding new ways to implement programs, and achieve equity in addressing diverse learning needs are approaches that have become most important to system leaders. In this edition, we are also reminded of how music education, virtual learning, student engagement, and synergies between communities can be enhanced despite the imposition of a pandemic. As these areas of focus and creative approaches become our “new normal,” they will predictably contribute to a more supportive, efficient, and responsive way of leading and learning than ever experienced before.

As the enclosed articles that showcase the dedication and innovation of school authorities through a pandemic indicate, leading through change and challenge is a great teacher. When lessons learned are brought to life for others, we discover approaches that can predict lasting impact.

The COVID-19 pandemic has accentuated the most important needs of our people for our system leaders. Recent studies by Gallup (2021) confirm that followers have four primary needs of their leaders: trust, compassion, stability, and hope. Additionally, Gallup has just indicated that when leaders make their employees feel enthusiastic about the future, they are 69 times more likely to be engaged in their work compared with employees who disagree with this statement reflecting their own workplace experiences.

Although these qualitative predictors of success are not always explicitly stated in the features of this publication, they are

certainly implied within the undercurrent of every initiative or focus of the school divisions. The journey through COVID-19 has been incredibly challenging, but as we see the end to the pandemic's imposition upon us coming into full view, the evidence indicates that we have every reason to celebrate our successes and be hopeful. Thank you to all system leaders for your ongoing demonstration of talent, innovation, and excellence throughout this evolving and most promising story of practice.

David Keohane

College of Alberta School Superintendents

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Unexpected Benefits in Unprecedented Times



Bringing passion into the classroom in the time of COVID-19. Photos courtesy of Teresa Di Ninno.

By Teresa Di Ninno, CAPE Public Charter School

Taquinos from Venezuela. Good food is good for the soul!

While many of us hoped for a post-COVID-19 return to at least a near-normal environment in September, we prepared for all contingencies and new planning gave rise to shifts in program delivery. Unfortunately, September's new regiment of changing restrictions and shifts between at-school and at-home have had an undeniable impact. Cohorting in a face-to-face environment has forced serious alterations to modes of delivery in programs where previously student movement was key, literacy and numeracy in particular.

Homogenous cross-grade grouping and seamless shifts between groupings were eliminated. Our student-choice projects had to be rebranded, reducing student choice.

Frequent hand washing and sanitizing eroded the teaching time and diminished the ability to facilitate groups in shared spaces. The more we attempted to address safety concerns, the more we diminished those effective practices that were central to programming for all of our students, but especially for those students that needed greater flexibility.

Our literacy and numeracy programs were designed to provide targeted supports to homogenous groups of below-grade-level students. Multi-age groups were structured based on standardized assessments and teacher observations. Membership in these groups was fluid, so that as students grew to meet grade expectations, they were able to transition from one environment to another. Three tiers of supports facilitated response to different levels of students needs.

In an attempt to counteract all that the literacy program would be losing, we assigned literacy instruction to specialist teachers. This

resulted in an improved selection of high-yield strategies in the classroom, greater collaboration, and the sharing of methods and resources that require a higher level of expertise. We also narrowed the role for each member of the literacy team, increasing their skillsets and understanding of their assigned students.

The numeracy program, although it parallels the literacy program, offered greater challenges. Firstly, the relative lack of specialist teachers and teacher efficacy with mathematics processes and instruction amplified the challenges in providing multiple levels of instruction within diverse groups. With greater group diversity came the need for a wider variety of approaches. The need for an effective assessment tool that provides meaningful data was painfully evident, and it forced the deficits in the program to become starkly apparent. As result, we are engaging in a complete review of the numeracy program. The numeracy team is being strengthened to better support the teachers and the students. We are developing

a written math assessment tool which we hope to pilot and have ready for the 2021-22 school year. We are also embarking on a series of collaborative efforts with post-secondary expertise to increase staff capacity and confidence in the teaching of numeracy.

Partnerships with the community, an integral part of our program, are conducive to student engagement. They create a sense of belonging and of community, foster the development of personal skills, allow for learners-mentors and/or role model interactions, and produce opportunities to participate in experiences that support successful engagement. Our cross-grade integration projects were designed to create such learning environments and provide students and parents with a voice in their educational pursuits. We found adaptations. Although multi-grade groups became homeroom groups, the students and parents still had a voice. Our voting system allowed us to remove projects that were of little or no interest to students and to focus on those that were of interest. Teachers looked to offer projects within their expertise and passions, such as debating. Guest speakers, such as a construction foreman, Zoomed in.

Undeniably, the unexpected shift to online learning has been the catalyst for a steep learning curve. The building of staff capacity in the use of a variety of online tools and the move to a much more cohesive and uniform system of platforms, apps, and tools are positive outcomes. Zoom for online meetings, Google Classroom for assignment tracking and collection, recording instructional lessons

or developing videos and presentations in a flipped-model classroom have advanced teacher capacity to offer learning regardless of time and space. Student learning has benefited from the unrestricted access to instruction and resources, and parents are better equipped to support their children. The adage of working smarter and not harder has been put into practice through online learning.

These difficult times have challenged our school community, demanded creative problem solving, and tested our resiliency. Lessons learned from the literacy program shifts will be applied to increase its potency. The work

inherent in addressing the numeracy program deficiencies will make it more effective. Our community connections will widen. Technology has become a part of our tool kits. While content with our former normal, we are reminded of the proverb: "Smooth seas do not make skillful sailors." ■

Teresa Di Ninno, CEGEP, B.A., B.Ed., M.A., is an alumnus of McGill University and the University of Toronto. Teresa began her teaching career in Alberta in 1980. She is also the founder, past principal, and current superintendent of CAPE Public Charter School in Medicine Hat, Alberta.



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Challenging Times and Emerging Opportunities

By Andrea Holowka, Dr. Lynn Leslie, John McDonald, Steve Petingola, Calgary Catholic School District

Faced with the COVID-19 pandemic, the Calgary Catholic School District prepared for the 2020-21 school year after many months of learning at home, as did school districts across Alberta. Knowing that there would be preference for a continuation of online learning for some families, Calgary Catholic spent the summer months creating a new online school for Grade 1 to 9 students, which became St. Isidore School, and bolstered its already present online senior high offerings at St. Anne Academic Centre, an alternative high school situated to serve the diverse needs of high school students. This required tremendous collaboration and leadership in instructional design, student supports, building construction, staffing processes, and mental health considerations. We are experiencing new strengths and new learning paths for students that will remain after the pandemic.

St. Isidore started up with close to 5,600 students, 220 staff, and four school administrators, creating connections was essential for fostering teamwork and shared leadership for learning. Teacher connections occur throughout St. Isidore's Grade 1 to 9

English, French Immersion, and Special Education programs. Each week, teachers meet with their grade-level subject teams to co-create lessons, share instructional strategies, and provide technology mentorship. They also meet with their teacher learning teams, where subject teachers share student learning profile information about their shared cohort of students and connect with the school's diverse learning teacher team, counsellor, and school support workers.

Fostering student and parent connections with teachers are paramount at St. Isidore. Each morning, teachers provide synchronous, whole-group instruction with lessons integrating visual and interactive learning tools, which allows teachers to introduce concepts, encourage student participation, and to assess student learning. Afternoon sessions support asynchronous learning through targeted, small group intervention, pre-booked and drop-in tutorials, or class community-building activities. Additionally, Master Classes are offered by teachers to engage students in co- and extra-curricular courses of students' choice. Teachers communicate with the parents of students in

their homeroom or connect with parents wishing to speak with subject-specific teachers as needed.

St. Anne's Academic Centre was tasked with the call to expand their online presence to create a new Grade 10 to 12 online school. They were able to build from an existing online structure and drew upon their established a working relationship with Dr. Barbour (co-author of *Online, Blended and Distance Education in Schools*) and Daylene Lauman (Alberta Education, Online Learning Advisor) for guidance. Through the district's centralized staffing practices, they secured several teachers experienced with technology and online learning, who developed highly interactive and pedagogically-sound online courses.

As the year has progressed, students and parents have been reportedly very satisfied. Part of this success is owed to their online quality improvement team, and ongoing online survey feedback from students and parents.

COVID-19 has brought about a change to society by removing the one reliable connection point to the outside world for our students. For some students, this isolation occurred within a loving family filled with more attention and activities than ever before. Unfortunately, others experienced isolation from friends, hardships within the home, and challenges with completing schoolwork in a remote setting. As such, that deliberate attention to the wellness of students and staff upon their re-entry is paramount to student success.

The four metro school jurisdictions worked with representatives from the University of Calgary, The Mathison Centre for Mental Health Research and Education, AHS, and Teen Mental Health.org to develop a comprehensive set of materials to guide teachers and administrators. A "watchful waiting" approach was highlighted, in which staff were encouraged to normalize the learning environment for students but also keep vigilant in observing student behaviour for signs of mental health challenges. Resources were also provided to our online sites, to ensure regular check-ins with staff, students, and their families. Additionally, employee wellness initiatives

Diverse learning teacher joins the Grade 2 Social Studies Class in Metaghan, Nova Scotia, to observe the differences between communities, landforms, natural resources, and daily life.

Photo courtesy of Andrea Holowka.



were highlighted, with a professional growth day dedicated to staff wellness right before the Christmas break.

Like so many across the province, we have taken this challenge as an opportunity to grow our skills as educators and leaders. Our newfound abilities in educational technology will guide us into new ways of program delivery well after the pandemic is

over. Our consideration of wellness for both staff and students will continue to ground our work as a compassionate and caring Catholic community. We will all be filled with gratitude for what we have missed the most: the ability to connect face-to-face with students, staff, and colleagues to support the learning and growth of the children and youth in our care. ■

Andrea Holowka is the Superintendent of Learning Services with the Calgary Catholic School District. Dr. Lynn Leslie is Principal of St. Isidore Online School. John McDonald is one of three Superintendents in the Department of Learning Services for the Calgary Catholic School District. Steve Petingola is Principal at St. Anne Academic Centre with the Calgary Catholic School District.



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Taking Your Mind off of Everything with Musical Learning

By Pamela Davidson and Sarah Drew, Calgary Girls Charter School

In these strangest of times, it is inspirational to witness educators designing innovative learning opportunities for students despite pandemic barriers. At Calgary Girls Charter School, helping students become well-rounded, empowered citizens hasn't diminished through the tumult of the pivots between emergency-remote, in-person and at-home learning. Fostering health and creativity, teachers crafted lessons that mindfully engaged students through academic, artistic and physical pursuits. In particular, the fine arts program remained essential in our balanced programming, despite the limitations of key activities like singing and playing wind instruments. Music Director Sarah Drew's skill and passion provided exceptional, unexpected learning for students.

What's a music teacher to do when the very thing they teach is deemed a danger to society?

Singing and wind playing, staples of our music program at CGCS, appeared on the prohibited activities' list during COVID-19. My story is not unlike what all music educators have been living since March 2020—pivoting, letting go, finding innovative ways to do what we love and know is so important in students' lives. Thankfully our school has a board and administration that understand the value of the arts. We continued to teach our subject through spring's "Emergency Remote Teaching", through the fall's cohorted homeroom approach, and December's full online teaching. Each time required a different approach.

In September, for safety, we 'cohorted' students in homeroom spaces all day. We reorganized the variety of complementary classes, delivering all students art, music, drama, and French in homeroom cohorts. This was good news—I could still teach music, however, if there was a test for my lifelong philosophy of "Music is for All," this was it! If I believed music was for all, how could I introduce students, who long ago rejected music, to reconnect with it, while finding ways to continue to inspire some



"This year I actually really liked music. I never thought I'd get into it so much! This year mandatory music was a lot of fun and I'm thinking of taking it again!"

— Student from Calgary Girls Charter School.
Photos Courtesy of Sarah Drew.



"I really loved the percussion unit and loved playing together in the gym. When we got it right, I felt so proud and happy with myself and I loved trying out different instruments."

— Student from Calgary Girls Charter School.

of my best trained musicians? How could I captivate **all** students in their classroom, without being able to sing or play wind instruments, nor share anything? Also, there was an added complication: limited access to the music room. On a quarter system, how to actively engage them daily, for weeks?

I quickly learned that my ideas for varied, interesting, music-related research projects were good, but students really needed something

active and hands-on. A portable ukulele cart needed to be built to transport ukuleles through hallways since I would be going to students. A class set of guitars was purchased for Grade 9 students so each could have their own. Handbells were in storage. Could I figure out how to teach these safely? Yes! After weeks of dogged research, I purchased memory foam mattresses, cut them into music stand-sized squares and

Continued on page 14

Connecting the Dots:

Planning for Effective Professional Learning

By Val Olekshy, CASS Director of Leadership

High quality professional learning is essential to support teaching and leadership quality. The Alberta Education assurance framework identifies a required local component focused on identifying the processes, strategies, local measures and data to demonstrate that the school authority supports teaching and leadership quality through professional learning. COVID-19 pandemic restrictions for attending or providing face-to-face professional learning opportunities has necessitated a consistent move towards offering online professional learning experiences. Connecting the dots between designing professional learning, preparing to gather meaningful and useful data that measures impact, as well as adapting professional learning for online delivery is an opportunity to reflect on our current practices and plans for continuous growth.

The current online context has not changed what we know about planning for effective adult learning, but has provided an opportunity to provide for equitable access to learning addressing travel costs or time constraints. This article provides an overview of factors to consider when designing and delivering professional learning.

A focus on supporting professional practice and your school authorities' goals for student learning includes the creation of a comprehensive plan for professional learning. Once you have a plan in place, you are best positioned to collect data to know if your efforts are having an impact.

Alberta context

Leaders from different stakeholder groups have developed “made in Alberta” resources that have guided professional learning and implementation practice. The Guide to Comprehensive Professional Development (Learning) was initially developed as an approach to move us beyond planning a one shot “PD” and to explore how a more comprehensive plan can lead to effective evaluation of professional learning. The Guide described the steps to help us design a professional learning plan. Following the



What... professional learning used for the CASS Learning Opportunities.

creation of this resource, the Guide to Implementation: Essential Conditions was developed. Alberta leaders came to understand that no matter what effective professional learning is designed and delivered, conditions that support implementation are required to support teachers and leaders in creating optimum learning for students in Alberta. (Both these made in Alberta resources—including CASS’s application of the models—are posted here: <https://cas-salberta.ca/planning-for-implementation/>). The intent shared in these resources, emerging research, and current practices, has helped CASS with the “why and the how” of effective professional learning planning.

As COVID-19 came into our lives, we were able to learn new skills in the delivery mechanisms for online professional learning. Zoom, Google Meet, and other online platforms created avenues to access our colleagues on a more consistent—almost too

consistent—and timelier basis. We learned about the mute button, how to share screens, create break out rooms, and different approaches to engaging our colleagues online. Continued professional thanks to our colleagues across the province who have led the way in modelling effective online learning strategies and approaches; for example, School Authority system leaders, ARPDC, ATLE, and ATA.

When the CASS Superintendent Leadership Quality Standard (SLQS) professional learning committee gathered, they confirmed that the work articulating the different ways we were designing and delivering professional learning was still based on the **why** we were offering professional learning (supporting system leader professional practice based on the SLQS) and the **how** we were designing the learning (a comprehensive plan). This image was created to identify the coherence between

Continued on page 14

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spaced each student out. One class used the music room, following strict safety protocols. No mixing up the bells; each student had a station and individual set of bells and gloves.

Playing percussion was safe; going from having a few percussionists in band, to an entire percussion class, was the next challenge. Gathering tools for students, creating a differentiated percussion curriculum, finding 'seconds' of pairs of drumsticks, sold for less, to create a class set (60 sticks!), researching and making 30 individual drum pads. Topped off with inexpensive drawstring bags—Voila! A personal COVID-19 friendly percussion kit bag for each student was created. Marshalling resources for this COVID-19 curriculum, which took innumerable hours, made me feel like a first-year teacher.

Meanwhile, band students were mourning the loss of community, wondering if they should just return their instruments to the music store. This broke my heart. Thankfully by the end of October, with strict protocols and parental permission, I resumed meeting with band students from each homeroom at lunch hour. It would take two weeks to get through all of my band, but we made music in modified form. Despite restrictions, students were beyond excited and grateful to be able to play.

These remarkable COVID-19 times have brought opportunities that pushed my practice, demanding much from me creatively. Although I joke that I've felt like a first-year teacher—nothing this year follows normal flow and patterns—I have witnessed the benefit of offering music to all. To hear students who did not choose music express, "I would have never tried music for myself. Because I couldn't read sheet music and wouldn't know where to start and most teachings at my age are not a beginner. I learned a lot and really *really* loved it!"

It reminds us all that expanding our comfort zones can be incredibly rewarding.

Throughout the pandemic, we witnessed staff flexibility, creativity, and imagination eliciting necessary instructional innovations. Students' music appreciation and skill advanced beyond expectations and this important work will continue as we seek a future 'new normal.' ■

Sarah Drew (B.Mus, Ed Cert. Dip FA Conducting) is the Music Director at Calgary Girls Charter School. Pamela Davidson, M. Ed., is the superintendent of the Calgary Girls Charter School.

Continued from page 13

in person, virtual, and online resources—professional learning designs that are part of our comprehensive plan to support system leaders' practice.

A comprehensive professional learning plan includes a cyclical process of conducting an environmental scan, seeking out participants' needs assessments, developing professional learning goals, identifying possible professional learning strategies, finalizing and implementing the plan, adapting as necessary, and evaluating the plan and impact. This process, to design effective professional learning, is not different if you are delivering online or face-to-face. Learning continues, regardless of a pandemic or not. How we deliver the adult learning will differ, but the design is based on consistent principles for planning professional learning.

One step CASS has undertaken is to "connect the dots" between the comprehensive professional learning plan and implementation intent based on the CASS strategic priority: strengthening leadership growth. It is this connection that will help us to learn if our professional learning efforts are having an impact on our implementation focus of supporting CASS members professional practice. As school authorities explore how to address the Assurance Framework, required local components related to how the school authority supports teaching and leadership quality through professional learning will be important to connect the dots between effective design of professional learning, and coherence with school authority goals related to creating optimum learning for students. ■

Val Oleksky is a CASS Director of Leadership.

CASS Professional Learning Resources:

- Collegial conversations and experiences represented by CASS SLQS Professional Learning meeting highlights: https://www.cass.ab.ca/professional_learning_committee_highlights.
- CASSalberta.ca
- The professional learning section of the CASS website includes resources to support members with application of the SLQS. The growing database of "made in Alberta" resources for system leaders is found in the resource library searchable by SLQS competency, Workplace Wellness Condition and Media Type <https://www.cassalberta.ca/resources/resource-library/>.



The advertisement for Brownlee LLP features a background image of modern skyscrapers. The firm's logo, a stylized 'B' inside a square, is prominently displayed. The text 'BROWNLEE LLP' and 'Barristers & Solicitors' is written in a serif font. Below this, there are two portraits of men: Colin Fetter on the left and Yvon Prefontaine on the right. Between the portraits, the text reads 'Exceptional Education Sector Experience' and 'Practical, Proactive, Timely Advice'. To the right of the portraits, it says 'Contact Colin Fetter, Yvon Prefontaine & our team today for all your legal needs at: (780) 497.4800 or 1.800.661.9069'. At the bottom, the website 'BrownleeLaw.com' is listed in a bold, sans-serif font.

Navigating the Pandemic TOGETHER

By Terri Reid, Black Gold School Division; Chad Kuzyk, Livingstone Range School Division; and Julia Drefs, High Prairie School Division

While the COVID-19 pandemic has created both challenges and opportunities in education, the greatest challenge to school jurisdictions has been the speed of change. Overnight, it became essential to adapt and shift our practice at every level of the education system. At the same time, opportunities to create synergies within and between school jurisdictions meant that we could be more responsive to the needs of our communities.

Continuity plans established at the local level created a shared vision which was contextual to the local environment, with input cycles designed for learning continuity planning through leadership processes. From central development to school administration review, staff feedback and back to central leadership for revision, varied opinions and expertise were essential in collaboratively developing and implementing these plans. Teachers, principals, and divisional leaders met frequently which allowed them to recommend local student supports and share successful elements. This led to clearly articulated and communicated roles and responsibilities, developing a level of coherence with all involved.

Educational leaders throughout Alberta shared their continuity of learning plans through an enhanced spirit of collaboration. Promising practices, including processes around leadership, vision, collaboration, resources, use of research, and community engagement, were identified through discussion between and within jurisdictions. Leaders met to explore possibilities and evaluate the effectiveness of strategies.

Existing resources and research that had previously lacked urgency became essential and impactful. School jurisdictions shared resources with generosity, grace, and speed. Many jurisdictions developed websites to share resources with teachers and parents. Ongoing commitments have been made to ensure quality resources are accessible to support students,

teachers, and families, including Edmonton Public School Board's Teacher Support Packs and the French Immersion resources being shared, gathered, and organized by the Alberta Regional Professional Development Consortia (ARPDC).

Creative problem solving was key to ensuring learning continuity. The work of the ARPDC in identifying the expertise needed by teachers and offering this learning virtually, both synchronously and asynchronously, allowed for equitable, maximum access. Educators leveraged professional learning (PL) opportunities more often, connecting through innovative methods with a sense of impact and inclusiveness. PL was available anytime, at little or no cost and as virtual conferences have become the norm, they are accessible to many more people.

Teacher collaboration teams, within jurisdictions and across the province, connected teachers as they designed, tested, revised, and reflected on instructional practices and their impacts on learning. Confidence and competence with technology increased for all educational stakeholders and the Learning Technology Policy Framework has prepared the landscape for leaders to provide the necessary support to make this happen. The use of digital tools has exploded exponentially as teachers work to connect and engage with students at home. The shift to virtual connections has led to increased engagement at parent meetings, leadership meetings, trustee school visits, and board meetings. Existing student conferences, activity days, and project-based collaborations and competitions have moved to digital formats. Virtual science labs, museum tours, author talks, land-based learning, and similar activities have become the norm.

In a system where thoughtful consideration is applied before embarking on changes, the speed of change necessitated the creation of a collective vision on a scale that is unparalleled. Roles and responsibilities within and between



A class doing drumming exercises. They also use the exercise balls for flexible seating. Photo courtesy of Terri Reid.

our organizations evolved to meet emerging needs. Conversations created space for collaboration instead of competition and sharing became the norm for leaders as well as teachers. The value of working through this together is evident.

Looking back, some changes were long overdue. Professional development became responsive to teachers' needs, including content, timing, and delivery mode. The previous barriers to sharing resources within and between school jurisdictions were overcome. We learned that not all meetings need to be face-to-face, and in hosting virtual meetings, we expanded leadership opportunities, which built capacity in future leaders. Most importantly, teachers and leaders examined actions more keenly through a student lens and brought the student even closer to the centre.

While existing practices were leveraged and new practices were created, the rapidity of change meant that a nuanced evaluation of these practices was not possible. As we move forward, there is a need for reflection and research; the most pressing of which are the impacts of the pandemic on student learning and development. Action research on teaching and assessment will ensure we can not only understand what worked, but why it worked. ■

Terri Reid is the lead for Learning Services—Curriculum and Instruction in Black Gold School Division. Chad Kuzyk is the Associate Superintendent of Curriculum and Innovation for the Livingstone Range School Division. Julia Drefs, Supervisor of Curriculum for High Prairie School Division supports teachers in areas of assessment, instruction, technology, and second languages.

Leveraging Challenge to Foster Instructional Leadership

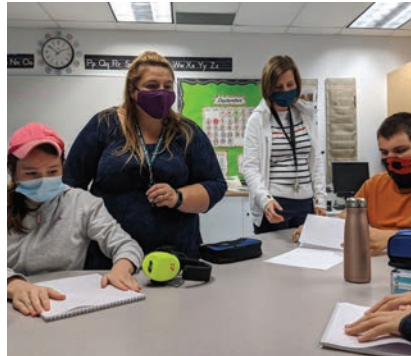
By Rita Marler and Shan Jorgenson-Adam, Battle River School Division

Similar to other school divisions across the province of Alberta, the Battle River School Division has faced a myriad of challenges that have come our way as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, this unprecedented time has also “unleashed a wealth of energy, collaboration, and laser-focused problem-solving,” (Fullan, M. and Hargreaves, A. (2020)), which has fostered continued growth in building instructional leadership across our division.

We first saw a hint of this phenomena when we hosted our annual fall “Start, Stop, Consider” conversations with school administrators. During these conversations, principals and assistant principals spoke to the need for us to use this challenging time to revisit and deepen the important work we have done in instructional leadership to support student success. Key areas of focus that they discussed were assessment, collaboration, high quality teaching, and optimum student learning. School leaders felt that the environment in which staff was working created the right conditions for people to be willing to reflect on their practice, change, collaborate, and problem solve to ensure success for all.

Over the past six years, our professional learning for school administrators has focused on Instructional Leadership through three academy formats: Division Leadership Academy, Principal Academy, and the Assistant Principal Academy. The definition of instructional leadership that we have used to frame the learning in these academies stems from the research of Vivian Robinson (2010): “Instructional leadership [is] those sets of leadership practices that involve the planning, evaluation, coordination, and improvement of teaching and learning” (Robinson, V. (2010) p. 1). Through this framework, we see evidence of a deeper understanding of instructional leadership and consistency in the way this work is undertaken in schools.

In preparation for writing this article, we asked some administrators to describe what they were seeing in their schools in relation to the focus areas identified in the fall, and how they believe the division continues to



All masked up and ready to learn! Photo courtesy of Shan Jorgenson-Adam.

support them in their efforts. Resoundingly, administrators identified that support from the division had and continues to facilitate positive change in their schools.

Administrators spoke to teacher collaboration building momentum at both the school and division level. Administrators believed that the division’s decision to change the school calendar so that teachers had front loaded professional learning and planning time provided the context for this collaborative environment.

These two days of professional learning were provided by division leadership and facilitated by administrators to enable them to work together with our teachers to map out how they would teach their curriculum in a quarter system for the school year. Our thanks to Edmonton Public Schools for graciously sharing their scope and sequence work with us. Administrators valued being part of the planning and facilitation of these days, as it has provided them with the background and understanding of their teachers’ instructional plans.

This has resulted in more focussed collaborative work amongst staff and provided for deeper conversations after classroom walkthroughs. Deeper conversations and reflections regarding assessment have also resulted from this work. These conversations have led to division office leadership organizing a variety of supports such as an administrator’s Google classroom that houses modules that support their data literacy,

teacher release days to develop common assessments, and the development of a new assessment and reporting website to support high impact practices.

Administrators believe that COVID-19 protocols outlined in our re-entry plan have provided them with the flexibility to address some structural behaviours that needed to be changed, which has increased instructional time and decreased office behaviour referrals. We have also prioritized the mental health and well-being of our staff, students, and families, and administrators have done the same. Our Mental Health Capacity Building (MHCB) and Family School Liaison Worker (FSLW) teams provide schools with a wealth of resources and support in this area. Administrators plan to retain these new structures and supports as they have proven to have a positive impact on learning.

Clear and consistent communication has also been paramount during these times. From the onset of the pandemic division leadership has kept in regular communication with our families. Administrators say this has resulted in stronger more positive relationships with their families. Information about the school is shared in more creative ways to keep parents involved and informed.

Tom Hierck, an education consultant who has worked closely with our division, challenged educators to refrain from moving to a “new normal” but rather to a “new better” (www.tomhierck.com/minute-musings). Our conversations with administrators, regular school review visits, and evidence from our last staff collaboration day affirm that we are moving forward to a “new better” and we are excited for the future! ■

For a full list of references, please email jcollignon@matrixgroupinc.net. Shan Jorgenson-Adam is the Assistant Superintendent—Learning, for Battle River School Division. Dr. Rita Marler is Superintendent of Schools for Battle River School Division. They would like to acknowledge the Leaders across Battle River School Division who have continued to put our students first during these challenging times.

Equity and Well-Being: Continuing Learning during a Pandemic

By Christopher Usih and Joanne Pitman, Calgary Board of Education

While impactful in many ways, the response to the COVID-19 pandemic provides new opportunities for addressing achievement, equity, and well-being for our students and staff. Collaboration with staff and families is key to improving outcomes for students. According to the Leadership Quality Standard (LQS), “a leader collaborates with the school community to create and implement a shared vision for student success, engagement, learning and well-being.”

In March 2020 when the Government of Alberta announced that school divisions would transition to emergency remote learning due to COVID-19, the Calgary Board of Education (CBE) moved quickly to implement processes to support learning at home for more than 123,000 Kindergarten to Grade 12 students. Scaling up online learning presented challenges and opportunities, and heightened concerns about equity.

Significant planning occurred in the months leading up to school re-entry. In August, we surveyed families to find out how their student would learn during the 2020-21 school year. Approximately 16 per cent (18,000) of our student population selected online learning. This necessitated new processes and deployment of additional resources to support both in-person classes and a design for Hub online learning that could be responsive to families, yet also support system stability. Working closely with staff and leaders in all service units, and with the support of the Re-Entry Task Force, we identified and resolved issues in a timely manner. Ultimately, our goal was to prepare for a successful school re-entry in the fall while prioritizing the safety, health, and well-being of students and staff.

The preparation for successful school re-entry for both in person and online learning required close attention in three key areas: timely and transparent communication; effective system processes and structures; and the ongoing development of high-quality resources to support staff in responding to student learning and well-being.

254 principals leading in highly variable contexts necessitates that system planning be



ABOVE: A group of students eagerly awaiting the school day to start. Photos courtesy of The Calgary Board of Education.

RIGHT: Masked students learning with their teacher.



clear on mandatory standards and where flexibility in approach may exist. To that end, specific attention was given to routine timeframes where decisions and updates would be communicated to school leaders and staff. The design of regular and direct system communication required a commitment to follow up and check-ins. Flexibility and follow up remain key themes in advancing the work.

Leveraging collaborative structures and processes where education directors work directly with principals in each area to manage site specific needs, either for in-person or Hub online learning implications, was vital to re-entry. Coordinating central supports and ensuring direct linkages to patterns of need based on school and teacher requests has also allowed for responsive and meaningful decisions and actions.

The CBE has also managed a central COVID-19 response team for positive cases in schools. Leveraging direct support to schools, collaboration, and data sharing, has meant more than the sole management of a health concern. The processes in place

have been critical to managing continuity of learning and knowing when a change in response may be needed at a school and/or system level.

In the midst of the pandemic and with the unevenness of emergency remote learning, it is understandable that some students returned to school in the fall with gaps in their learning. Ongoing shifts as a result of illness and/or required quarantine may also serve to increase these gaps. For identified student populations where we see persistent gaps in achievement over time, we are leveraging shifts to current processes like the CBE *Three-Year Education Plan 2020-2023*, with a goal to enhancing equity by personalizing learning for each student. Using data to identify strengths and areas for growth at

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Manifesting a New Meaning of Student Engagement

By Bill Shade and Emily Parkin, Stoney Education Authority; Jody Ferguson, Chris Goodman, and Sheldon Couillonneur, Morley Community School

I would like to begin by acknowledging the leadership and resilience demonstrated by our students, education staff, parents/guardians, and our Superintendent of Education during the 2020-21 academic school year. Stoney Education Authority (SEA) is composed of four schools (Nakoda Elementary School-NES, Morley Community School-MCS, Ta Otha School, and Chief Jacob Bearspaw School-CJBS) within three First Nations (Wesley First Nation, Chiniki First Nation, and Bearspaw First Nation). There is a student population of roughly 1,200 Stoney Nakoda students.

"Stoney Education Authority saw the need for online learning in March of 2020. SEA did not hesitate to order 1,200 Chromebooks for each of our students attending SEA schools," says Bill Shade, Superintendent of Education, SEA. "This proved to be very important, as the final order did not arrive until August of 2020. Chromebooks became increasingly difficult to purchase. SEA will continue to support its students during the COVID 19 pandemic. Students will continue to have

online learning opportunities based on need, and will be supported in whatever learning platform that best suits their needs."

As part of SEA's re-entry plan, dialogue and discussion were rooted around a synchronized education model that delivered face-to-face learning and online learning throughout the school year. Our vision would address the interchange during the 2020-21 academic school year due to COVID-19. The education model would become the 3G Education Model, which includes Google Classroom, Google Meet, and Gmail.

To impact student learning, it was imperative to identify essential outcomes for building capacity and confidence in our teachers and educational assistants to produce quality instruction via Google Classroom and Google Meet. SEA administrators congregated together and explored successful pedagogies with online platforms and best practices in distance learning. Ultimately, research and best practices eluded to a coaching model consistent with an EdTech Coach. The EdTech Coach would be tasked with accelerating our teacher's and educational assistant's ability to develop and deliver educational programming online, facilitate orientation sessions with students

and parents/guardians who chose to learn online only this year, and develop a school learning portal for all SEA schools.

"Leading our school through the online learning model has had a profound effect on me; through problem solving and pivoting this unique challenge with my colleagues," Emily Parkin, EdTech Coach. "Exceeding our own expectations through collaboration has been the most powerful experience and will continue to drive us as we provide intentional and meaningful education opportunities to our students."

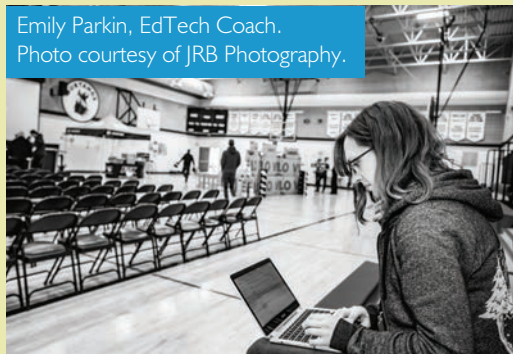
In order to measure the success of our 3G Education Model, student engagement and student achievement would become the variable to creating quality educational programming for our students. This involved the development of a definition of student engagement using an online model.

"Google Meets have helped me feel connected to my school because I'm with my classmates and my teacher," says Grade 6 student Joseph Heavenfire, MCS. "We talk as a class and my teacher helps me with my work. My typing has improved because I have had to type a lot. When I present in front of the school, virtually, I practice my speeches and I show someone in my house my speech to see if it's good, then I add a few things. I can email my teacher if I need any help with my assignments, and I can then have a Google Meet with her."

SEA schools focused on ensuring our students feel a sense of belonging and a sense of community within our schools. As part of creating a positive learning experience for our students, SEA schools have developed strategies to sustain school events using our Google Meet platform. SEA schools have completed virtual Remembrance Day ceremonies, Halloween celebrations, weekly assemblies, Christmas concerts, Rock your Mocs event, variety show events, and flag raising ceremonies.



Emily Parkin, EdTech Coach.
Photo courtesy of JRB Photography.



From left to right: Jody Ferguson, Sheldon Couillonneur, and Chris Goodman. Photo by Emily Parkin.

“The SEA 3G model, developed in response to the year-end data collected from spring of 2020, has allowed us to track the effectiveness of the overall program in terms of student engagement in real time,” says Chris Goodman, Vice Principal, MCS. “Google Meet attendance, email returns, Google Classroom assignment return and completion can be measured on a daily, weekly, and monthly basis allowing for quick in-stream adjustments.”

“What was crucial for everyone to understand was that we were all learning together,” adds Jody Ferguson, Vice Principal, MCS. “Teachers and staff needed to know we were there to support them with PD, online training, and our EdTech Coach was absolutely crucial to help us with this. It was inspiring to see everyone come together to learn as a team. Together as a staff we have created a safe place to take risks, learn and work together to take our school to the next level.”

The past year has truly reminded us all of the passion and dedication we have in education and to our students and communities who value leadership and resiliency. SEA schools will continue to refine our 3G Education Model and embrace the future state of education. ■

Bill Shade is the Superintendent of Education for Stoney Education Authority. Emily Parkin is an EdTech Coach from Stoney Education Authority. Jody Ferguson and Chris Goodman are the Vice Principals at Morley Community School. Sheldon Coullonneur is the Principal at Morley Community School. SEA would like to acknowledge the leadership and resilience demonstrated by our students, education staff, parents/guardians during the 2020-21 academic school year.

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each school, for each cohort and grade level, and for each student, is consistent with our commitment to equity and continuous improvement. In addition to specifying a program of study goal (e.g. literacy), each CBE school is expected to include a well-being for learning goal in their School Development Plan.

To support the common process of School Development Plans in schools, we focused on the development and application of high-quality resources for both student learning and well-being. Leaning on previously created Kindergarten to Grade 9 Assessment and Reporting Guides for ELA and Math, a scope and sequence was specifically created to ensure alignment between Hub Learning and in-class programming, and smooth transitions following potential staff and student absence. Exemplars for instructional design across programs of study and the development of COVID-19 Guidelines for Assessment and Reporting provide guidance to schools in responding to and identifying gaps. Learning is not separate from well-being and working collaboratively with key partners such as the University of Calgary and Alberta Health Services, along with other school authorities, has also resulted in effective resource development.

We continue to support learning environments where each student develops a sense of competence, confidence, and belonging as a learner, regardless of their background, identity, or lived experience. We will know we are having an impact when all students experience success, without exception. ■

Christopher Usih is Chief Superintendent of Schools, and Joanne Pitman is Superintendent of School Improvement for the Calgary Board of Education.



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Our Staff Matter:

Authentic Staff Health & Wellness Practices

By Kurt Sacher and Ray Hoppins, Chinook's Edge School Division



The Chinook's Edge School Division Wellness Champions. Photo taken pre-pandemic. Photo courtesy of Kurt Sacher.

We are convinced that to move forward with a deeply embedded staff health and wellness agenda in the school division, there are some key elements that are necessary to set the stage. We believe we have some things that are working for us, because we have a school board and a central office leadership team that authentically value people for who they are before they value them for what they do. They genuinely care, and they are fully prepared to engage with their people in an environment that is safe, transparent, and openly receptive to challenge.

Teachers Matter and Support Staff Matter

Michael Fullan (2008) wrote that the first secret in his book *The Six Secrets of Change* is to “love your employees.” We truly believe that our success story is predicated on a love for the people that work in Chinook's Edge School Division (CESD) that starts at the leadership level and flows naturally across the system. This is why we have created what we call our Matters Committees.

Our Teachers Matter and our Support Staff Matter Committees are made up of “opinion leaders” (*The Influencer*, 2008), central office leaders, and in the case of our teacher group, the ATA local president. These committees have been invaluable to us over the past 10 years.

Our “opinion leaders” have typically been on staff for five years or more, and they are people who aren't afraid to challenge us or challenge their colleagues. Our opinion leaders

are respected, because when they speak, people listen. A key staple of both groups is the “question box” concept. It is through this safe and anonymous portal where staff can ask their leaders about anything they might be concerned with. They get an authentic answer in a timely fashion that is published for all to see.

We also have effective internal communication mechanisms for our administrators and our division office staff. Our Superintendent's advisory team connects our central office leaders with the day-to-day reality of our schools, while our division office advisory team ensures that our division office staff are listened to and able to influence the environment they work in as well.

Weekdays 'Til 6

While we feel healthy communication structures are the most important part of our commitment to authentic wellness, we have also taken steps forward to augment a climate that is designed to make it easy for people to stay well. One that has given us surprisingly positive results, at no cost to the division, was the introduction of *Weekdays 'Til 6*. We put protective hands around our people by asking them to voluntarily stop sending emails and texts to other staff and parents after 6:00PM, and not at all on weekends.

We encourage people to draft an email or use schedule-send for a time after 8:00AM the following day, and we have seen a number of key successes. First, we make it much easier for people to focus on their family because they

are not receiving emails that are distracting or make them feel guilty for spending time with their family. Second, we are far more prone to emotionally charged email streams late in the evening than we are during the regular workday. As a result of *Weekdays 'Til 6*, we have noticed a significant reduction in unnecessary email activity that we believe was largely ineffective, and that worked against our systemic commitment to wellness.

Wellness champions

Another avenue in support of our wellness agenda is the introduction of our wellness champions. Every school has one, and they come together at regular intervals throughout the year to share and steal great wellness ideas that work. This was formed in response to a division-wide needs survey. Meetings are facilitated by a steering committee comprised of our division's staff wellness worker, Aaryn Manning; nine CESD staff with a passion for health and wellness; and key representatives from Alberta Health and Alberta Employees Benefit Plan. We believe that embedded wellness initiatives support staff well-being, connect people to external resources and supports, and help keep people happy and healthy, regardless of what life and work might bring.

We are so proud of the people who make up Chinook's Edge School Division; they have embraced these leadership efforts and made it even better for everyone. An authentic focus on staff health and wellness is helping all of us support each other through difficult times. By providing authentic voice at every level, making a commitment to unplug digital distractions, and encouraging our wellness champions to support all staff, we believe we are making a difference when, quite frankly, the people in our school division need it the most. ■

Kurt Sacher, Superintendent of Schools, and Ray Hoppins, Associate Superintendent People Services, are part of a large team of people who care for others in Chinook's Edge School Division. They have both learned from leaders before them while serving in a variety of teaching and leadership roles over the past 30 years.

It Takes a Village to Support your Mental Health



The Alberta School Employee Benefit Plan (ASEBP) is a health and welfare trust governed by 10 Trustees. It offers a wide variety of health benefits and promotes programs that sustain healthy lifestyles and workplaces for more than 62,000 covered members and their dependants in 58 school jurisdictions and 14 associations across the province. ASEBP is pleased to contribute a regular column in The CASS Connection.

By Kelli Littlechilds

It's been one year since Alberta's school communities have had to make significant adjustments to how they live and work, amid a global health pandemic. At last, I believe we can see the glimmer of light at the end of a long, winding tunnel. We all hope that 2021 will bring a return to family and social gatherings, flights to warmer destinations and seeing the smiles on our colleagues' faces from out behind their masks.

Even before the pandemic, we at ASEBP were aware that an increasing number of educational workers were managing higher levels of stress, decreased energy, and other mental health concerns due to the province's economic downturn and other classroom pressures.

In early 2020, we partnered with the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA) and the University of Calgary on a research study to gain a better understanding of these pressures and the short- and longer-term health impacts within our school communities. With all the changes in the latter part of the 2019-20 school year, we anticipated that educational workers were feeling an even greater level of stress and uncertainty.

For Phase One of this study, more than 2,800 educational workers in Alberta—teachers, educational assistants, support staff, school administration and school district administration, as well as supporting employers such as the ATA and

ASEBP—participated in an online survey in June 2020. The questions focused on understanding how school communities perform emotional labour and how they rated their level of compassion fatigue and satisfaction, stress and burnout.

Through the survey, educational workers shared their worries and experiences about how they were coping during the early days of the pandemic. The Phase One report (www.bit.ly/379de5Y) delves into the close relationship between emotional labour, compassion fatigue and satisfaction, as well as highlights the ongoing stigma around burnout in the education sector. It also identified a combination of professional development, self-care, positive workplace culture, and mentorship opportunities that provide individuals with strategies they can draw on in times of stress and uncertainty.

The Phase Two report of the study, which will be released in spring 2021, will provide additional details on how educational workers are doing and how we can help prevent and treat mental health distress.

At ASEBP, we recognize that the change, anxiety and fear of what else might be coming our way has affected each of us in different ways. We're all familiar with the adage of "it takes a village to raise a child." But it's just as important for the "village" to support a person through life's ups-and-downs.

As part of your school's village, ASEBP is here for you and your staff. Your ASEBP benefit plan includes coverage for many

health services that help you decompress, reset, and take care of yourself. For some, this may also involve seeing a psychologist, either in-person or via telephone or video calls, to talk about your feelings or help cope with grief, anger, stress or anxiety.

Another way to support your team is by encouraging them to access free, confidential supports offered by the Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP), through Homewood Health. Staff can reach out to Homewood directly by phone at 1-800-663-1142 (English) or 1-866-398-9505 (français). Or they can create a Homeweb.ca account to access free articles or get support via e-chat.

As principals, managers and leaders, you have access to the EFAP's Key Person Advice Line for immediate consultation, should a workplace situation—related to interpersonal conflicts or other employee issues—arise that could benefit from professional input. I'd also encourage you to reach out to wellness@asebp.ca and connect with our team of workplace wellness consultants for support including customized presentations and learning opportunities, as we continue to adapt how we live, work and support our teams.

Throughout 2021, we're also ramping up our support to covered members by sharing information and connecting them with community resources and learning opportunities to foster resilience and self-care. More information is available at www.asebp.ca/mentalhealth.

Our goal is to help school communities have honest conversations about mental well-being—one where we acknowledge when we're not okay and lean on our own villages for support, connection and hope.

As you continue working hard to make your schools a safe, healthy and supportive place for students and staff, I want to remind you that ASEBP is part of your village. We know that not everyone copes with tough times

in the same way and for some it takes longer to heal. That's why it's important for us all to keep talking, offering encouragement and support as we look forward to when we can once again enjoy all the joys life has to offer. ■

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IT TAKES A VILLAGE

to support your mental health

You've likely heard 'it takes a village to raise a child'. But it also takes a village to support you or your family through life's ups-and-downs. As part of your village, ASEBP provides health benefits to help you reset and care for yourself.

Lean on your village for support, connection and hope, finding safe spaces to say, "I'm not okay." Visit asebp.ca/mentalhealth for more information.

#THINKSHAREHEAL #YOURASEBP

