

CASS Summer Learning 2021 Highlights

Over 175 Alberta system leaders attended the CASS Summer Conference representing 80% of Alberta School Authorities (Public, Separate and Francophone); Charter schools and education partners were also in attendance.

System leaders from 18 different school authorities were willing to share their “Stories of Practice” at the variety of concurrent sessions offered or be the lead facilitator for the 6 different role alike opportunities provided. Program information available at: <https://cass.ab.ca/conferences-workshops/2021-cass-summer-learning/>

See Conference program archives for resources from the summer conference. (as well as resources and highlights from other conferences) This includes access to session recordings, presenters slides and/or contact information. <https://cass.ab.ca/conference-program-archive/>

The Fall, Annual and Summer Learning Conferences were offered online during the 2020-21 school year. We are very appreciative to presenters, zoom hosts and session hosts who have learned new technologies and approaches to ensure that members were engaged and involved in effective online presentations. The virtual opportunities have allowed for session recordings, and as resources are available, the creation of learning guides that provide for ongoing reflection, access to recordings and an opportunity for team system leadership follow up. You can access learning guides via the CASS Resource Library at <https://cass.ab.ca/resources/resource-library/>

The conference also provided an opportunity for members to be engaged in those aspects of the professional organization status which are most appropriate. Updates and transition year actions will be frame on the CASS ACT described as : Aspirations, Collaboration and Technical Requirements. Bang the Table provided CASS access to an engagement platform introduced at the conference as CASS Pro-spective. (seeking CASS members professional prospective). You can access CASS pro-spective via the CASS website at <https://cass.ab.ca/>

The opportunities for engagement at the conference focused on CASS as a Professional Organization as well as Role Alike Opportunities.

CASS as a Professional Organization – Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations and Results (SOAR)

CASS President Dr. Wilco Tymensen provided an overview of CASS objects (a 3-minute video provides the information and is available here: <https://cass.ab.ca/member-information/>)Following this presentation members were asked to respond to sentence prompts related to the “SOAR” process. A high-level review of comments received, across all 4 categories of “Soar”, resulted in five consistent themes emerging:

The Value of:

- Collaboration among members.
- Serve as a provincial partner with a prominent voice in education.
- Access to meaningful professional learning.
- Advocate for the best interests of students.
- Provide relevant and ongoing communication.

CASS Provincial Role- Alike

Members in attendance shared that a highlight for any CASS conference was the role alike opportunities. These sessions provide for a structured opportunity to discuss timely topics addressing common problems of practice, emerging opportunities and contextual variables. CASS Pro-spective includes a space for all members to be engaged with the role alike conversation(s) of their choice. Bookmark CASS Pro-spective Role alike to continue or start to be engaged with the dialogue and keep as a space for ongoing networking and collaboration. This year's Role-Alike will be led by system leaders:

- Curriculum, Assessment and Technology - [Joanne Pittman](#), Calgary Board of Education, [Shan Jorgenson-Adam](#), Director Zone 4
- Chief Superintendents – CASS President Dr. Wilco Tymensen and CASS Executive Director David Keohane.
- Inclusive Education - [Danica Martin](#), Wolf Creek Public Schools, [Andrea Holowka](#), Director Zone 5 – Calgary Board of Education
- Human Resources - [Greg Miller](#), Director Zone 1 – Grande Prairie Catholic Schools
- First Nations, Métis and Inuit - [Annalee Nutter](#), Fort McMurray Public Schools
- Wellness - [Paul Corrigan](#), Elk Island Catholic Schools

Summaries of Role Alike conversations are posted on [CASS Pro-spective](#).

Conference Survey Data

35% of conference delegates responded to the conference survey and shared this information:

- 98-100% shared that the conference learning contributed to their growth and understanding of system leader professional practice and that they plan to apply the learning.
- An aspect that made the conference meaningful: opportunity for dialogue specifically via the role alike session and break out room opportunities. Delegates appreciated timely topics shared via the concurrent sessions. Sample comments:

Learning from those with experience - hearing the challenges, the choices they made and why, the unintended consequences. Nothing can replace experience and the wisdom in the group and their willingness to share is fantastic professional development.

I'm brand new to CASS and I feel like "this" is what I have been craving for years. Truly, the rigour and immediate applicability of all that I learned is outstanding. Also, I am so impressed and thankful that I was embraced into the fold and while I know so little in comparison to the presenters, I felt that my voice was valued!

- An aspect of the conference that can be improved: upcoming in person professional learning opportunities, enhanced networking opportunities. Sample comments:

A format for personal introductions to very small group work would be useful, as some members clearly knew each other while others did not. I appreciated that our self-nominated facilitator encouraged us to introduce ourselves.

In our division the same person has many roles so choosing the Role-alike is difficult. Perhaps a couple choices at different times?

- Members that responded to the survey shared what they needed to support further professional learning as well as general thoughts about the conference:
 - Greatest area of need identified in the competency question: governance and Ensuring First Nations, Metis and Inuit Education
 - Continued opportunities to learn from and with colleagues.
 - Research, theory and practice-based sessions coherent with the SLQS/LQS competencies.
 - Most responded positively to trying “Bang the Table” and some felt that it was not necessary to capture members views and pro-spectives.
 - All appreciated the design of the virtual format (e.g., program and clarity of instructions) but are hoping for an in-person opportunity soon.

Sample comments:

We have become more efficient and better at virtual learning opportunities. I would suggest that CASS continue with some virtual events for cost effectiveness. Having said that, it will be great to see everyone in person again.

I truly appreciated and benefitted from the overall structure of this learning opportunity, and particularly like the continuous embedding of the SLQS strands. Participation in the different sessions using new and different tools was seamless since all the material was so well organized and we had been encouraged to 'set ourselves up' prior to the start of the sessions.

CASS SLQS Professional Learning Committee will meet to reflect on survey data to identify improvements and ensure that the learning opportunity met the **CASS Professional Learning Goal – 2020-21**

Deepening the understanding and applying the learning to support implementation of professional practice.