



# Planning Guide to Support Curriculum Implementation

A Strategic Roadmap  
for System Education Leaders



**CASS**

College of  
Alberta School  
Superintendents



Continuing  
Education  
Program

# System Educational Leaders’ Keys for Success in Curriculum Implementation

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# Auditing structures to ensure system alignment & readiness

System education leaders must ensure they have established structures such as planning, instruction, and assessment across the school authority.

A review of their Student Information System should be undertaken to show consistency across schools. Having conversations with school leaders and communicating clearly with teachers as to the expectations, current environment, and responsibilities of each group helps create the conditions for a successful implementation of the new curriculum. By institutionalizing new practices in procedures and policies, system education leaders align practices with the vision of the school authority (Gallagher et al., 2026; Gouédard et al., 2020).

## Strategies for System Education Leaders

 <p>Establish alignment across provincial, jurisdictional, and school plans.</p>	 <p>Communicate the vision and “why” to all stakeholder groups.</p>	 <p>Clarify roles and commitments of system-level partners.</p>
 <p>Audit system resources to identify implementation gaps.</p>	 <p>Create policies and procedures to align new practices with vision.</p>	 <p>Ensure consistency across schools in relation to planning, instruction, and assessment.</p>

# Reflective Questions

1

What current policies or structures are misaligned with the curriculum goals, and how will we address them?

2

Are all system education leaders (*superintendent, deputy superintendent, etc.*) actively involved?

3

Have we communicated our vision and alignment to the new curriculum?





4

Is there consistency across schools?  
If not, how do we create it?


5


Do our system, school, and professional growth plans clearly map to the curriculum outcomes?

# Action Checklist

-  Align vision with implementation of new curriculum.
-  Review and align jurisdictional and school education plans.
-  Define and communicate the specific responsibilities of system education leaders.
-  Complete a system-wide resource and capacity audit.

Add your own actions





**Notes & Local Application**

**Reflection**

# Committing to a multiyear process with protected time & deliberate pacing

Systemic change is a process that takes time.

Implementing a new curriculum must be an iterative process in which teachers take steps and system education leaders provide opportunities for discussion and collaborative work among the teachers. Gallagher et al. (2026) and Gouédard et al. (2020) indicated that monitoring and building of adult capacity are necessary foundations for sustained implementation. A “go slow to go fast” approach is critical. Allow time for teachers to reflect on the process and changes that need to be made.

## Strategies for System Education Leaders



Prioritize deep, intentional learning.



Provide time for school leaders & teachers to collaborate & refine practice.



Use an iterative process for reflection, sharing, and adjusting.

# Reflective Questions

1

How are we protecting time for deep professional learning and collaboration across the system?


2

Are we prioritizing depth of understanding over the speed of rollout?


# Action Checklist


  
Develop a multiyear implementation roadmap.

  
Prioritize protected time for job-embedded professional learning.

  
Communicate a clear, deliberate timeline to all stakeholders.

Add your own actions





**Notes & Local Application**

**Reflection**

# Fostering a culture of explicit permission to learn, take risks, and share feedback

System education leaders must create an environment in their school authority that allows for teachers and school leaders to share their experiences and questions while still being supported in their work.

This culture of relational trust and psychological safety is foundational for sustained implementation of a new curriculum (Gallagher et al., 2026). System education leaders must be careful to provide both support and pressure, in order to build the emotional resilience of teachers (Gouédard et al., 2020).

## Strategies for System Education Leaders



Prioritize relationships to build trust and accountability.



Ensure psychological safety to promote inquiry and risk-taking.



Provide support but also pressure when needed.



Create an environment conducive to learning.

# Reflective Questions

1

What specific actions demonstrate our commitment to relational trust at the system level?

2

How do we ensure staff feel safe to admit struggle and implement innovative ideas?

3

Are we balancing support with pressure?


4

What observable behaviours indicate that we have achieved psychological safety and trust?

# Action Checklist


  
Create a safe space for professional risk-taking.


  
Model humility, vulnerability and openness to feedback in leadership teams.

  
Establish structures for nonpunitive, shared problem-solving.

  
Have professional conversations with individuals who are not moving forward.

Add your own actions





**Notes & Local Application**

**Reflection**

# Coaching and modelling learning to build instructional capacity

System education leaders must support school-based leaders to be strong instructional leaders.

As Honig and Rainey (2020) indicated, when system education leaders work with principals to ensure high-quality teaching and learning for all students, principals engage in more challenging instructional leadership tasks. In turn, principals build the capacity of their staff, resulting in higher success for all students.

## Strategies for System Education Leaders



Explicitly model and teach sound instructional leadership practices (through elbow-to-elbow coaching, leadership meetings, and professional learning sessions).



Model a culture of inquiry and learning alongside staff.



Align professional growth plans with instructional coherence.

# Reflective Questions

1

How are we actively modelling the learning required by the new curriculum?

2

What is our strategy for ensuring consistency in instructional expectations across all schools?

3

How do we ensure school leaders are providing effective instructional leadership?

4

What strategies will we employ to build the capacity of our instructional leaders?

# Action Checklist



Establish a system-wide instructional coaching and professional learning framework.



Commit time to modelling learning in system leadership meetings.



Define core instructional expectations related to the new curriculum.

Add your own actions



## Notes & Local Application

## Reflection

# Implementing sustained, job-embedded learning tailored to system & school needs

Capacity building is a critical component in implementing a new curriculum.

It is also a key responsibility of system education leaders, who must facilitate a move away from “one and done” sessions to collaborative structures that incorporate professional learning communities (Gallagher et al., 2026; Gouédard et al., 2020). Networks across the school authority should be established so that grade- or subject-level teachers are able to connect and share successes and challenges as they implement the new curriculum. A coaching model should be utilized to build teacher capacity and school leaders’ instructional leadership skills (Gallagher et al., 2026; Gouédard et al., 2020). Professional learning should be differentiated to support teachers at their level of knowledge, skill, and experience (Gouédard et al., 2020).

## Strategies for System Education Leaders



Design professional learning for diverse teacher and school leader needs.



Use data and supervision evidence to plan and support individualized professional development for both school leaders and teachers.



Build collective efficacy through collaborative problem-solving.

# Reflective Questions

1


How are we determining the specific professional learning needs of each school community and leader?


2

Is our professional learning approach promoting collective efficacy or isolated practice?


# Action Checklist


  
Implement a needs assessment protocol for professional learning.

  
Allocate resources to external professional learning providers as needed.

  
Mandate collaborative learning structures within school implementation plans.

Add your own actions





**Notes & Local Application**

**Reflection**

# Strategically allocating human resources, funding, and vetted materials

Resource allocation is a key responsibility of system education leaders (Gouédard et al., 2020).

Ensuring that new instructional tools are available for teachers to use when implementing a new curriculum is essential because these tools have a direct impact on student engagement (Haile & Mekonnen, 2024). Resources must be reviewed to determine whether a reallocation is needed or whether budget lines need to be adjusted to add additional resources such as lead teachers or instructional coaches.

## Strategies for System Education Leaders



Ensure an equitable allocation of resources.



Determine budget priorities that enable the acquisition of resources and staffing.



Establish clear processes for vetting instructional materials.

# Reflective Questions


1


Are we funding isolated initiatives or strategically investing in the priorities outlined in our implementation plan?


2

Do our school administrators and educators have easy access to vetted, high-quality resources?


# Action Checklist


  
Complete a resource mapping exercise tied to curriculum priorities.

  
Review and revise budget allocations to align with long-term implementation goals.

  
Communicate the official list of high-quality, vetted resources.

Add your own actions





**Notes & Local Application**

**Reflection**

# Using continuous feedback loops to make real-time adjustments

During implementation, provide regular feedback to all stakeholders.

When school authorities monitor implementation, provide regular feedback and adapt to the changes that need to be made, they ensure deep implementation of the new curriculum (Gallagher et al., 2026; Gouédard et al., 2020). Effective monitoring, feedback, and adaptability are ongoing processes that address not only results (such as student success and teacher growth) but also the work that impacts these results (Dufour & Dufour, 2012).

## Strategies for System Education Leaders



Implement evidence-informed feedback loops at the system level.



Model evidence-informed feedback for school leaders.



Use an iterative cycle to monitor progress, gather evidence, provide feedback, and adapt.



Demonstrate adaptability by adjusting plans based on monitoring data.

# Reflective Questions

1

What data points are we collecting at the system level to accurately monitor implementation depth, not just compliance?

2

How are we ensuring monitoring leads to adaptation rather than simply evaluation?

3

How are we using evidence to inform feedback?

# Action Checklist



Define key system-level metrics for implementation success.



Establish regular, structured check-in points for feedback review and adaptation.



Communicate how feedback will be used to adjust the implementation plan.

Add your own actions



## Notes & Local Application

## Reflection

# Final Reflection for System Education Leaders

Successful curriculum implementation is an ongoing process of learning, collaboration, and refinement. Sustainable change occurs when system education leaders support educators not only to implement curriculum but to grow professionally within a collaborative culture focused on student success.

**The most effective systems  
recognize that implementation is:**

**1**

**A multiyear  
journey**

**2**

**A shared  
responsibility**

**3**

**A process requiring  
trust & support**

**4**

**A balance between  
accountability & autonomy**

**5**

**A commitment to  
continuous improvement**

## Additional Resources

See CASS eLeadership Guides - an on-demand learning resource for system education leaders.

<https://cass.ab.ca/resources/eleadership-guides/>

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## References

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