Advancing Student Achievement through System Instructional Frameworks

Friday, November 6
10:45 am - 12:00 pm
Room: Sundance B

CASS College of Alberta School Superintendents

Continuing Education Program

Presenters

- Corinne Kruse, Director of Teaching and Learning, Grande Prairie Public School Division
- Beverley Barca, Numeracy Assessment Coordinator, Northland School Division
- Keith Gamblin, Associate Superintendent, Learning Services, St. Paul Education
- Terri-Lynn Duncan, Deputy Superintendent, Horizon School Division
- Gloria Antifaiff, Principal Leadership Consultant, CASS

Continuing Education Program

Professional Practice Standard Competencies





Continuing Education Program

As a result of participating in this session, participants will have the opportunity to:

- examine research findings and Alberta Stories of Practice to identify system education leadership practices that strengthen instructional coherence and student achievement;

- analyze how system instructional frameworks can connect system priorities, professional learning, evidence use, instructional leadership, and classroom practice while remaining responsive to local context; and

- apply insights from the CASS research and eLeadership Guide to identify next steps for developing, implementing, or refining system instructional frameworks within their own school authority.

Continuing Education Program

Self-Reflective Guide

ADVANCING STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

through System Instructional Frameworks

Connecting the research and four Alberta Stories of Practice to your school authority's work.

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Where are we now?

a) At what stage is our school authority in developing system instructional frameworks to advance student achievement? (Circle all that apply.)

○ Not started ○ Developing ○ Implementing ○ Refining

b)What is working well to support instructional coherence across our school authority, and where are there opportunities to strengthen alignment?

Choose a research theme that is most relevant to your current situation.

Circle the research theme that is most relevant to your current situation. Why did you choose this theme (s)?



- ○ Coherent system direction
- ○ Evidence-informed system education leadership
- ○ Instructional capacity through embedded professional learning
- ○ Creating the conditions for improvement
- ○ Structural and contextual conditions
- ○ Differentiated literacy and numeracy coherence

01 Story of Practice

Grande Prairie Public School Division

Leadership action and connection:

Condition, evidence, or adaptation to local context:

02 Story of Practice

Northland School Division

Leadership action and connection:

Condition, evidence, or adaptation to local context:

03 Story of Practice

St. Paul Education Regional Division

Leadership action and connection:

Condition, evidence, or adaptation to local context:

04 Story of Practice

Horizon School Division

Leadership action and connection:

Condition, evidence, or adaptation to local context:

CHIEVEMENT
meworks
dapt ideas to your context, and identify one practical leadership action.
CASS Continuing Education Program

ies of practice? How can frameworks become living structures

sider capacity, relationships, and differing literacy and

B. Identify a next step

1. Identify a next step you would like to take to strengthen instructional coherence in your school authority, whether or not a system instructional framework is in place.

2. Who needs to be involved, and what support do we need?

ogue

rd provided, about implementation, evidence, or refinement
lex cards will be collected, collated, and considered for
Connects.

D. Additional Resources

Explore additional resources on the CASS website at cass.ab.ca. From the main menu, select Resources, then choose the relevant subsection.

- **Research for System Education Leaders**: *Advancing Student Achievement in Literacy and Numeracy: Perspectives of Alberta's System Education Leaders Study*
- **Research for System Education Leaders**: *Advancing Student Achievement in Literacy and Numeracy: Perspectives of Alberta's System Education Leaders Executive Summary*
- **eLeadership Guide**: *Advancing Student Achievement Through System Instructional Frameworks*

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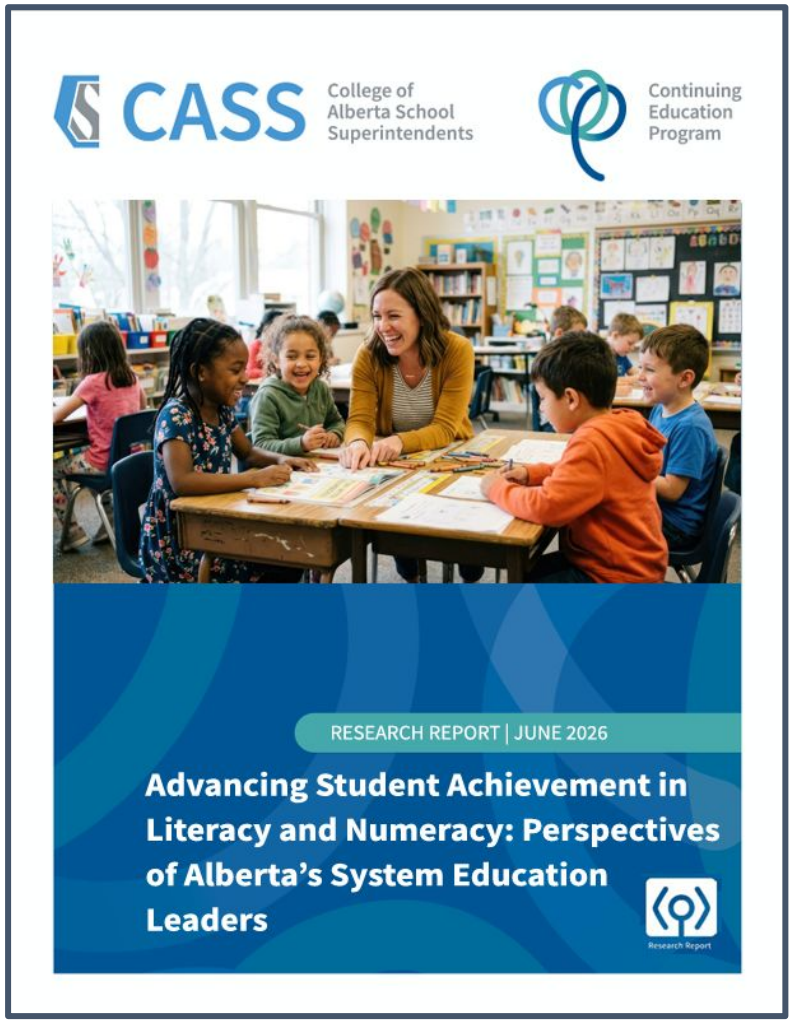
Questions and Curiosities

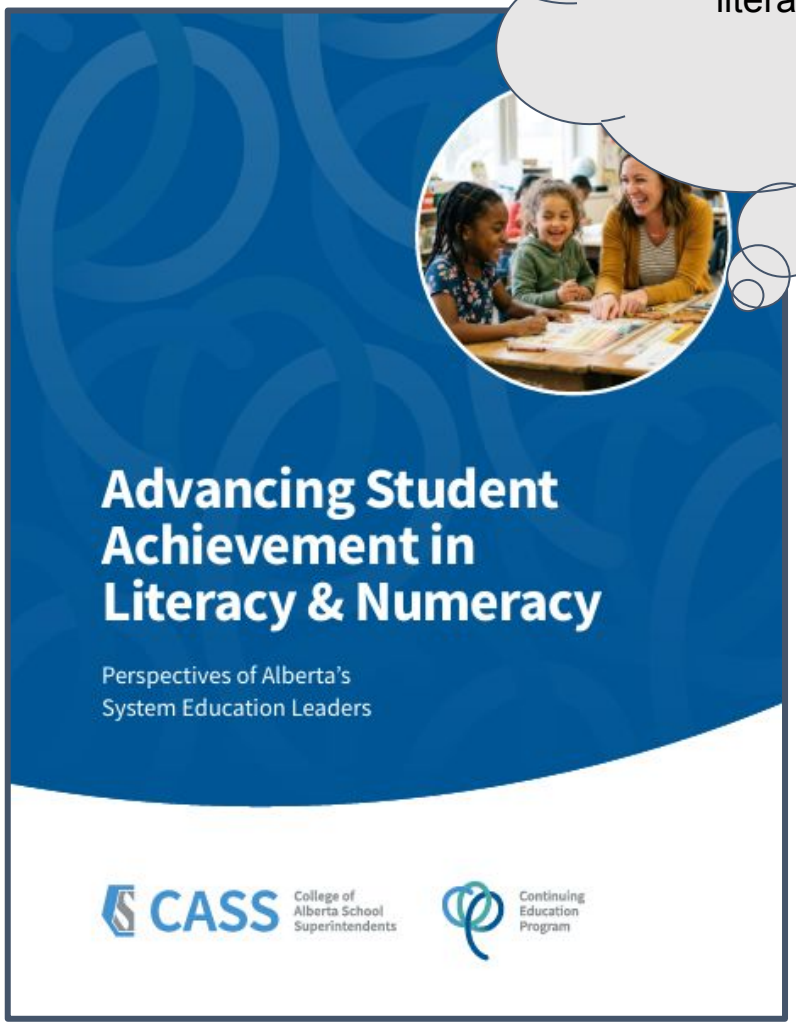


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Research says…

How do system education leaders create the conditions for advancing student achievement in literacy and numeracy?

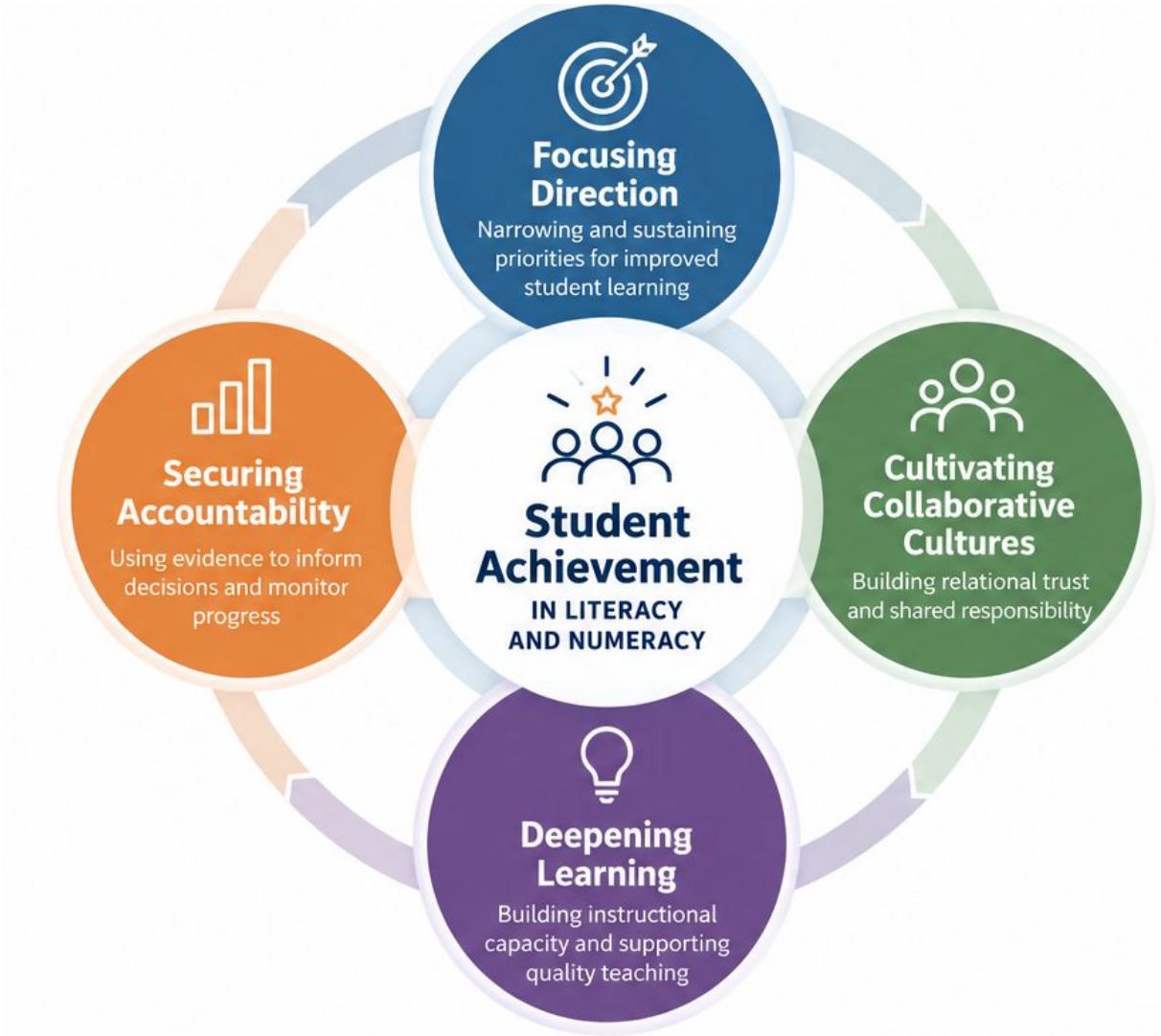


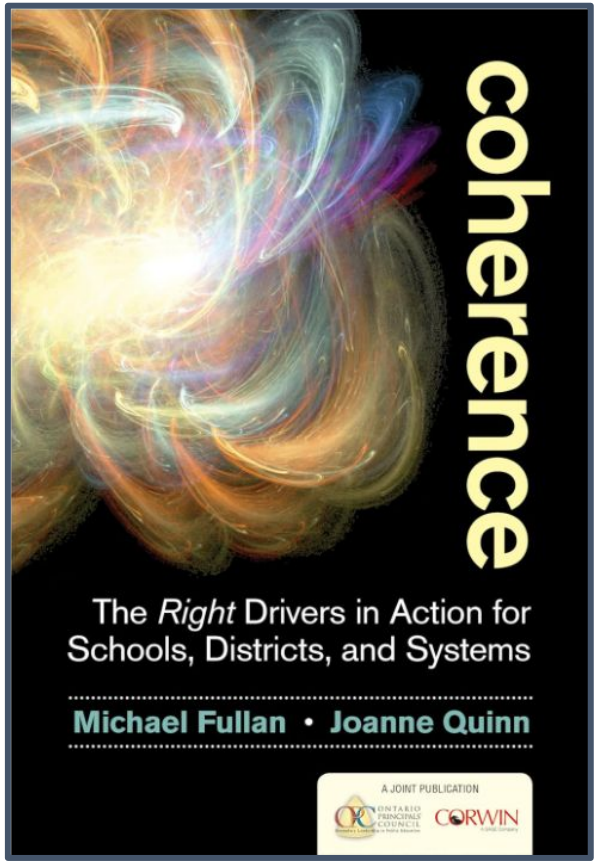


Methodology

- Qualitative descriptive research approach
- 47 system education leaders
- 24 semi-structured interviews
- Representation from 24 Alberta school authorities across rural, urban, and remote contexts
- Interviews conducted January–March 2026

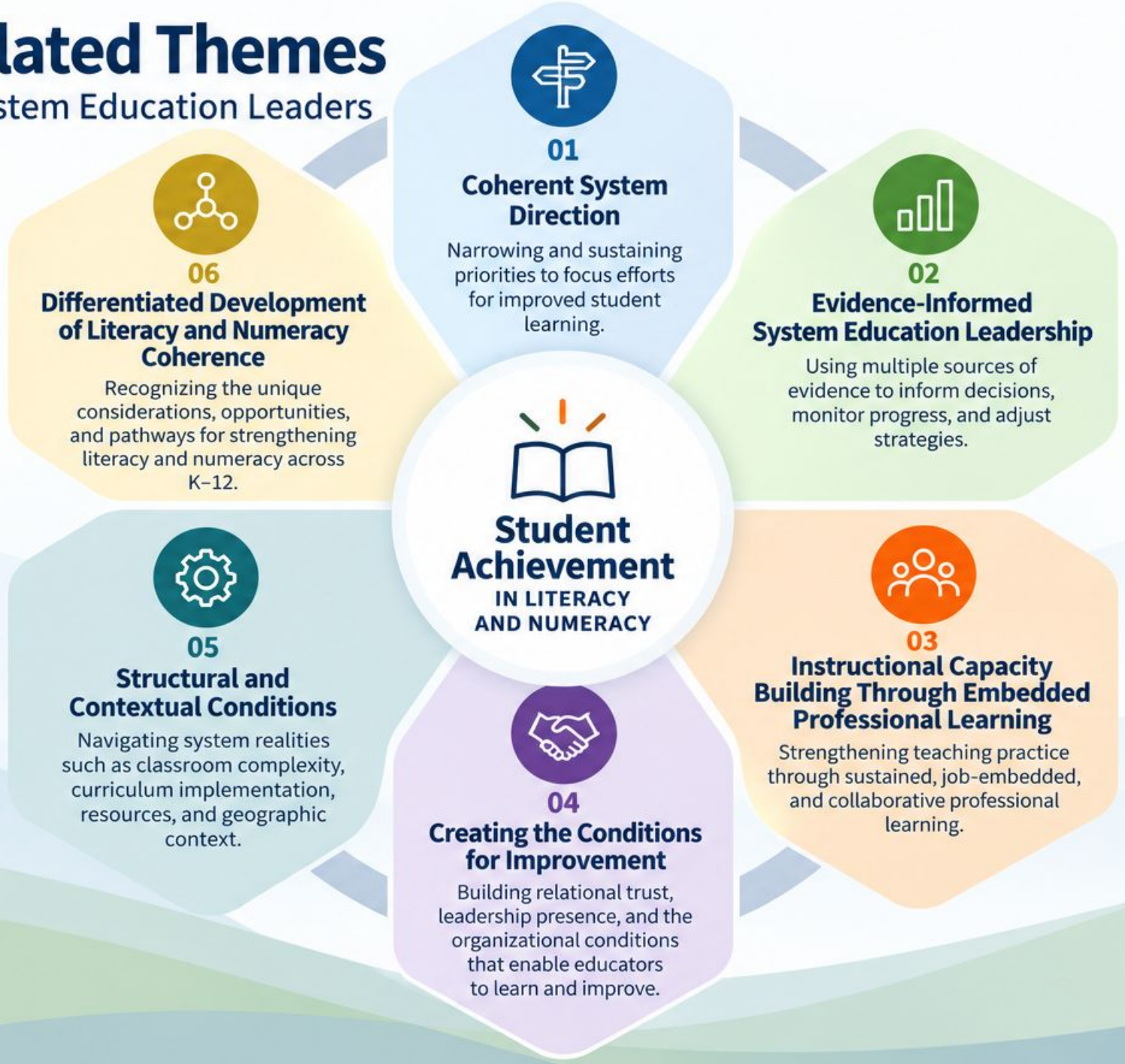
Research Framework and Structure





Six Interrelated Themes

Perspectives of System Education Leaders



Direction and Evidence

Theme 1 - Coherent System Direction

- Narrowing and sustaining system priorities
- Aligning organizational structures and processes
- Collaborative development of shared direction
- Strategic plans and frameworks as living documents

Theme 2: Evidence-informed System Education Leadership

- Increasing sophistication of longitudinal and comparative data analysis
- Strengthening data literacy
- Using multiple sources of evidence
- Normalizing evidence-informed decisions across the school authority

Professional Capacity & Leadership

Theme 3 - Instructional Capacity Building Through Embedded PL

- Sustained, job-embedded professional learning
- Shared understanding of effective instruction
- Collaborative professional learning structures
- Capacity building across system, school, and teacher leadership

Theme 4: Creating the Conditions for Improvement

- Relational trust and psychological safety
- Leadership presence and active involvement
- Distributed instructional leadership
- Adaptive leadership responsive to emerging needs

Context & Differentiated Development

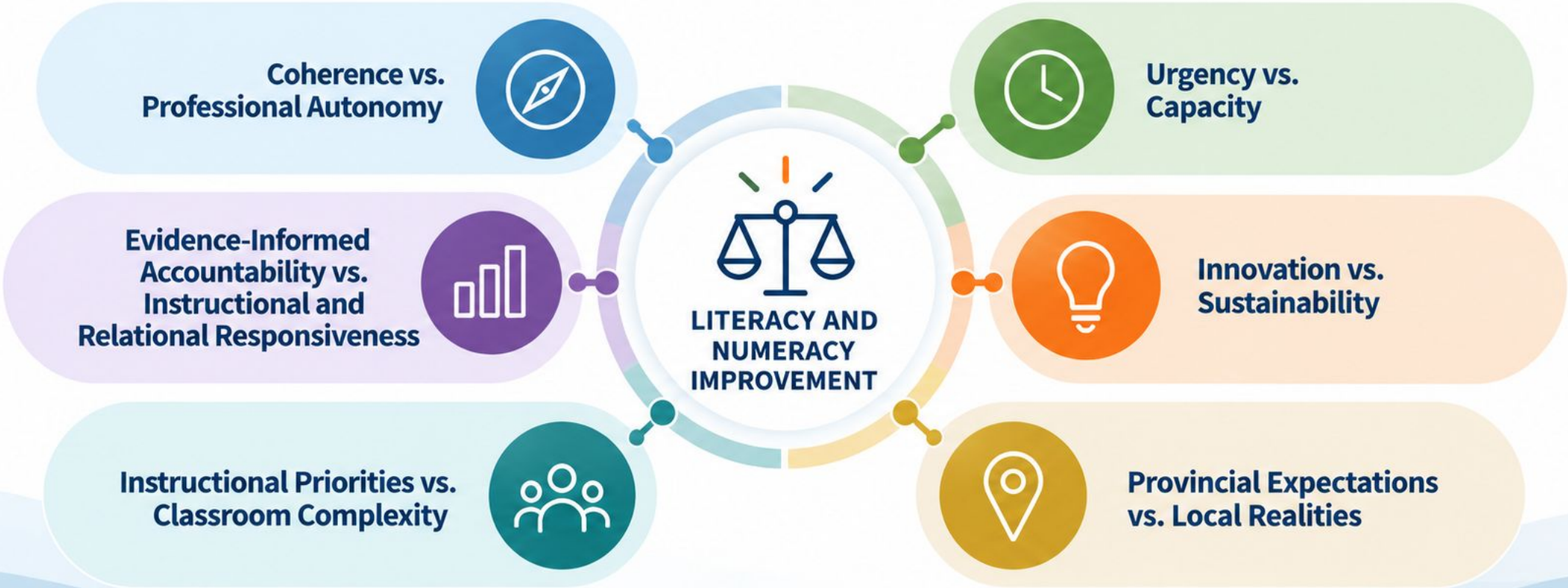
Theme 5 - Instructional Capacity Building Through Embedded PL

- Increasing classroom complexity
- Curriculum implementation demands
- Staffing and resource constraints
- Sustainability and quality of instructional resources

Theme 6: Creating the Conditions for Improvement

- Uneven development of literacy and numeracy approaches
- Numeracy frequently identified as an emerging system priority
- Importance of early years foundations
- Shared K–12 responsibility for literacy and numeracy

Six Common System Tensions



Choose a research theme that is most relevant to your current situation.

Circle the research theme that is most relevant to your current situation. Why did you choose this theme (s)?



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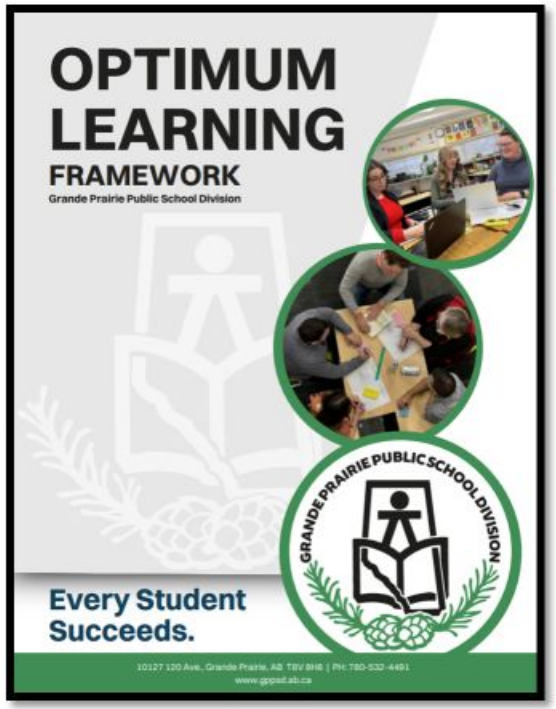
Grande Prairie Public School Division

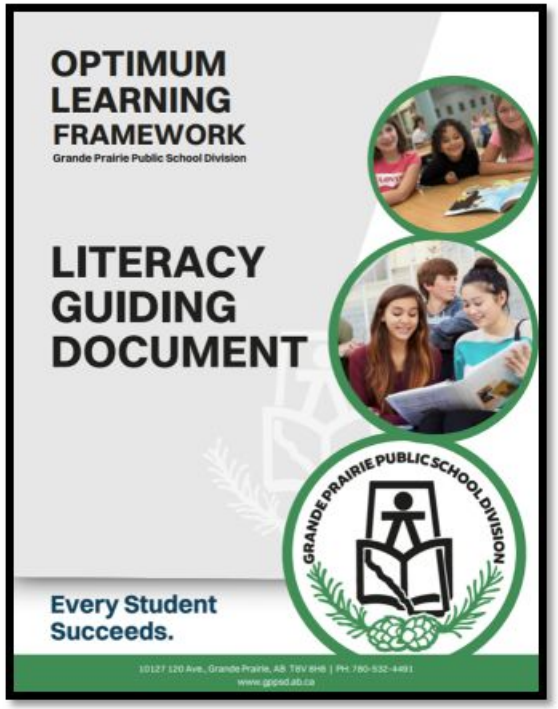
Corinne Kruse

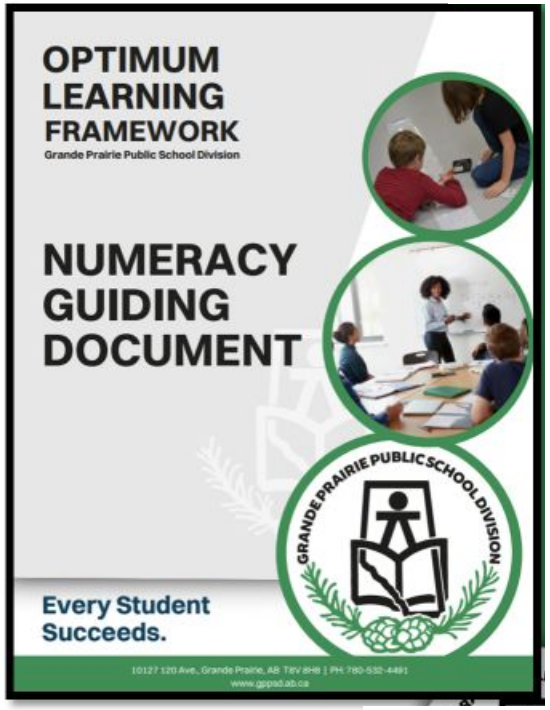
Director of Teaching and Learning

GPPSD Instructional Frameworks

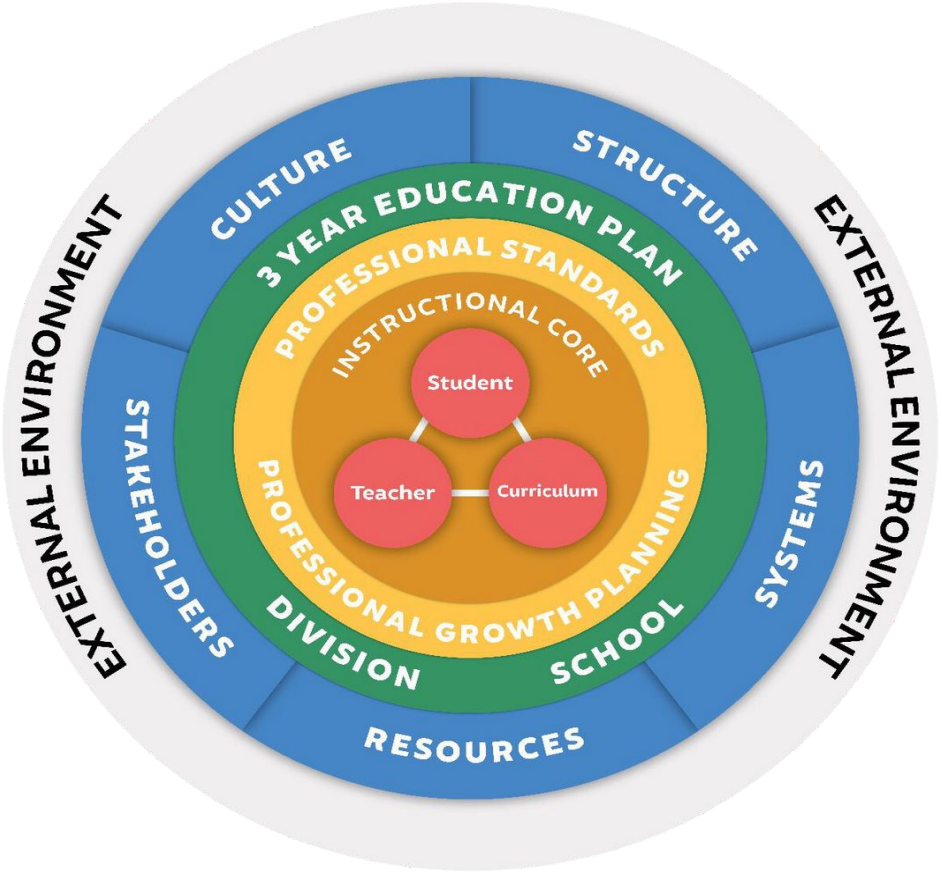








Elements of System Coherence



Adapted from PELP Coherence Framework
Harvard Graduate School of Education and Harvard Business School, 2011

Instructional Core:
Teacher knowledge, student engagement, curriculum

Professional Growth Planning:
Aligned professional growth

Planning:
Coordinated, intentional improvement strategies

Stakeholders:
People and partnerships- within and out of division

Culture:
Norms, values, attitudes

Systems:
Processes and procedures through which work is achieved

Structures:
Forma and informal, define how work is achieved

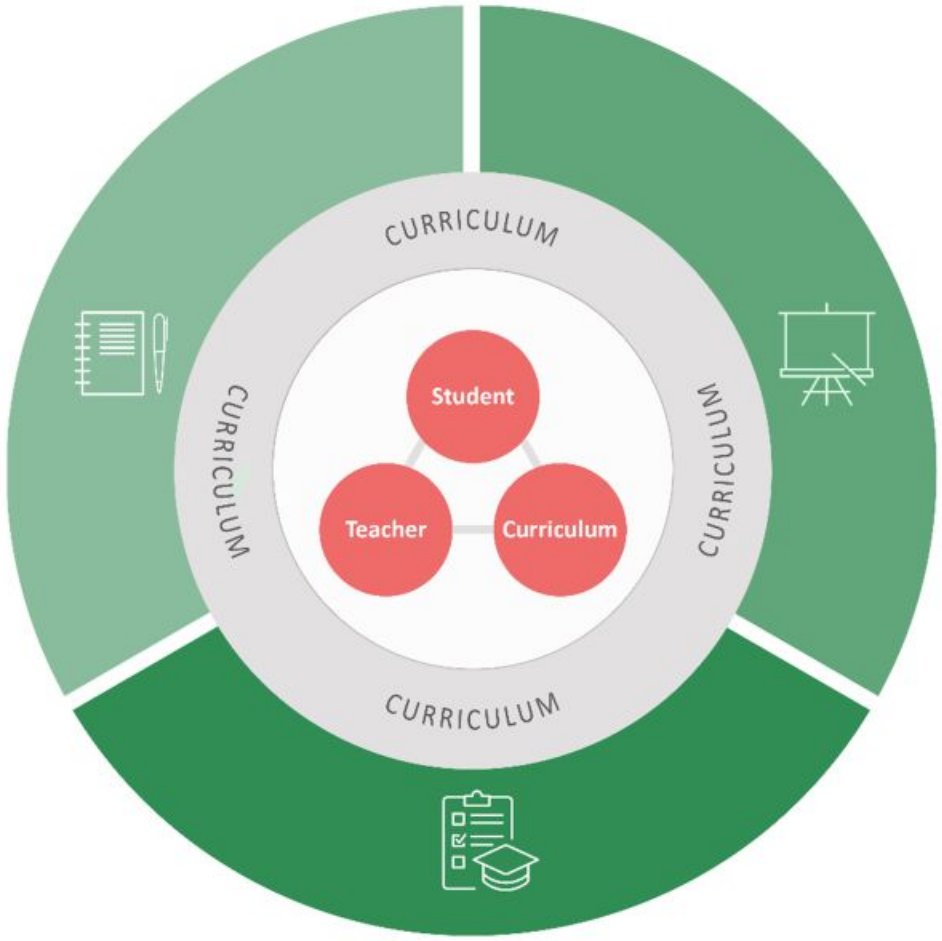
Resources:
Manage physical and human that support conditions

Quality Teaching

Curriculum aligned to planning, assessment and instruction

Research informed practice within the instructional core

Consistent teaching that supports student growth and achievement



Planning

A teacher demonstrates:

- Knowledge of curriculum
- Understanding of learner
- Planning instruction strategies and assessment
- Integration of resources

Instruction

A teacher demonstrates:

- Communication with a student
- Engagement in student learning
- Questioning & discussion techniques
- Informing instruction through assessment
- Flexibility & responsiveness

Assessment

A teacher demonstrates:

- Understanding of tools that provide evidence of student learning
- Providing opportunities for students to develop understandings to move learning forward
- Understanding of professional judgement to interpret evidence
- Communication of assessment results

Curriculum specifies what students should learn at each grade level, guiding instruction and assessment to meet provincial standards.

How System Leaders Create the Conditions

System leaders **align priorities**, **professional learning** and **resources** around a **shared vision for quality teaching**.

They strengthen **school leaders' instructional expertise** and a **shared understanding of effective practice**.

They use **system-wide evidence** to guide effective practice to improve **outcomes** for all students.

Vision and Coherence

- Establish a shared direction and reinforce coherence across the system
- Establishing and communicating a shared vision for quality teaching, student learning, and continuous improvement across the division
- Ensuring division-wide coherence in expectations, priorities, and instructional practices
- Developing school leaders' understanding and application of division frameworks, priorities, and improvement strategies.

Strategic Alignment

- Ensuring resources, supports, and learning opportunities are aligned to priorities
- Designing professional learning strengthen planning, instruction, and assessment

Leadership Development

- Building the expertise and effectiveness of school leaders
- Facilitating collaborative planning and improvement processes that engage school leaders in advancing division and school priorities

Evidence- Informed Improvement

- Using evidence to guide decisions, action, and continuous improvement
- Supporting the implementation of evidence-informed practices that strengthen teacher expertise and student learning
- Using multiple sources of evidence to inform strategic decision-making

Collective Responsibility and Continuous Improvement

- Fostering shared ownership for student success across schools and the division
- Strengthening a culture of continuous learning, reflection, and improvement

What Leaders Create and Sustain

L E A D E R S

Shared Beliefs and Commitments

Leaders create the conditions for quality teaching by establishing shared beliefs that guide decisions and actions by:

- Promoting equity and maintaining high expectations for all learners
- Fostering the growth and continuous improvement of every teacher and student

Professional Knowledge and Shared Understanding

Leaders create coherence by:

- Building shared understanding of curriculum and the progression of learning
- Establishing common expectations for effective instructional and assessment practices
- Promoting the consistent analysis and use of evidence to inform teaching and learning
- Building capacity to lead adult learning and support change

Structures, Processes, and Supports

Leaders design structures that enable quality teaching to become consistent practice by:

- Establishing dedicated time, structures, and processes for collaboration, professional learning, evidence-informed planning, instructional reflection, and professional growth conversations
- Aligning resources and supports with school and division priorities
- Removing barriers that limit teacher capacity, consistency, and coherence

Where Leaders Focus Their Influence

Planning

- Align planning to curriculum outcomes and evidence of student learning.
- Expect teachers to use diagnostic, formative, and summative evidence to guide decisions.
- Reflect learner strengths, needs, and diversity in planning.
- Build coherence across classrooms through horizontal and vertical alignment.

Instruction

- Advance high-impact instructional strategies and high expectations for all learners.
- Promote engaging, relevant, and culturally responsive teaching.
- Use classroom observation evidence to provide specific feedback that supports professional growth and strengthens instructional practice.

Assessment

- Ensure assessment accurately measures intended learning outcomes.
- Embed formative assessment in instruction to inform responsive teaching.
- Use multiple sources of evidence to inform summative assessment.
- Communicate student learning clearly, accurately, and continuously.

How Leaders Demonstrate Their Influence

Clarity of Expectations	• Establish expectations for quality teaching through planning, instruction, and assessment • Use common OLF language to clarify expectations among leaders and teachers
Evidence-Informed Leadership	• Use multiple sources of data and evidence to identify student needs and monitor progress • Ground decisions in evidence, not assumptions
Feedback and Monitoring	• Gather evidence of teaching and learning in classrooms and collaborative settings • Provide specific, timely feedback aligned to planning, instruction, and assessment • Follow up with feedback and next steps to improve teaching practice and student learning
Professional Learning Leadership	• Ensure professional learning strengthens instructional practice and student learning • Keep learning ongoing, classroom-connected, and responsive to student learning evidence • Engage in professional learning alongside staff
Building Coherence	• Align school priorities, professional learning, and resource allocation • Connect system and school priorities with classroom practice • Ensure all efforts strengthen the instructional core and improve student learning
Relational and Collaborative Practice	• Build trust through transparent communication and shared responsibility • Facilitate professional dialogue focused on practice and impact • Build collective efficacy through collaboration and shared learning for student success



Northland School Division

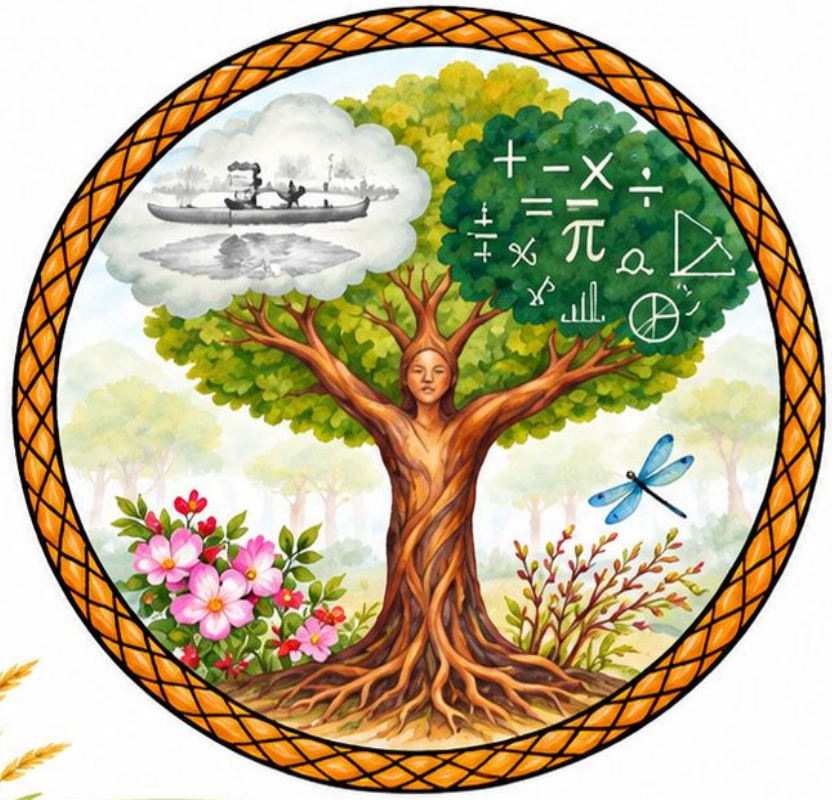
Beverley Barca

Numeracy Assessment Coordinator


Northland School Division
A Journey of Teaching and Learning Mathematics
Leading a Learning Community
Providing Instructional Leadership
Developing Leadership Capacity
Visionary Leadership
Leading Learning
We want schools reflecting who we are and where we come from.
3 + 2
1/2
n + 2
2, 4, 6, 8 ...
1/4
3/4 = 6/8
2 : 1
y = 2x
10


It Began with a Collective Pause
A conversation shaped by hope, curiosity, and a sense of urgency.
3/4
What if teachers could begin to see mathematics differently, and in doing so, create different possibilities for their students?
Mathematics for Thriving Communities
Land • People • Patterns
Many Ways of Knowing
A More Inclusive Mathematical Future
PEOPLE
PLACE
MATHEMATICS
POSSIBILITIES
UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY
Math Minds

THRIVING STUDENTS



Every student arrives with a world of knowledge already within them.

Belonging, identity, and lived experience shape mathematical understanding.

THRIVING TEACHERS



We were not simply changing what teachers do.

We were creating opportunities to change how we think about teaching and learning mathematics.

THRIVING CLASSROOMS



A pedagogy of presence.

The focus is no longer simply on what was taught, but on what was learned—and how we know.

THRIVING LEADERSHIP



Leadership grows from within.

Relationships, shared responsibility, and collective commitment grow mathematics leadership across our schools.

Advancing Student Achievement through System Instructional Frameworks

The future of learning is found in the connections we create.



St. Paul Education

Keith Gamblin

Associate Superintendent,
Learning Services

St. Paul Education
Learning Together, Growing Together

The Power of the Collective: Advancing Literacy Achievement Using a Collaborative System Approach

St. Paul School Division

The St. Paul Education Journey

- St. Paul School Division Context:
  - Approximately 3600 students
  - 14 schools, plus 3 Hutterite colony schools
  - Includes 1 Mennonite School (450 students) where nearly all students are EAL learners
  - 31% of our students are FNMI learners, including 600 students who live on reserve
  - 3 dual track French immersion schools (K-5, 6-9, K-12)

The St. Paul Education Journey

- Why the need to shift to a systems-based approach?
  - There were inconsistencies in our division schools when it came to data collection and reporting
  - The lack of PATs and DIPs due to the pandemic exposed a lack of system level data. As a result, we lacked information about the overall health of our system

Formation of a Division K-6 Literacy Committee

- In 2021-2022, we re-established a division literacy committee
- Made up of 1-2 teachers from every K-6 school in our division
- Committee members were selected by their school administration teams
- They were selected based on their demonstrated instructional leadership, knowledge, expertise and passion for literacy
- About 20 teachers in total

Formation of a Division K-6 Literacy Committee

Once we re-established our division literacy committee, we co-constructed two system-wide goals:

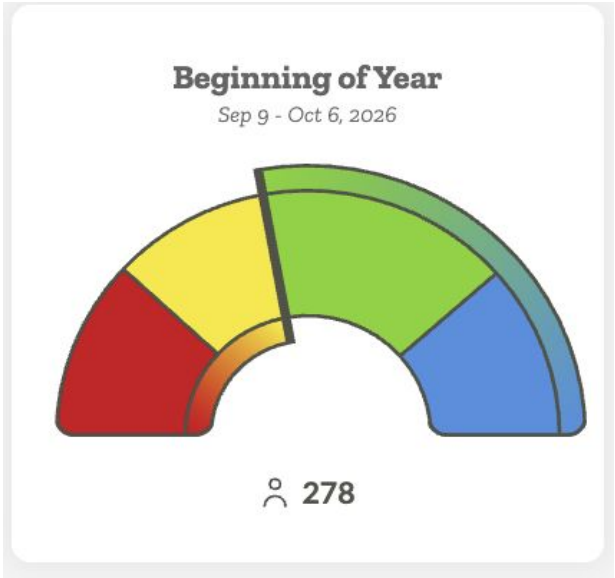
1. Get better data
2. Learn to use the data more effectively to guide instruction

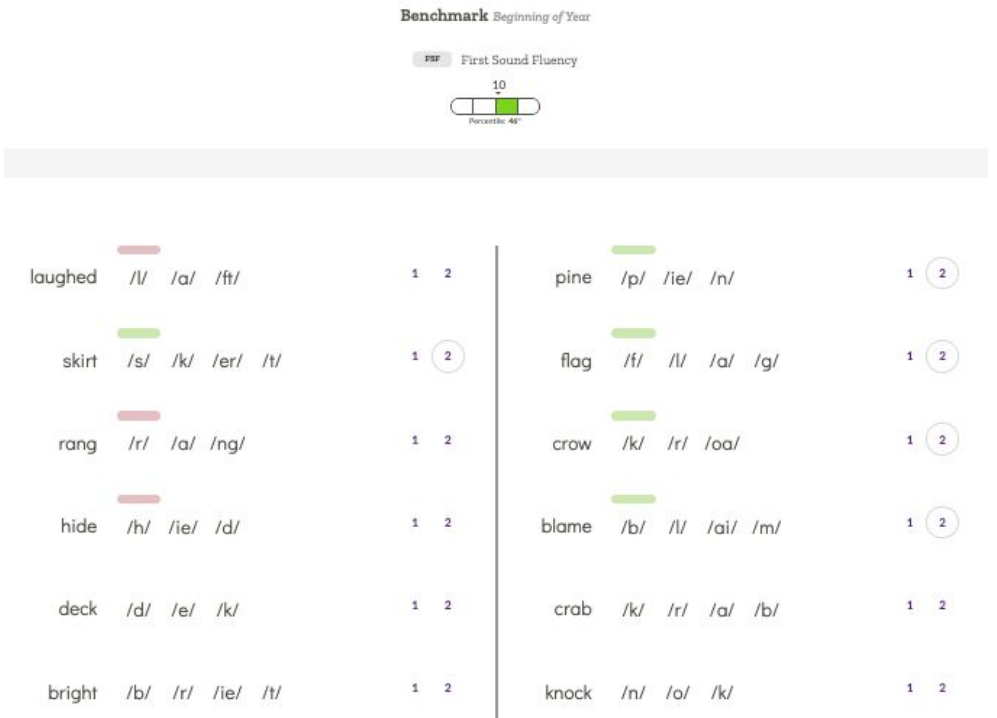
Goal 1: Get Better Data

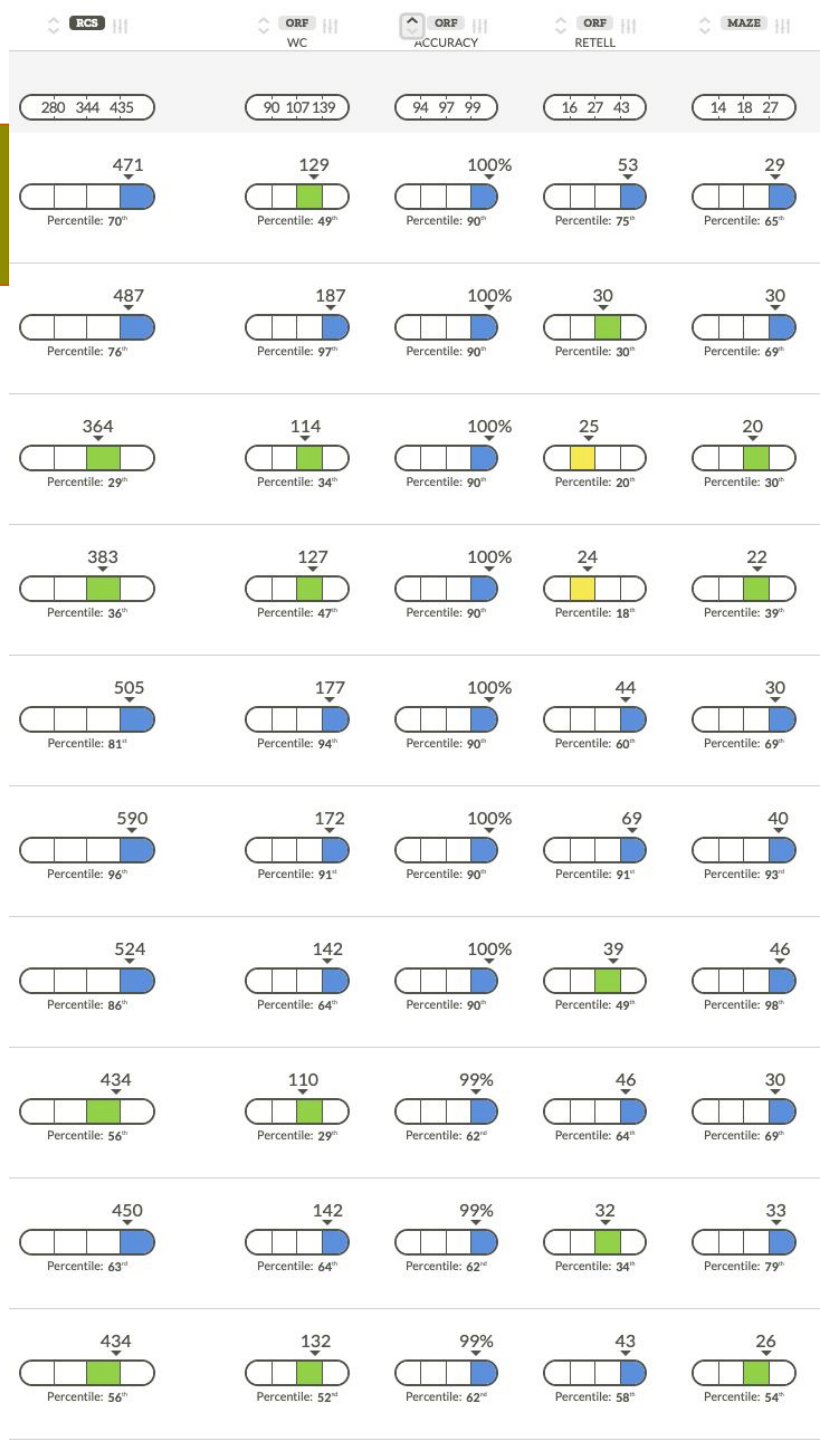
- Our committee wanted more detailed information from our literacy screeners.
- They volunteered to pilot different approved screeners.
- After trialling different screeners, they compared the benefits and drawbacks of each.
- After several months of piloting, our committee chose to adopt Acadience.

Goal 1: Get Better Data

Our committee appreciated the specific information provided by Acadience at the division, school, classroom and student level.







Goal 2: Use Data More Effectively to Guide Instruction

School administrators recognized that collected more detailed data would only improve results if we leveraged that data more effectively to guide our instruction.

- Every September and February (after the fall and winter testing windows) we host grade level data interpretation meetings, including one for for administrators)
- Teachers meet in grade level teams to receive professional development, analyze their data more deeply, and plan instruction tailored to their students' needs.

Additional Supports

We have an literacy support team made up of one division literacy consultant and 4 program interventionists.

- Division teachers are not responsible for testing their own students
- Our support team does all testing for teachers. This had two measurable benefits:
  - Dramatically increased the fidelity of our data collection
  - Helped us win over teachers (one less thing on their plates)

Additional Supports

- When not testing, the division literacy consultant:
  - Provides job-embedded professional development to teachers, administrators and school teams
  - Oversees the programming of our program interventionists

- Our program interventionists:
  - Provide individual and small group intervention to students in the schools that the data identifies as having the highest needs.

Connection to Research

- Our division has partnered with Dr. Lesly Wade Woolley, Processor and Associate Dean from the University of Alberta and Jodi Devries, PhD student from the U of A
  - They provide guidance, professional development and lead action research with division teachers.

What Did We Learn?

- Key Takeaways:
  - Involving as many people as possible in every step of the process has been key in fostering buy-in, building enthusiasm and ensuring that we get it right
  - As we continue to grow, the process has been more important than any document we have created
  - Staff involvement from every school promotes better communication to all staff in all schools



Horizon School Division

Terri-Lynn Duncan

Deputy Superintendent

HORIZON'S CONTEXT

- Horizon's Division Context:
  - Approximately 3300 students
  - 19 schools, plus 19 Hutterite Colony Schools
  - Includes 1 Outreach School, 2 Christian Schools,
  - We have a large population of Low German Mennonites in our division who are EAL learners

Advancing Student Achievement

Through System Instructional Frameworks

Horizon's Optimal Learning Model and how the RTI2 method works toward student engagement and learning

Horizon’s story of practice for system leaders

RTI2- Response to Instruction and Intervention

HORIZON INSTRUCTIONAL MODEL



horizon
school division

The goal: three frameworks, one coherent learning system

Literacy, numeracy, and instruction needed a shared architecture for practice.

Literacy Framework

Numeracy Framework

Instructional Framework

→ **Horizon Optimal Learning Model** →

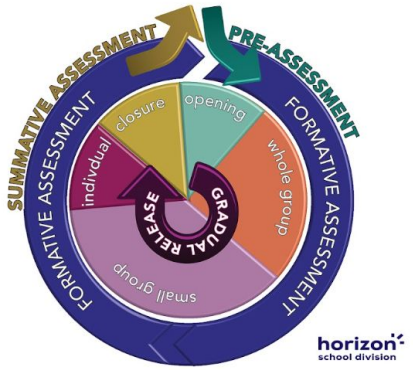
Student achievement through coherent practice

Design stance

- common arc
- local context
- evidence cycle

The model does not replace professional judgment. It gives everyone a shared language for planning, teaching, assessing, intervening, and learning together.

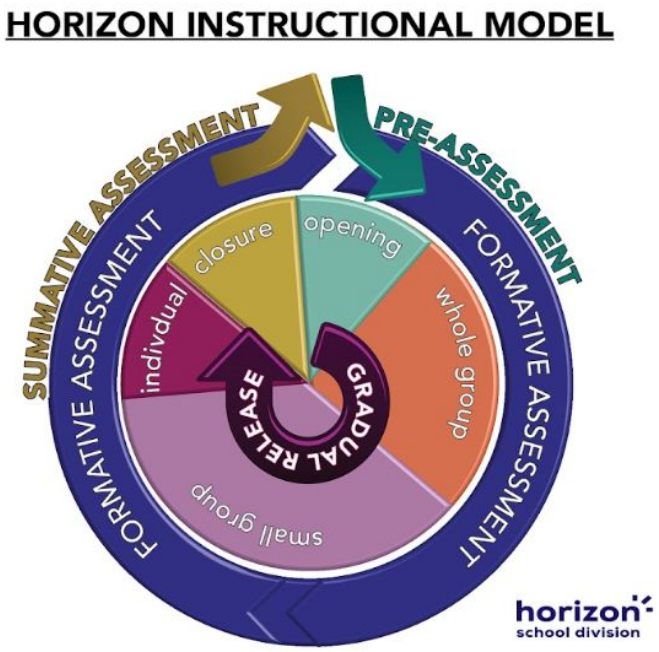
HORIZON INSTRUCTIONAL MODEL



ACTION AND APPROACH

The Horizon Optimal Learning Model: a shared instructional arc

Each learning cycle moves from curiosity to evidence of understanding.



1. Engagement & Inquiry

Activate prior knowledge, foster curiosity, and establish the learning target. Students frame questions and connect with real-world context.

2. Guided Exploration

Scaffold concepts through direct instruction and collaborative modeling. Teachers facilitate discussion as students construct deep understanding.

3. Synthesis & Application

Independent practice, formative feedback, and self-assessment. Students apply skills in novel contexts to demonstrate mastery.

opening ➔ whole group ➔ small group ➔ individual application ➔ closure

The strategy of creating trust: Innovation and Creativity

Horizon encourages teachers to be innovative and creative! To try new learning strategies while looking at the levels of student engagement and learning.

"Permission to be Innovative"

A deliberate system move to create rich professional learning.



1 Invite

Open the door for early adopters to try new strategies and to create ways for deep learning

2 Listen

Use teacher and administrator voice to refine supports and enrich professional development.

3 Scale

Turn local learning into shared system practice.

Coherence grew through participation, not compliance.

Professional learning: scaffolded, sustained, and social

Adult learning mirrored the student learning we wanted to see.

3 "Cup of Supports" Yearly ongoing PD

2 **Division Wide Professional Learning for All Staff through TLC's**

1 **Professional Learning for Administrators**

TLC Teaching Sprints

Collaboration Cafes

Friday collaboration became the engine for creation of documents and for collaboration with colleagues



Embedded professional learning is the bridge between a framework on paper and practice in classrooms.

Impact: from collective leadership to student achievement

The leading indicators are shifts in language, practice, and ownership.



Shared language	Leaders and teachers talk about learning using common terms.	**Visible thinking**	Student reasoning is documented and used to plan next steps.
Assessment conversations	Pre-Assessment, formative, and summative evidence are connected.	**Teacher voice**	Feedback from Administrators and teachers influences system decisions.

We are moving our achievement story and continue to do so as a system through the use of data and professional development

Leadership insights: depth precedes speed

Structures matter, but relationships carry the structure.

1 Depth precedes speed.

If we move too fast, coherence becomes compliance. If we move with depth, coherence becomes shared practice.

2 Permission is a leadership action.

Permission reduces vulnerability and invites educators to learn in public, while leaders keep the direction clear.

3 Frameworks must remain living documents.

The model strengthens when teachers, principals, and system leaders use evidence to refine it.



LQS / SLQS connections

- LQS 4 - Learning Community
- LQS 6 - Instructional Leadership
- LQS 7 - Leadership Capacity
- SLQS 3 + 4 - Visionary Leadership and Leading Learning

Questions for system leaders

What permission would help your system move from uncertainty to confidence?

1	**Permission**	What spoken or unspoken messages communicate that educators may learn, test, revise, and ask for help?
2	**Coherence**	Where do your literacy, numeracy, and instructional frameworks align - and where do they compete for attention?
3	**Evidence**	What student, teacher, and system evidence would show that learning is becoming deeper and more transferable?

Horizon's next move — **sustain** | **scale** | **study impact**

horizon school division

Sources: eLearning Guide Development Guide; Synthesis of Findings; Horizon Optimal Learning Model Board Brief; The Power of Permission Curriculum Journey.



From Research to Practice: CASS eLeadership Guide

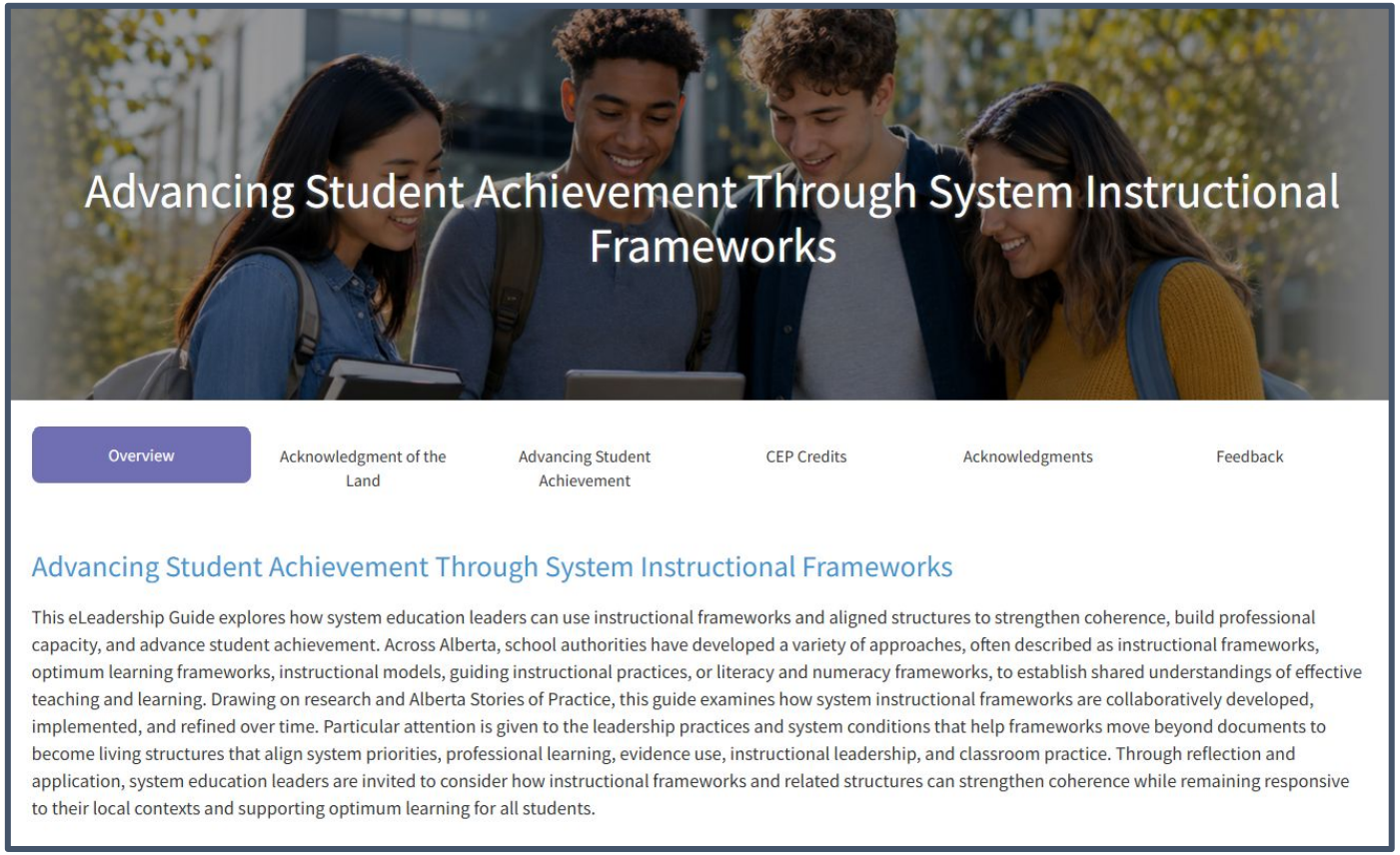


Table Dialogue & Self-Reflection

ADVANCING STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT
through System Instructional Frameworks

Compare the stories of practice, adapt ideas to your context, and identify one practical leadership action.

CASS Continuing Education Program

A. From reflection to dialogue

1. What pattern connects the research and stories of practice? How can frameworks become living structures that influence classroom practice?

2. What would require adaptation locally? Consider capacity, relationships, and differing literacy and numeracy needs.

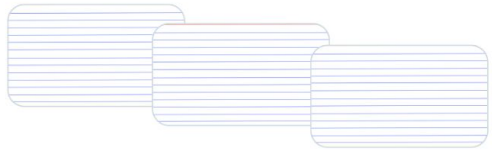
B. Identify a next step

1. Identify a next step you would like to take to strengthen instructional coherence in your school authority, whether or not a system instructional framework is in place.

2. Who needs to be involved, and what support do we need?

C. Curiosities to continue the dialogue

Write one question or curiosity, on the index card provided, about implementation, evidence, or refinement related to system instructional frameworks. Index cards will be collected, collated, and considered for reflection stories in upcoming editions of *CASS Connects*.



D. Additional Resources

Explore additional resources on the CASS website at cass.ab.ca. From the main menu, select Resources, then choose the relevant subsection.

- **Research for System Education Leaders**: *Advancing Student Achievement in Literacy and Numeracy: Perspectives of Alberta's System Education Leaders Study*
- **Research for System Education Leaders**: *Advancing Student Achievement in Literacy and Numeracy: Perspectives of Alberta's System Education Leaders Executive Summary*
- **eLeadership Guide**: *Advancing Student Achievement Through System Instructional Frameworks*



Please return to the large group



Please share learnings, questions,or curiosities that have arisen from your discussion.

Thank you!

Continuing Education Program

CASS College of Alberta School Superintendents