THE CONDITIONS NECESSARY FOR A SCHOOL LEADER TO SUCCESSFULLY IMPLEMENT AN INITIATIVE

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Dedication

For my mom and dad.

Seija and Howard Kromm

Abstract

This paper will examine the importance of collaboration in implementing school initiatives. One important consideration in successful collaboration is the existing culture of the school and, accordingly, each initiative in action may vary from school to school depending on the community and the needs of all stakeholders. When all stakeholders, teachers, students, parents and community are included in the decision-making process, they will react positively to the introduction of initiatives such as the Alberta High School Redesign. The Alberta High School Redesign initiative is designed around nine dimensions including mastery learning, rigorous and relevant curriculum, personalization, flexible learning environments, educator roles and professional development, meaningful relationships, home and community involvement, assessment and, welcoming, caring respectful and safe. When formal leaders have a clear vision and can explain the positive correlation of the Redesign with improved student engagement, achievement, and relationships within the school community, stakeholders will support it full heartedly. When formal leaders demonstrate trust in their teachers it is truly amazing to witness the creative and innovative ideas that emerge to improve teaching and learning in the school.

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Importance of Initiative Implementation

The most important resource that a nation has is its citizens. Therefore, "the goal of the education system [is] to enhance the competitiveness of [the] nation [through] the self-fulfillment of [its] citizens" (Egan, 1997, p. 9). Other then the family, the educational system has the most influence on the development of its citizens. "Teachers, all 100% of them, are your nation builders" (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012, p. 174). In order for nations to be successful on a global level they require a strong education system. Canada has one of the "strongest advanced economies in the world" (Economy Watch, 2010) and its educational system is the highest ranked "English–speaking and French-speaking nation in the world" (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2012, p. 93). The province of Alberta has "an excellent education system today where people come from all over the world to take a look at what we're doing" (Alberta Education, 2010, p. 4). In order for Canada and Alberta to maintain these high levels of success at a global level, the educational system needs to continue to provide learning opportunities that are engaging and relevant. "Our most valuable export as a country will be creativity and innovation and these skills are not developed in the cells-and-bells model of school" (Nair, Fielding, & Lackney, 2013, p. 27).

The importance of education for everyone is undeniable because through education people gain knowledge and a deeper understanding of the world around them. The information and life long learning skills that students develop as they progress through the educational system enable them to become healthy contributing members in a globalizing world. Kautilya, an Indian philosopher stated some 2000 years ago, "education is an investment in human capital, and it can have a great impact on a nation's growth and development" (Oak, 2013). Education systems that do not continually strive to advance and improve usually experience detrimental

effects to the standard of living and quality of life for the citizens of that nation. The quality of education provided in schools should be continually analyzed to ensure that the learning environments are preparing citizens for success in the future. Albertans have high expectations of the different school divisions across the province and, therefore, expect that educational leaders are constantly striving to improve learning and teaching in every classroom. One way that this improvement plays out is through the introduction of initiatives.

School improvement initiatives can originate at the individual school, district or provincial level. The end goal of an educational initiative is to improve the learning environments and support systems that students have so they can "contribute to an enriched society and a sustainable economy" (Government Of Alberta, 2011, p. 7). The students graduating from Alberta schools require the skills and knowledge to be successful in the future. "Creativity, innovation, intellectual agility, teamwork, problem solving, flexibility, and adaptability to change are essential to the new economy" (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009). In Alberta, the vision for all students is "to achieve success and fulfillment as engaged thinkers and ethical citizens with an entrepreneurial spirit" (Government Of Alberta, 2011, p. 6). Schools that embrace creative and innovative ways of teaching and learning will make Alberta's vision a reality. The Alberta High School Redesign Initiative (AHSRI) has shifted the perception of the work of schools from being school and teacher centered to being student and outcome centered focusing on finding ways to ensure that each student meets with success in high school (Alberta Education, 2013b).

"Alberta has earned an international reputation for excellence in education. The contributions of principals in fostering commitment, collaboration and cooperation among community members are key factors in this achievement" (Alberta Education, 2011, p. 1). One

of the responsibilities of formal school leadership is to create a culture that understands that change is an important part of providing optimal learning environments for all students. "We live in what has been described as a post modern, pluralistic world. This means that things are not as they used to be and are not likely to be that way again" (Novak, 2009, p. 61). Schools are therefore responsible to create learning environments that address the changes that students will need to face in the future.

Schools should be a place where all students and staff want to be, where they are validated and feel safe. This environment should provide learning opportunities for both students and teachers. In order to achieve this type of environment, growth is often required and to do so, all stakeholders need to understand 'why' it is necessary. When stakeholders understand the rationale, a natural 'buy-in' usually follows. Further, when a clear understanding that the initiative will be beneficial and will be in the best interest of students, their commitment will increase.

Successful Initiative Implementation

Educational systems are responsible for providing learning environments for students that are authentic, relevant, and engaging. Schools therefore have a "fundamental purpose ... to ensure all students learn at high levels, the future success of students will depend to a great extent on how effective educators are in achieving that fundamental purpose" (Dufour & Fullan, 2013, p. 14). In order to ensure students are receiving high quality educational experiences, successful initiative implementation is essential. The AHSRI was developed to provide creative and innovative ideas to enhance the teaching and learning found in Alberta schools.

Why High School Redesign?

The world today is very different than it was one hundred years ago. However, the education system has remained virtually the same. Wiggins and McTighe (2007) point out that:

Conventional schooling is fixated on coverage of discrete content; teachers work in isolation from other teachers; teachers work with textbooks relating only to their particular content, not the institution's goals; no mechanism exists to ensure that assessments and grades reflect coherent practice related to mission. (p. 21)

The majority of schools in Alberta are still teaching using industrial models based on the Carnegie Unit that was established in 1906. This was a time-based measure of educational attainment developed to quantify the amount of time a student spent studying a subject. In Alberta high schools, the Carnegie Unit is based on 25 hours of face-to-face instruction per high school course credit a student earns. Schooling basically consisted "of sitting at a desk among thirty or so others, being talked at, mostly boringly, and doing exercises, tests, and worksheets, mostly boring, for years and years" (Egan, 1997, p. 9).

Using the factory or industrial model, education became standardized and, instead of personalizing education, schools

... tend[ed] to depersonalize teaching and compartmentalize learning. Students [were] expected to learn on a predetermined time schedule and in a predetermined way. Those who [couldn't] or [didn't] learn in this way aquire[d] an inferior label, or they [were] sent to the scrap heap or pulled out for recycling and repair. (Schlechty, 2009, pp. 77-78)

This traditional structure only counted the hours that students spent with their teachers, not the quality of education. "Public schools too often encourage[d] teachers and school leaders to value passive compliance over active involvement and to value the amount of time spent on tasks over

the quality of the energy invested in the task" (Schlechty, 2009, p. 21). It is proposed that removing the Carnegie Unit will free up schools from its binding limits and open up more creative possibilities for timetabling, course delivery, and instructional methods. "Successful reform depends on each educator and staff person breaking a long-standing array of habits and attitudes that for centuries have held schooling back from entering a new era" (Wiggins & McTighe, 2007, p. 4). Considering Alberta has used an industrial educational model for over a century, it is imperative that schools and schooling is refurbished to create "joyful places of promise and hope [instead of] mechanized factories bent on producing only a small fraction of what a well-educated person needs and what the community wants" (Deal & Peterson, 2009, p. 4). School leaders must "demonstrate responsibility for all students and act in their best interests" (Alberta Education, 2011, p. 4) because children deserve and parents usually expect the best that each school can provide.

Influence of Technology

Technology has transformed the way in which people live, work, play and learn. "The child born this year will have more interactions with differing cultures, languages and religions than ever before" (Alberta Education, 2010, p. 4). It is possible to communicate across continents and oceans within seconds. "We are currently experiencing profound change in the manner in which we communicate with each other and disseminate information, which in turn has greatly altered the expectations of learners" (Nair et al., 2013, p. 15). In order to provide an education that allows children to develop the skills and attributes required to be successful in the future, education systems need to become "more learner-centred and competency based" (Alberta Education, 2010, p. 7). The amount of information at one's fingertips is incredibly vast. "If students are to be prepared adequately for their future, they need to learn to pull information

from their environment" (Schlechty, 2009, p. 177). Therefore, it is important that teachers learn instructional strategies to teach their students how to access and sort through this information. "Schooling must help every citizen develop the skills, attitudes, and habits of mind necessary to make discerning judgments in a world awash with competing claims, all backed by reams of facts and data and each championed by some group or interest" (Schlechty, 2009, p. 120).

Teaching requires educators to look past the pages of a textbook which "typically tells students what is important rather than helping them see the complexities and connections" (Wiggins & McTighe, 2007, p. 30). With the availability of knowledge, the cross-curricular competency of critical thinking becomes that much more important (Government Of Alberta, 2013). Education is beyond the task of providing rote knowledge, it is required to personalize and make learning relevant and engaging to stimulate students' creativity and innovative ideas. "It is creativity, a playful mind, and the ability to think and reason in disciplined ways that are the attributes most needed in the modern world" (Schlechty, 2009, p. 80).

Alberta has an exceptional academic education system and is "widely acknowledged as among the best in the world" (Alberta Education, 2010, p. 4). However, thousands of Albertans have expressed a need to change the long-term vision of the educational system for their children (Alberta Education, 2010). Albertans want a curriculum that is richer and more relevant to students ensuring that the next generation "will have the skills necessary to both continue the Alberta legacy and strengthen it" (Alberta Education, 2010, p. 4). The AHSRI was intended as a guide for administrators "to develop and implement high school redesigns that suit their schools' unique contexts" (Alberta Education, 2009, p. 5).

Stress and Anxiety

Based on the rapid changes in technology and the uncertainty of the types of jobs that may exist in the future, stakeholders' expectations of education have increased. Many students in Alberta feel excessive pressure to constantly strive for co-curricular excellence and high academic performance to improve their opportunities to extend education to post secondary institutions. This expectation has resulted in students experiencing elevated levels of stress and anxiety (Flett, Coultier, Hewitt, & Nepon, 2011, p. 161). High levels of stress and anxiety often result in students turning to self-defeating and self-destructive behaviours. Stress and anxiety in high school students is very prevalent and can lead to "uncontrollable worry" (Flett et al., 2011, p. 162). Students often place pressures upon themselves and don't have the ability to cope.

Depression in adolescents comes from the feeling that they are unable to live up to the expectations of others (Trudgen & Lawn, 2011). This anxiety causes a greater sense of isolation, loneliness and, suffering (Roxborough et al., 2012). Studies show that "when people tried to present themselves as perfect, they felt depressed" (Mushquash & Sherry, 2012, p. 8). The desire to be seen as perfect in the eyes of others or in the eyes of oneself can lead to self-defeating behaviours when perfection is not achieved such as binge eating, avoidance of tasks, creating conflict with others and in extreme cases, suicide (Mushquash & Sherry, 2012). "Over the past 50 years suicide rates have more than tripled in youth between the ages of 15 – 19" (Roxborough et al., 2012, p. 217). School systems need to address these high levels of distress in their students and determine ways to improve the well being of the youth that come under their care. It is

imperative that the psychological well being of students be addressed and changes made to current school practice to alleviate high levels of stress and anxiety.[1]

Many students don't feel they have anyone to talk to and have not developed authentic relationships with their teachers. Not all students have extreme anxiety levels, however, all students will benefit from school change that work toward fostering supportive learning environments. School C can be used as a powerful example of providing a supportive, inclusive, innovative, and engaging educational environment for all students. School C is a high school of approximately 800 students in grades nine to twelve and in its second year of the AHSRI. The student population consists of students from farms, ranches, acreages, and the town itself. It is fifteen minutes west of a city with over one million people. The administrative team at School C wanted to make changes to support and improve the development of genuine interpersonal relationships within the building. Teachers have an important role to play to develop "the student-teacher relationship and … understand students' individual and differentiated learning [needs]" (Trudgen & Lawn, 2011, p. 128). Stakeholders in School C acknowledged that there was a need to change the system to one that better prepared to meet the needs of students in a dynamic society (Alberta Education, 2009). The process of redesigning School C to increase support and engage students through innovation and creativity should improve achievement and alleviate the stress they feel.

Change to What?

In 2008, the Education Minister in Alberta, put together a Working Committee to develop an initiative that would create a vision for education to 2030 (Alberta Education, 2010, p. 5). This vision is entitled *Inspiring Education* and is the bases of High School Redesign (HSR) in

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[1] From "Stress and Anxiety in High School Students" (2013). By Anne Kromm for Danny Balderson at the University of Lethbridge. EDUC 5400.

Alberta. In order to provide "the kind of education that students will need in the 21st century" (Government Of Alberta, 2011, p. 1) education must transform. "Without transformation, the education that schools provide most students will become increasingly formulaic, uninspired, and superficial" (Schlechty, 2009, p. 17). The Alberta government has established a *Framework for Student Learning* that "outlines the relationships among literacy, numeracy, competencies and subject/discipline areas [as] essential for students to become engaged thinkers and ethical citizens with an entrepreneurial spirit" (Government Of Alberta, 2011, p. 2).

The AHSRI provides nine dimensions that if successfully implemented will address the main concern of many businesses, "that too many high school graduates lack creativity, imagination, the ability to work effectively in groups, the ability to organize and lead others, the ability to think critically, and so on" (Schlechty, 2009, pp. 179-180). The nine dimensions are mastery learning, rigorous and relevant curriculum, personalization, flexible learning environments, educator roles and professional development, meaningful relationships, home and community involvement, assessment, and welcoming, caring respectful and safe. When schools focus on the implementation of these nine dimensions, education will achieve the vision and mission outlined in the *Framework for Student Learning*. The AHSRI is about developing each student to his or her full capacity. "The educator's attention should be focused on the individual development of each child and on the provision of experiences that can optimally further this development" (Egan, 1997, p. 17).

In order for schools to successfully transform and implement this initiative, it will require the collaboration and involvement of all stakeholders. To increase commitment, administration at School C realized that as many stakeholders as possible needed to participate in the decision making process. "If you were not involved in the process, you're not likely to have a high level of

commitment" (Jensen, 2011, p. 96). To achieve commitment from stakeholders, they would need to trust that the redesign would in fact provide a safe and caring environment that would improve educational opportunities for all students. It is critical that all stakeholders' work together to develop relationships built on trust. When these relationships are built the school will be more cohesive. "Building a cohesive school community means shaping a culture that reaches out and touches everyone: students, teachers, staff, administrators, parents, and community" (Deal & Peterson, 2009, p. 184). When school culture is built on respect and trust, the school and community "can become a powerful force for the good of all children" (Deal & Peterson, 2009, p. 195). Trust from all stakeholders improves when those leading the change show that they have a deep understanding of why change should occur. Formal leaders of any school embarking on transforming their school require a solid understanding of the initiative they want to implement.

The initial research in School C started with the idea of moving from the traditional timetable to one where students could design their own self-directed learning and personalize their education to meet their individual needs. School C had a desire to change how education was delivered to their students, they analyzed the tradition of how schools operated in order to break down what was and was not working. School C wanted to provide an educational environment where teachers facilitate "activities that encourage students to explore the world around them and, … [to] propose knowledge relevant to students' present and likely future experience" (Egan, 1997, p. 23). Once the initial research was completed and there was an understanding of why School C was moving forward with HSR the tone needed to be set for all stakeholders. This would be accomplished through both internship one and internship two. These two internships would involve all stakeholders to successfully implement this transformational initiative.

Internship Experience

When School C began to investigate the idea of implementing the AHSRI one of the first tasks was to determine how to set the tone for successful implementation. Through careful planning, collaboration of all stakeholders, literature review, and supportive professional learning opportunities, the tone would be set for success. Internship one and two were designed to collect and analyze data from stakeholders to determine what was working and what could be improved in regards to the initial implementation of the AHSRDI. This data would be used to make informed decisions and to establish an understanding of the conditions necessary for a school leader to successfully implement a new initiative.

Setting the Tone for Successful Implementation

The AHSRI is both straightforward and extensive. The nine guiding principles can work independently but more often they tend to overlap depending on how schools implement each dimension. Collectively, the nine dimensions might seem overwhelming; however when one is implemented, several other principles are accomplished at the same time. One of the best ways to understand how these principles work is to see them in action in existing contexts. Prior to implementation, School C travelled to schools that had already started their HSR journey to hear their stories and learn from their experiences. Similarly, after School C implemented the AHSRI, many schools from across the province began to visit to hear our stories and to ask questions. Margaret Wheatley (2007) explained the importance of having a story and telling it wherever you are and to whomever you meet (p. 31). By telling and sharing our stories of HSR other schools will benefit in their own transformation of education. "Good stories teach us. They convey not only how something should be done, but more importantly, why it should be done. They communicate priorities and clarify what is significant, valued, and appreciated" (Dufour,

2007, p. 253). Here is the story of School C's journey and the role of formal leaders in the successful implementation of the AHSRI.

School C has a long-standing tradition of academic excellence and achievement. Students earn Rutherford Scholarships at extraordinarily high levels and high school completion rates are well above provincial average (See figures 1 and 2).

Figure 1. Rutherford Scholarship Recipients From School C's School Annual Results Report

RUTHERFORD SCHOLARSHIP

Each year, the Rutherford Scholarship is awarded to high school students, who attain 80 percent or better in five core subjects. The table below reports the percentage of students earning the scholarship over a five-year period.

RUTHERFORD SCHOLARSHIP:	2008/09		2009/10		2010/11		2011/12		2012/13		2014/15
	School Results (%)	Prov. Results (%)	School Results (%)	Prov. Results (%)	School Results (%)	Prov. Results (%)	School Results (%)	Prov. Results (%)	School Results (%)	Prov. Results (%)	Target
Recipients	70.4	56.9	70.3	59.6	78.5	61.5	88.8	61.3	81.3	60.9	85

Figure 2. High School Completion Rate From School C's School Annual Results Report

HIGH SCHOOL COMPLETION
The chart below illustrates the number of students graduating from high school within three, four and five years of entering grade 10.

HIGH SCHOOL COMPLETION RATE:	2008/09		2009/10		2010/11		2011/12		2012/13		2014/15
	School Results (%)	Prov. Results (%)	School Results (%)	Prov. Results (%)	School Results (%)	Prov. Results (%)	School Results (%)	Prov. Results (%)	School Results (%)	Prov. Results (%)	Target
Three Years	82.7	71.5	88.8	72.6	85.9	74.1	87.9	74.8	86.4	74.9	90.0
Four Years	90.9	76.1	85.4	76.9	89.2	78.1	87.6	79.4	90.0	79.6	95.0
Five Years	92.2	79.0	91.7	79.0	87.7	79.6	89.6	80.8	87.7	81.7	90.0

Considering the continuous success that students at School C were demonstrating year after year, convincing stakeholders that a transformation was still needed looked to be a hard task. School C had already started to implement a few modifications to instructional design and stakeholders had recognized the value in these changes. The school had moved to becoming a one to one mobile computing school where each student brought their own device with them to class.

Teachers had started to create web-based courses where students could access materials anytime, anyplace, and anywhere. These two initiatives had already helped create personalized and flexible learning environments. Most teachers in School C embraced these ideas and creatively determined different ways to engage students using technology. Teachers began to extend learning beyond the classroom walls using flipped classes, interactive programs, community involvement, and accessing specialists in particular disciplines. Realizing the opportunities available for education, teachers became very creative and innovative with their day-to-day lessons. Educators must "deliberately learn how to get better so [they] can teach the students of today for the world of tomorrow" (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012, p. 46). The educational practitioners in School C realized that there were "newer interventions that will work better than our old standby [system]" (Mertler, 2012, p. 5).

Educators in School C wanted a school "to cause learning that [was] intellectually vital, generative of future self-directed learning, personally meaningful and productive, and socially valuable" (Wiggins & McTighe, 2007, p. 12). School C was moving forward to create a 21st Century learning environment focused on providing an education "to help the learner achieve over the long haul, in and beyond school" (Wiggins & McTighe, 2007, p. 12). The teachers seemed to be ready, but in order to determine if the entire school community was willing to start the journey of HSR, administration put together a Student Centric Learning Team (SCLT) to investigate the possibilities of transformation at School C. Collaboration was at the core of this team, which was made up of administrators, teachers, parents, students, community, and a trustee. Davies and Davies (2009) point out that, "it is important that all in the school community – staff, parents, children and local community – are involved" (p. 31). The administrative team at School C felt that if stakeholders transparently worked together to improve the learning

environment, the chances of educational transformation would increase. As the student centric team learned and worked together they developed and solidified positive relationships with each other based on the common goal of improving student achievement. Professional relationships built on "trust and expertise work hand in hand to produce better results" (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012, p. 91).

To increase the level of expertise in regards to HSR, the team was provided with resources to study and literature to review. Road trips were taken to other Alberta High Schools that had already started their own HSR journeys. After each trip the team debriefed what they had seen and focused on what they liked and how it could be implemented into School C. It is important to create these opportunities to talk because "the initial stages of school transformation require a great deal of discussion and conversation" (Schlechty, 2009, p. 275). Each school was so different and it was evident that in order to successfully implement this new initiative, School C had to create a plan that enriched and supported it's rich culture of curricular, co-curricular, and extra curricular activities.

When all the trips had been taken and the literature and sources had been analyzed, the SCLT was divided into three working groups to design a mission statement with "a clear and explicit goal, to be committed to achieving specific effects in learners" (Wiggins & McTighe, 2007, p. 9). These three working groups focused their discussions on specific questions that were provided on a universal learning environment understanding by design planning document (See Appendix A). It was interesting to see that all three groups came up with similar mission statements:

1. We want to redesign School C's community to create a more flexible, personalized and collaborative learning environment for all.

2. We want to create a flexible learning environment so that we can create an engaging and personalized atmosphere where creativity can blossom for all.

3. We want to create an empowered, flexible, and relevant learning environment that is personalized for all learners now and in the future.

After months of preparation and analysis, the School C community was eager to start implementing the initiative of improving the education that was being provided within the building. The majority of stakeholders of School C saw this initiative as a no brainer and wanted to start as soon as possible. The administrative team knew that "inspiring people and drawing them into change must precede the action of bringing change about" (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012, p. 58). By including community members and parents in the process of participating in School C's redesign, there were minimal conflicts between internal and external stakeholders. The stakeholders realized that if successful they would decrease stress and anxiety in students, improve academic achievement and success, and improve relationships within the building.

High School Redesign Initiative

After extensive study and research on the theory and practicality of the idea of flexible learning environments a collaborative decision was unanimously made by all stakeholders to implement a new timetable for the following school year that included a flex block for students at School C. Based on the concept of redesigning how education is delivered in Alberta and the benefits that students might experience as a result of this initiative, School C developed an educational leadership internship project to analyze the roles and responsibilities that teachers have on initiating a successful change in a schools learning culture. Successful change occurs when "school leaders [take] responsibility for ensuring quality student learning, teacher practice efficacy and an effective learning culture" (Alberta Education, 2011, p. 2).

Students in School C were provided with a flex block where they were able to access subject teachers for additional instruction one to one or in small groups, work independently or collaboratively in any subject area of their choice. As a result of teacher guidance students gained skills in goal setting and time management as well as learning to be responsible and accountable for their flex block time during the day (See Appendix F and G). In order for students to understand what was expected of them teachers played a critical part in instructing and creating routines for their students to follow and adhere to during the flex block. "Successful and sustainable improvement can therefore never be done to or even for teachers. It can only ever be achieved by and with them" (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012, p. 45).

Knowing the critical role that teachers play in the successful implementation of the AHSRI, School C's administrators focused on teachers in order to ensure they were "prepared properly and rigorously at the beginning" (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012, p. 149). The roles and responsibilities of the teacher needed to be clearly laid out and each teacher needed to have the knowledge and skills to successfully proceed and move forward.[2] "The success of school improvement initiatives depends so much on the strength of commitment of classroom teachers who are their most numerous and most influential participants" (Townsend & Adams, 2009, p. 135).

Internship One

The first internship supported teachers in setting up the infrastructure and creating an appropriate tone for the flex period. It was determined that a professional learning day prior to the start of school would be dedicated to developing a common understanding of the role of a flex teacher. The purpose of this professional learning day was to allow teachers the opportunity

[2] From "Educational Leadership Internship One" (2013). By Anne Kromm for Carmen Mombourquette at the University of Lethbridge. EDUC 5635.

to see their roles as critical to the success of this redesign and to help them realize they "are among the most powerful sources of influence on learning" (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012, p. 52).

In order for all students to have the same flex block experiences and opportunities, how each teacher established and set up structures for student accountability was critical. These types of "rituals and procedures must be in place to ensure that the learning doesn't go awry ... and, perhaps more important creates the kind of order necessary for student freedom to exist" (Knight, 2013, pp. 288-289). The internship project monitored how teachers implemented agreed upon procedures in their flex blocks and how well they introduced the key accountability components. By building the capacity in teachers to fully understand their role, students would learn to manage and make productive use of the time given to them during this flex block.

In internship one, the administrative team in School C collected data from teachers to determine the effectiveness of developing a new timetable, which included a flex block. All teachers were given a qualitative questionnaire survey to complete that collected their reflections on School C's student centric learning environment (See Appendix B). The data was used to make some important changes that improved the overall effectiveness of the flex block. Information gained from the teachers' perspectives of the transformational process led to improvements to the school environment helping to further engage and support student learning. Teachers in School C were involved in the collective problem solving to improve the instructional innovation of adding the flex block. Using a distributed leadership model the administrative team was able to "draw change from the everyday knowledge and capacities of staff rather than driving reforms through them" (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009, p. 96). Internship one demonstrated the importance of gathering feedback from all stakeholders to evaluate and shape future decisions for educational structure and practice. Based on the feedback,

administration made changes to create a learning environment for all students to achieve and find success. Robinson (2013) states that when administrators make ongoing changes to improve the educational environment they are considered "good educational leaders ... who make a difference to the learning and well-being of their students" (p. 1).

Internship Two

In the second internship, two other important stakeholders, parents and students, were asked to complete surveys to provide feedback on their experiences in semester one. The data was analyzed and used to make further revisions in the second year of redesign (See Appendix C and D). The education system in Alberta supports a shared responsibility model and is accountable to the stakeholders. Using input from everyone has "the potential to engage all stakeholders in the achievement of educational objectives" (Bush, 2011, p. 86).

By the end of the first year of HSR, the data that was collected and analyzed was implemented and adopted as practice into the school's learning culture. The desired outcome of both internships was to create an environment in School C focused on teaching and learning which instils "the Three E's" (Government Of Alberta, 2011, p. 6) of education into the students entrusted in our care. These three E's are engaged thinker, ethical citizen and one that has an entrepreneurial spirit (See Appendix E). School C was able to provide opportunities for all stakeholders to have input into the decisions related to making sure that students are at the center of learning and supported as individuals to become life-long learners.

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Research Findings

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Once the data was collected it was then analyzed to identify themes and commonalities. The data collected from internship one and two allowed the administrative team to make informed decisions to improve the teaching and learning environment for students. The voices of

all stakeholders were heard which allowed for collaborative decision-making. This team

approach created an inclusive environment and a successful initiative implementation. The

following two sections will explain and illustrate the analysis of data collected from teachers,

students, and parents.

Data Collection and Analysis From Teachers

After three months of implementing the flex block into the timetable, School C teachers

began to understand to varying degrees that "innovative and educationally sound high school

redesign [would] benefit students learning and success in high school" (Alberta Education, 2009,

p. 6). Administrators learned firsthand along with teachers and students as to what was being

experienced. This helped in the analysis of the data, as all professionals in the building had a

solid understanding of how students used their flex block. Once analyzed, the data was used to

inform professional practice of School C as they undertook the transformation of the school

culture. Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) strongly support the collection of data because they feel

"it's good to have data to help you make better, more-informed decisions and to allow you to

intervene before it's too late" (p. 172). In a school setting it is important to develop opportunities

for all stakeholders to provide feedback on any new idea or change that is initiated. Using input

from everyone has "the potential to engage all stakeholders in the achievement of educational

objectives" (Bush, 2011, p. 86).

The internship was successful due to the high teacher support and active participation.

Teachers in School C felt comfortable providing transparent feedback on what was running

smoothly and what was not. Teachers are professionals who adhere to a code of conduct of high

ethical standards. The moral principles of teachers should make them trustworthy participants

who provided accurate and dependable responses to the survey questions. By listening and using

their ideas, administration sent a powerful message to their teachers that their voices were valued and that their knowledge and skills were an important piece to the successful implementation of flexible learning environments. Jensen (2011) emphasizes the importance of listening to others because it is "the act of being present to another human being with the intent of truly understanding what they are saying [which] is an incredibly powerful act" (p. 37). When individuals feel that they have been listened to, they will more likely buy into the initiative because they feel they are making significant contributions.

The feedback that was received from the survey was very positive. The participants were happy that they were able to give their feedback and not be restricted to pre-established answers. Teachers felt that they were able to personally expand on specific areas that affected them and stated that they were able to reflect on their own practice during flex block and how they were using it while guiding their students in its use. The evidence clearly showed that the majority of teachers were supportive of the flex block initiative. They expressed relief seeing that the data spoke loudly supporting School C's redesign and the few outspoken naysayers who expressed their pessimism in staff meetings were a very small minority. This realization gave voice and empowered those teachers who were quieter, to move forward in their teaching practices to do what is in the best interest of their students. Teachers felt that the survey was timely and addressed significant staff concerns that lead to self-reflection. Teachers appreciated the opportunity to share their thoughts honestly and to be included in the decision making process. It gave teachers a communication tool to express what was working, as well as to discuss some of the problems and concerns that they saw that should be adjusted. When the data was shared it allowed teachers a chance to see what issues other staff were having and to work together as an educational team to develop strategies to address these issues within the flex block timetable.

Teachers saw School C's high school re-design process as the penultimate experience of program design.

Teachers were very interested in seeing the analysis of the data. They appreciated having input and felt that their voices had been heard. Using a collaborative decision making process helped to empower teachers and to encourage them to become active participants. Davies and Davies (2009) strategic leadership model supports collaboration because "if people are working together, decisions and implementation of decisions will tend to be better as there will be a higher level of trust and morale" (p. 28). The responses to the questions that the teachers made provided excellent feedback to guide School C in the continued implementation of the AHSRI and the data collected will be an important resource to "guide future practice" (Mertler, 2012, p. 161). [3]

The success of any initiative can be based on the backing of those who are involved. Teacher involvement in the implementation of an initiative is critical because "you cannot get anywhere without widespread teacher ownership" (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012, p. 180). When schools initiate internal changes, it is imperative that teachers understand the changes and support them. When a school introduces a completely new idea the key to successful implementation are supportive teachers "who have a deep understanding of both the reasons transformation is necessary and why an easier course cannot be taken" (Schlechty, 2009, p. 4).

Data Collection and Analysis From Students and Parents

"Alberta has earned an international reputation for excellence in education. The contributions of principals in fostering commitment, collaboration and cooperation among community members are key factors in this achievement" (Alberta Education, 2011, p. 1). In the

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[3] From "Flexibility Enhancement Redesign Action Plan" (201s). By Anne Kromm for Danny Balderson at the University of Lethbridge. EDUC 5400.

second internship, two other important stakeholders, parents and students, were asked to complete surveys to provide feedback on their experiences in semester one. This data was analyzed and their input was used to make changes for the following year.

By including parents and students in answering surveys to collect feedback on School C's new student centric learning environment, administration "foster[ed] positive working relationships … within the school community" (Alberta Education, 2011, p. 4). This feedback was essential in understanding how the redesign was supporting students' learning and was used to guide decisions for the upcoming year. "The value of feedback is inarguable. It is a powerful, sobering force that can help refine good ideas, kill bad ones, and postpone premature ideas that are not yet ripe" (Belsky, 2012, p. 124). The survey results overwhelmingly expressed that students wanted to keep the flex block (See figure 3).

Figure 3. Should Flex Time Continue?
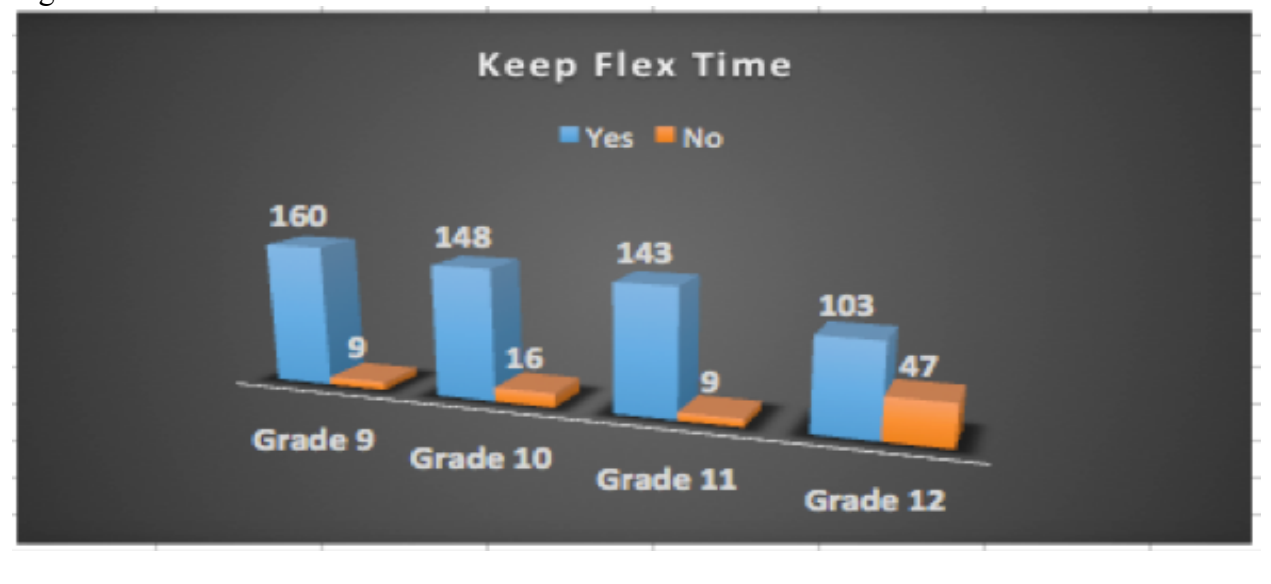
Students felt that the flex block reduced stress and anxiety by providing additional time to get schoolwork done and to access teachers when they had specific questions. It also provided students with free time afterschool for activities they enjoyed (See figure 4).

Figure 4. Reduced Student Stress and Anxiety
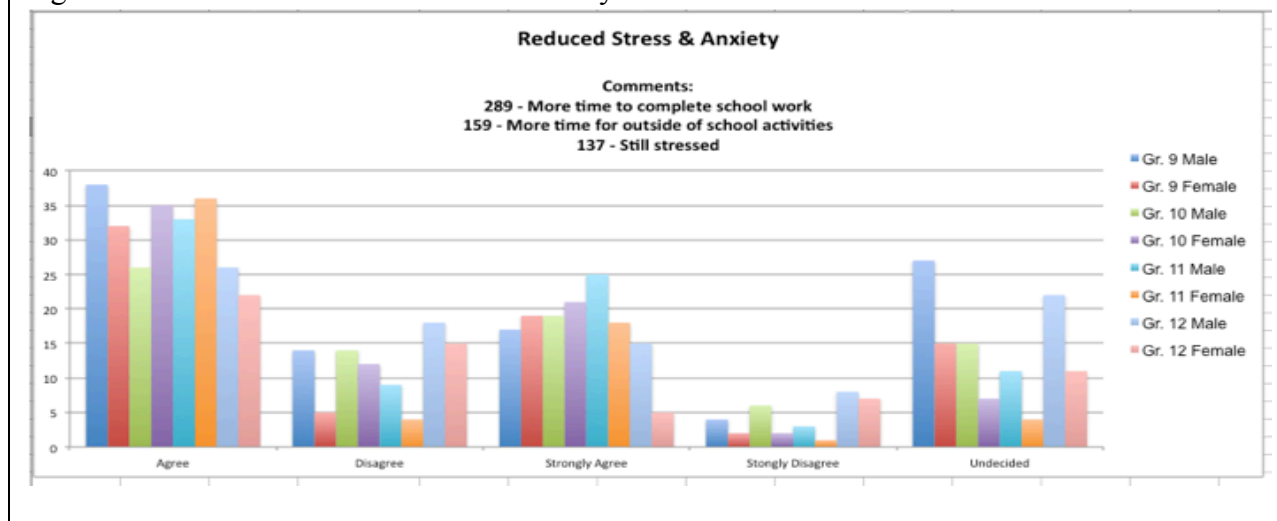
Students and parents made specific recommendations to improve how flex was being offered to further meet diverse student needs. Both students and parents agreed that having additional time during the day resulted in improved academic results (See figures 5 and 6).

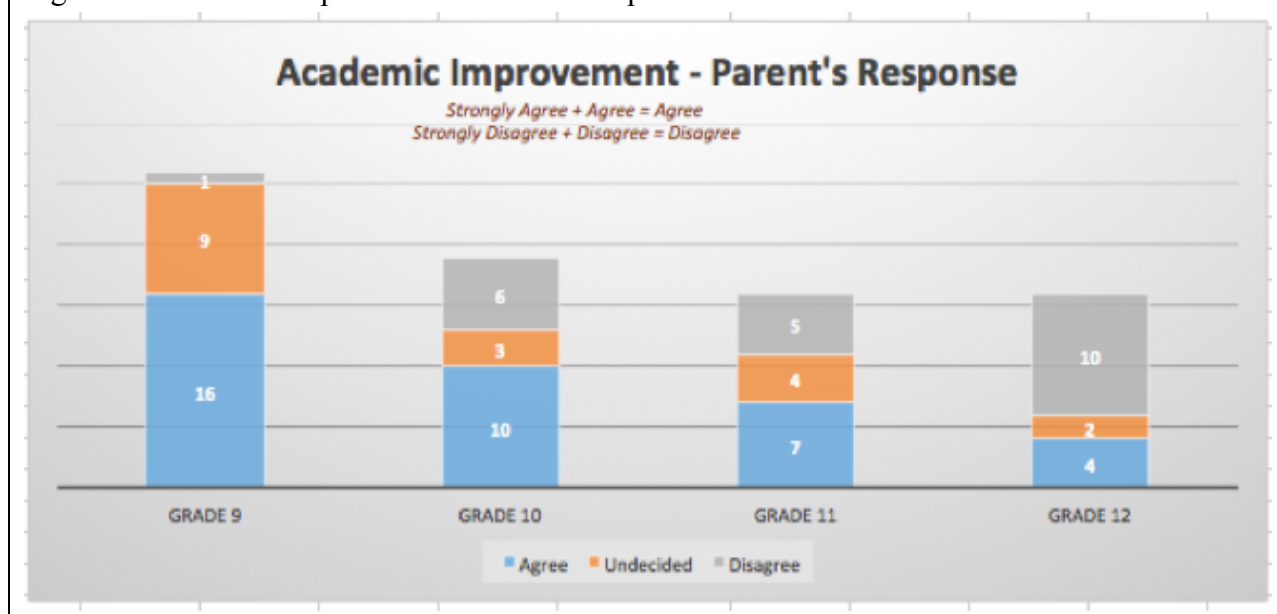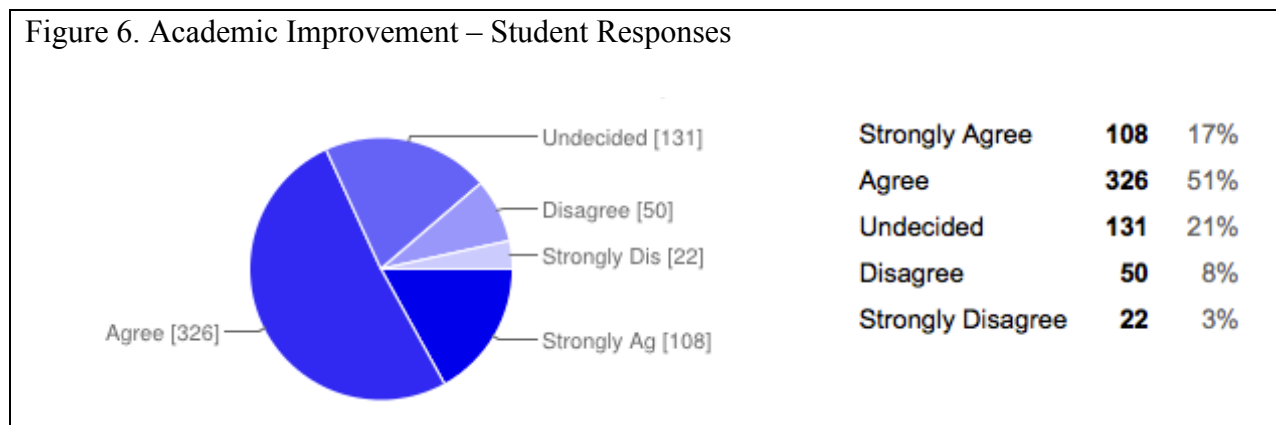Figure 5. Academic Improvement – Parent Response

Figure 6. Academic Improvement – Student Responses

Strongly Agree	108	17%
Agree	326	51%
Undecided	131	21%
Disagree	50	8%
Strongly Disagree	22	3%

Based on the feedback received the administrative team decided to make changes to the following years daily schedule. Administration and staff realized that the original framework set up did not meet the needs of the stakeholders. Managing the school operations and resources is an important responsibility of administration to "ensure a safe and caring, and effective learning environment" (Alberta Education, 2011, p. 6). Without providing teachers with a schedule and timetable they felt comfortable with would result in "conflict within the school community" (Alberta Education, 2011, p. 4). Internship two was successful and School C gained insightful information, which was used to plan the following year. [4]

Difficulties

Difficult situations and problems can arise when implementing an initiative. When this happens educational leaders are needed to help find solutions to make sure that learning environment is not negatively affected. Successful administrators are good critical thinkers and problem solvers because they "are constantly tackling tasks that are replete with tensions, competing requirements, paradoxes, and inconsistencies" (Robinson, 2011, p. 31). Through casual conversations with staff and students, administration realized that not all teachers were

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[4] From "Leadership Internship II Reflections" (2014). By Anne Kromm for Carmen Mombourquette at the University of Lethbridge. EDUC 5637.

committed to following the routines set up during the initial professional learning days. For successful initiative implementation it is important that teachers maintaining established routines over an extended period of time. Townsend and Adams (2009) state that "it is a truism of school improvement that its success depends primarily on the skill and commitment of those educators who take up the challenge on a daily basis, and sustainable improvement is rarely spectacular in the short term" (p. 9). Some teachers were found to be passive aggressive and agreed to the changes up front but when they went behind closed doors their practices stayed the same. Instead of flex time being used for the benefit of their students some teachers used the time to complete their own work. This behaviour showed how some teachers lacked collective accountability and even "after every effort and encouragement, [fell] short of their professional mission and let their peers as well as their students down" (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012, p. xvi). Fortunately, this was only the case with a few teachers, however, the frustration seen from teachers working hard to follow the agreed upon procedures was obvious.

Administrators at School C realized that those teachers not being accountable to their colleagues either needed clarification about what was expected of them during flex or they did not understand how detrimental their actions were to the successful implementation of the HSRDI. The administrative team recognized that "teachers must own a change if it is to be successful" (McLeskey & Waldron, 2000, p. 25). In order to create a clear understanding of expectations, teachers that seemed to lack a sense of ownership were spoke to individually and confidentially by the principal. Conversations were followed up with administrative visits to these teachers' classes during flex. In order for a school initiative "to be successful, change ultimately must be supported by the administration (top-down support) as well as by the teachers who must implement the change (bottom-up support)" (McLeskey & Waldron, 2000, p. 24).

School C teachers understood and realized to varying degrees that "innovative and educationally sound high school redesign [would benefit] students learning and success in high school" (Alberta Education, 2009, p. 6). This understanding did not always end up in unified compliance to what was expected. Although teachers understood the importance of change, some had difficulty shifting their current practice, and as suggested by Jensen (2011) "unless we change our beliefs, we cannot change our behaviours" (p. 58). Some teachers got frustrated at the degree of change and tried to cope by modifying the procedures. When teachers are all doing different things and have varying levels and types of expectations, students began to see the dysfunction and the newly implemented system became compromised. Educators need to realize that in any good "school, you should expect quality and consistency" (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012, p. 21).

One part of the initiative that created a lot of tension between staff was the creation of e-portfolios for their students using a web-based program called Mahara. The purpose of the e-portfolios was to guide students to understand and link the 21st Century competencies to subject specific outcomes. Once students completed a project, teachers would advise them to upload the final product to their e-portfolios as evidence of their competency levels. This would provide students with examples of their success in achieving the cross-curricular competencies. Student work would be uploaded onto their Mahara e-portfolio and at the end of the school year they would be able to demonstrate the extent to which they had developed in each of the competencies. Teachers understood the relevance of the e-portfolio and at the beginning of the year started to link program of studies outcomes to the competencies. However, administration found out at the beginning of the second year that not all teachers had linked their course outcomes to the competencies.

Everything seemed to be working well until teachers realized that they would have to guide students step-by-step in the creation of their Mahara e-portfolios. Panic spread through the staff like wild fire, supporting Fullan's (2001) observation that "in a culture of change, emotions frequently run high" (p. 74). Teachers did not know how to create the pages and felt that they just didn't have the time to spend to develop their knowledge and skills to the extent that "feelings of inadequacy … got in the way of project success" (Townsend & Adams, 2009, p. 135). So much of their time was required in supporting and monitoring their flex groups that they felt that this was just too much. The administrative team recognized this, but it was too late. Teachers felt stressed because they had been asked to instruct their students to preform a task that they themselves did not feel qualified to accomplish. The administrative team had implemented a complex project and forgot that "leaders of school improvement initiatives must take greater responsibility for ensuring that every initiative is accorded the amount of quality time that is fundamental to its successful implementation" (Townsend & Adams, 2009, p. 133). Developing "school capacity is the key to success" (Alberta Education, 2011, p. 6).

It became obvious at School C that "for better or for worse, change arouses emotions, and when emotions intensify, leadership is key" (Fullan, 2001, p. 1). Thus the leadership team realizing that the e-portfolio was too much for teachers to handle made changes to support them. The Career Counselor made videos and posted them on YouTube for students to access and follow step by step. The problem had temporarily been solved, but the feelings of frustration felt by teachers lingered for months. Even bringing the word e-portfolios up the following year had to be done carefully. Important school leadership lessons had been learned through this

experience. Teachers must feel comfortable and understand why they are doing things in order for things to run smoothly. [5]

Robinson's (2011) student-centred leadership theory pinpoints that "if [teachers] don't perceive a discrepancy, or a problem that is worth acting on, they will not be convinced of the need for change and will not commit to the hard work required to achieve it" (p. 50). The only way that true change will occur is if teachers really believe that what they are doing will improve the learning environment for their students. There are a few teachers at School C who believed the adage "if it isn't broken, don't fix it." These teachers need to understand that things don't necessarily need to be broken in order to improve them. "Few of us drive to town in a horse and buggy. There was nothing wrong with the horse and buggy - it wasn't broken – yet Henry Ford and others decided to 'fix' it" (Jensen, 2011, p. 61). School C has an outstanding reputation for high achievement and in order for this to continue it needs to be 'fixed' through the implementation of the nine dimensions of the AHRDI. Students at School C should be prepared to drive not only a horse and buggy but also the vehicle of their choice.

When a school culture is being transformed all stakeholders need to be on the same page in order for it to be successful. "If the teach[ers] in a school [are] all over the place … we should be wondering what is wrong with the school" (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012, p. 20). When teachers are individually accountable and work to improve their practice, they raise the performance of the entire teaching staff and the collective responsibility can become very powerful. "As teachers work together, they develop shared understandings of the level of effort, commitment, and professionalism that they expect of each other" (Robinson, 2011, p. 107). Teachers are professionals and have an obligation to their students to search out better ways to meet their

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[5] From "Knowledge is Power" (2014). By Anne Kromm for Carmen Mombourquette at the University of Lethbridge. EDUC 5500.

learning needs. Educators must "deliberately learn how to get better so [they] can teach the students of today for the world of tomorrow" (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012, p. 46).

Unexpected Developments and Results

An interesting development that occurred was the curiosity that other schools had in what School C was doing to successfully implement the AHSRI. In order to assist other schools that were starting their own journeys in HSR, it was important for School C to share the valuable lessons and insights gained through their own initiative implementation. Many different school teams visited School C, which included administrators, parents, students, and teachers. These school teams were provided with a presentation and time to tour and work with discipline specialists. It was beneficial to have had the data that was collected from both internships ready to share with them. The data collected turned out to be incredibly valuable and was also presented at a research conference focusing on collaborative research and how educators can use data to inform practice.

Schools are beginning to transform their educational systems to teach students the much-needed skills they require for tomorrow. By doing so "we [will] help [students] become lifelong learners who contribute to healthy, inclusive communities and thriving economies" (Alberta Education, 2010, p. 4). Educational transformation will continue to change to "foster students' capacity to think critically; be resilient, adaptable and confident in their abilities; take personal responsibility for life-long learning and collaborate to achieve a common purpose" (Alberta Education, 2011, p. 2). Administrators and teachers must not only work collaboratively within their own schools, but must work together throughout the entire province to redesign what education can look like. Supported by administration, teachers in School C were given time

during the day so they could "share their professional expertise to the benefit of others in their schools, communities and profession" (Alberta Education, 1997, p. 4).

School C is coming to an end of an era and many of the long time veteran teachers are retiring, including the current principal. When a principal leaves it is important that there is a succession plan in place to find a suitable leader who can support the school culture and maintain the changes implemented under the new initiative. Hargreaves (2009) sustainable leadership theory emphasizes the importance of "leadership succession events ... [as] they are crucial to the ongoing success of the school" (pp. 189-190). Central office understood the importance of leadership succession, so sent the associate superintendent of schools to a staff meeting to ask what characteristics were important to have in the new principal. One staff member said that she was glad that the principal had created an environment for dispute and open discussion where different opinions were listened to and heard. The entire staff agreed that this was a powerful characteristic of a leader and they wanted it to continue.

The teacher further went on to express how the trust that resulted from these discussions had increased collaboration within the school because all stakeholders' perspectives were taken into consideration. Lencioni (2002) agrees that, "teams that lack trust are incapable of engaging in unfiltered and passionate debate of ideas" (p. 188). These open discussions had brought the staff closer together and gave them the confidence to take risks in attempting to improve instructional design and assessment. Hargreaves & Fullan (2012) believe that:

> Collaborative cultures require broad agreement on values, but they also tolerate and to some extent actively encourage disagreement within these limits. Schools characterized by collaborative cultures are also places of hard work and dedication, collective responsibility, and pride in the school. (p. 113)

Under the formal leadership of two different principals in the first two years of the implementation of HSR, there have been significant steps made to improve teaching and learning in School C. These two principals have helped guide stakeholders to understand that "the transformation of educational systems is possible, but that it takes time, patience, and determination" (Sahlberg, 2010, p. 6).

Is There More To High School Redesign?

Many teachers, administrators, students, parents, and community members have travelled to School C to learn how to successfully implement School Redesign. School C has told stories of the successes and challenges that accompany implementation of a new initiative. Most schools wanted to understand how to run a flex block and see how it was done in School C. However, these schools soon realized that HSR was much more: it was about changing the mindset of how instruction and learning could take place. Here is the rest of the story of the successful beginning of the implementation of the HSR and the important role that formal leaders have. By opening the minds of teachers and allowing their creativity and innovative ideas to blossom, schools and their classrooms can become alive and full of the most amazing educational experiences. These ideas may start in the classroom but then begin to flow out into the school community and beyond.

Flexible Learning Environments

Flexible learning environments are more than just adding a flex block to the timetable. If implemented properly, student and teacher flexible learning environments should enable learners to learn when they want, how they want, and what they want supported by increased one to one teacher instruction and feedback. School C's one to one initiative has allowed all students access to technology. Technology is used to support student-centered, personalized, and authentic

learning for all students. In School C, "teachers apply a variety of technologies to meet students' learning needs" (Alberta Education, 1997, p. 4). Students are freed to learn at their own pace, anywhere at anytime. School C's decision to embed technology into every course supports the development of communication and collaborative skills, gives equitable access to content, and turns technology into a catalyst for innovation. Students have access to global information and can network with people everywhere. They can use technology to take their learning to a depth and relevance that is profoundly personalized and present it to significant audiences anywhere in the world. For example, some Biology 30 students in School C are working with university professors, community mentors, and an interdisciplinary school team to solve real world problems. These students used technology to collaborate with mentors, accessed YouTube videos from medical labs around the world, created spreadsheets and digitally documented the findings throughout the experimental process. Alberta Education (2013a) has created a new *Learning and Technology Policy Framework* that explains how technology "provides the opportunity to personalize learning and to engage students in deep, authentic learning that enables them to learn about what matters to them – at their own pace and regardless of place or time" (p. 9).

Mastery Learning

For the first time ever, a group of students participated in a genetic competition where they created synthetic DNA that can be used to solve a real world problem, in this case the mountain pine beetle epidemic. This critical thinking competition used cross-curricular concepts in scientific inquiry, during which "teachers [were] more than designers of engaging work for students; they [were] ... guides to alternative forms of instruction" (Schlechty, 2009, p. 45). Students created a DNA plasmid, incorporating it into a lab grade e-coli cell to produce an

enzyme that degrades the cell wall of the blue stain fungus carried by the mountain pine beetle.

The students that successfully created synthetic DNA were able to develop critical thinking skills

which are "essential to the acquisition of profound knowledge, as are reflection, re-creation, and

reconfiguration" (Schlechty, 2009, p. 45). The potential outcome of the creation of this synthetic

DNA is that the fungus will be eradicated, allowing the tree's own natural defenses (resin) to

control the proliferation of the mountain pine beetle. Mastery learning occurs when "the core

business of the school is designing engaging work for students – work that calls on students to

complete intellectually demanding tasks – and leading students in the successful completion of

those tasks" (Schlechty, 2009, p. 65). School C students were successful at completing the task

and placed fifth out of 53 international high schools.

Rigorous and Relevant Curriculum

The administrative team encouraged all teachers to create an inquiry or project based

learning unit either individually or in an interdisciplinary group. It was fascinating to observe the

creativity of the teachers as they took on this challenge, especially those who found unique ways

to collaborate with other disciplines in a high school environment where discreet department

work has been traditionally practiced. Teachers began to understand and identify "the linkages

among subject disciplines, and their relevance and importance in everyday life" (Alberta

Education, 1997, p. 3).

Construction and photography classes worked together to create a canvas photo framing

business. Students in construction built a canvas stretcher frame and photography students took

photos and printed them to create an appealing end project. The mechanics and construction

students started to refurbish a 1949 Ford half-ton pick up truck. The mechanics students installed

a new working engine, adapted an automatic transmission, fabricated motor mounts, replaced the

suspension, lowered the truck ten centimeters, and installed bucket seats. The construction

students replaced the pick up bed, and prepared the hood for flame decals. A local glass shop

donated the windshield, which students learned to install. Art students will do the final detail

painting. The professional learning experience of creating inquiry-based projects "has likely

influenced the way these teachers will instruct their students and interact with their colleagues

for the rest of their teaching careers" (Thibodeau, 2008, p. 55).

Personalization

Personalization is achieved when learners are "supported as individuals with learning

opportunities to support their unique needs and interests" (Alberta Education, 2010, p. 25). In

order to meet the needs of all learners, formal leaders need to understand the complexity of needs

of every student that walks into the school and understand that the needs can be overwhelming.

"An inclusive curriculum addresses the child's cognitive, emotional, and creative development. It

is based on the four pillars of education for the 21st century – learning to know, to do, to be, and

to live together" (United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2014). All

students should be taught in an environment that will provide instructional opportunities that take

into consideration their individual learning needs. "Every learner should have fair and reasonable

access to educational opportunities regardless of ability, economic circumstances, location, or

cultural background" (Alberta Education, 2010, p. 32).

Educational leaders require an understanding of the programs and support systems

available for "a student in need of a special education program" ("School Act," 1988, p. 44). An

individualized program plan (IPP) is required for all students with special education needs. "In a

democracy, a customized educational experience should be the birthright of every child"

(Schlechty, 2009, p. 76). The IPP supports "students with mild, moderate or severe … needs and

those who are gifted and talented … to achieve their full potential" (Alberta Education, 2014, p. 70).

"A well-developed inclusive program results in better instruction for all students, not just those with disabilities" (McLeskey & Waldron, 2000, p. 22). The learning specialist teacher at School C has done an exemplary job of creating a universal learning environment. The complex learners have contributed to the surrounding community through a variety of activities. They have donated money from a fundraiser to the Humane Society, visited and provided drinks at the senior's complex, and volunteered at a coffee shop and at a preschool. Within the school the complex learners support the school sustainability program through recycling the refundable drink containers on a daily basis. They also enjoy participating in real life experiences including grocery shopping for the foods program. "Profound learning is more likely to result from … students' finding meaning, personal significance, and value in the tasks they are asked to complete and their work products" (Schlechty, 2009, p. 45).

Educator Roles and Professional Development

All teachers should be provided with professional learning opportunities in all dimensions of the AHSRI. "How can we expect children to develop 21st-century skills of innovation and creativity if their teachers don't enjoy the same opportunity" (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012, p. 117)? When school leaders introduce new programming to schools, the key to successful implementation are supportive teachers "who have a deep understanding of both the reasons transformation is necessary and why an easier course cannot be taken" (Schlechty, 2009, p. 4).

Over the last two years School C teachers have participated in a handful of HSR professional learning sessions throughout the province. These sessions are designed to share

ideas and to provide time for teachers to network and discuss their pedagogical practices and determine how these new ideas could be applied to their own schools unique environment. Teachers from School C shared their own creative and innovative practices and had the opportunity to listen and ask questions to other schools involved in the AHSRDI. These ideas were brought back to the school and collaboratively shared with fellow colleagues during department and co-curricular meetings. One of the most effective ways to develop capacity is through collaboration. A collaborative school culture focuses on building capacity for continuous improvement within the educational institution (Fullan, 2007). Townsend and Adams (2009) further emphasize, that an "effective way to promote and nurture learning and growth for all members of a school community is through the creation of a collaborative and collegial workplace in which all members are engaged in learning" (p. 84).

Being in the second year of HSR, "knowledge sharing [became] a cultural value" (Fullan, 2001, p. 78). The administrative team at School C set up professional gallery walks for teachers during a professional learning day for staff to share, discuss, and ask questions about the various inquiry and interdisciplinary projects each were doing. "A school leader must nurture and sustain a school culture that values and supports … meaningful, collaborative professional learning for teachers" (Alberta Education, 2011, p. 5). Many teachers began to realize the importance of changing their practice to include more inquiry-based projects in their classes. "Team learning was transferring to others in the school, … influencing the culture … and raising the capacity of the entire organization to improve" (Thibodeau, 2008, p. 62).

"Good teachers can become better teachers if given the opportunity to meet … and talk about and reflect upon their teaching and the reasoning behind it" (Van Horn, 2006, p. 2). The quality of teachers is essential to providing students with excellent education. "There is

widespread agreement now that of all the factors inside the school that affect children's learning and achievement, the most important is the teacher" (Jensen, 2011, p. 60). As authorities in education, it is important that teachers continue their own development by engaging in professional learning. As recognized by Hargreaves and Fullan (2012):

> The trust that people have in teachers isn't blind. It's based on something solid: on highly qualified people who have undergone rigorous training that connects theory to practice and who stay many years on the job – people who are constantly perfecting their practice and always inquiring into how to do it better. (p. xii)

Administrators can aid teachers in their growth by providing and leading relevant and engaging professional learning opportunities. Instructional design, embedding information technology, and assessment were key areas of focus of the school professional development plan (See Appendix H). The leadership team at School C planned "all staff development ... around specific needs of the school and is linked to specific school improvement goals" (Sparks & Hirsh, 2000, p. 13). The administrative team supported educators to attend professional learning sessions offered by Anne Davies to help develop a school wide assessment plan. Through these collaborative sessions, "administrators involved all teachers and likely would characterize teachers as partners" (Sandholtz & Scribner, 2006, p. 1114). This plan would guide teachers through key levels of assessment. Administrators at School C recognized that all teachers were at different levels of understanding assessment. Assessment guides instructional design so as teachers improve in assessment they will also improve in instructional design. "When done well ... assessment can help build a collaborative culture ... and serve as the driving engine for transforming a school" (Dufour, 2007).

When teachers understand the "importance of contributing, independently and collegially, to the quality of the school. They [will] enhance and maintain the quality of [the] school to the benefit of students, parents, community and colleagues" (Alberta Education, 1997, p. 2). Staff teamwork and input leads to "teacher buy-in [which] is essential for implementation" (Sandholtz & Scribner, 2006, p. 1114). Professional learning at School C emphasized "evidence-based practice and teamwork, collaborative inquiry … for ensuring that the work of school teams is purposeful, focused, sustainable, and successful" (Townsend & Adams, 2009, p. 10). Teachers are professionals and constantly spend time refining their practice to meet the needs of their students. The hours that teachers put into the profession are what truly define them as experts in the field. Researchers have identified that it takes the brain ten thousand hours to assimilate all that it needs to know to achieve true mastery (Jensen, 2011, p. 63).

With support from central office, the principal introduced learning walks to provide teachers with an opportunity to observe master teachers and reflect upon their own practice. These learning walks provide a forum for the administrative team to support and "work with people with whom [they] know have a high probability of success" (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012, p. 22). School C used learning walks as a way to build a common understanding of teacher practice, collegiality and to study how instructional design influences student engagement and the transfer of knowledge. "By working together, educators share knowledge and expertise and identify both the causes and potential solutions to problems" (Sandholtz & Scribner, 2006, p. 1110). Learning walks helped administration observe and discover instructional design elements that lend themselves to student achievement and authentic learning. The intention of learning walks "is to engage the teachers and to turn ordinary schools into extraordinary learning

environments where teachers share common understandings and are constantly seeking collegial and collaborative growth" (Guilott & Parker, 2012, p. ii).

Meaningful Relationships

"In developing [students], the challenge is … about igniting in them the desire to achieve their potential, whatever their focus" (Jensen, 2011, p. 6). Student centric learning environments can provide staff with an opportunity to know all of the children in their building personally. This focus will increase the chances of teachers "taking collective responsibility for every student" (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012, p. 32). It was conveyed after speaking with teachers and students after the first year of High School Redesign at School C that a large part of improved learning environments came about as a result of building authentic relationships. "The school … work[ed] to ensure that each child has at least one adult who is significant in their lives and who cares about his or her progress as a student" (Schlechty, 2009, p. 129). When the students are genuinely cared for they have an increased desire to attend school, which results in improved achievement. "Academic matters have less potency than do matters of the heart" (Schlechty, 2009, p. 172).

Home and Community Involvement

The community that feeds into the school is a very important part of the learning environment for the students. The community should become an integral part of the collective power that supports the design of educational opportunities. "Relationships and alliances both within the [school] and outside it help negotiate effective and sustainable organizational change" (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011). Formal leaders who desire to inspire educational change require more than just positional authority to gain support for an initiative. Principals need to understand the values, beliefs and rituals that underpin the schools culture (Bush, 2011, p. 189). Without the

understanding or consideration of the culture and community of the school, the stakeholders will not support any innovation that formal leaders try to impart.

An example of creating relationships and alliances with the outside community was when grade nine students participated in an inquiry field study with two elementary schools at the recently opened Provincial Ranch. Students analyzed real world issues while being mentored by experts. These community volunteer experts included: invasive species experts, chemical engineers, biologists, archeologists, park conservation officers, hydro-geologists, plant taxonomists, edible wilds expert, Alberta Tomorrow director, hydro-geologist, rancher, and environmental advisors.

Biology 20 students also developed a relationship with the outside community by starting to create an i-book field guide for a local tourist attraction. These two projects were relevant to students at School C because they took into consideration "the importance of individuals, contexts, and community" (Van Horn, 2006, p. 2). The community members were thrilled to be apart of this educational experience and hoped that this form of community involvement would continue.

After these projects were completed, the science department implemented a gallery walk that showcased the work of their students for the entire community which "increased parental contact and awareness" (Townsend & Adams, 2009, p. 56). Parents want to be involved in their child's education and when given the opportunity to come into the school to see what is going on, they will embrace it. "The strongest motivation for parents' involvement is their own children" (Robinson, 2011, p. 139). Parents are filled with joy when they see their children being recognized for what they have learned and contributed to the school. "Schools that bring parents

into celebrations of their children's accomplishments … foster a culture of inclusion and connection" (Deal & Peterson, 2009, p. 109).

Assessment

Students learn best when they and their teachers share a clear understanding of the desired learning outcomes. "Teachers need to be aware of what each and every child is thinking and knowing, to construct meaningful experiences in light of this knowledge, and have proficient understanding of their content to provide meaningful and appropriate feedback" (Gladwell, 2008, p. 40). School C teachers are committed to honing and refining their assessment practice. Teachers are required to demonstrate and "know how to assess the range of learning objectives … [using] a variety of … assessment techniques and instruments… for the ultimate benefit of students" (Alberta Education, 1997, p. 2). They seek to create a balance between providing feedback to students while they are learning a new concept and providing feedback after the instructional phase to assess the achievement of learning outcomes. Teachers "use the results of their assessments to modify their teaching practices and students' learning activities" (Alberta Education, 2011, p. 4).

Administration and a team of teachers at School C participated in a professional learning session, which focused on quality assessment in high schools. Anne Davies worked with teachers to begin the process of re-thinking how assessment was done inside of the classrooms as well as throughout the entire school. "To be effective, assessments must clearly communicate to students and teachers how well the students are performing" (Knight, 2013, p. 68). From this professional learning the administration led the school through a variety of sessions where teachers looked at their own courses to create a more student-driven assessment process. The end goal of this

process was to create a reporting procedure that is more relevant, timely, and meaningful to both students and parents.

Welcoming, Caring, Respectful, and Safe

One of the duties of putting together the flex block student groupings was to select the students that would be assigned to each teacher. Each teacher was given a list of all of the students and told to check off any individual they felt they had a connection with. It was determined that if a teacher already had a good relationship with a student then they would be placed together. When the lists had all been handed back it was a sad eye opener to see that a significant amount of students were not checked off. It was obvious that School C needed to develop genuine interpersonal relationships. Through these relationships students would see School C as a safe and caring place to be. "When students feel cared for and respected, they are more likely to behave well and interact on more friendly terms with their peers and teachers" (Nair et al., 2013, p. 16).

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Principal Quality Practice and Leadership Dimensions

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The Alberta Professional Practice Competencies for School Leaders (PPCSL) guides the administrative team in School C to "ensure that each student has an opportunity to engage in quality learning experiences that lead to achievement of the goals of education and that address his or her learning and developmental needs" (Schlechty, 2009, p. 8). Over the past year and a half of implementing the HSRDI at School C all of the PPCSL's have been touched upon. The PPCSL focus on providing and "ensuring quality student learning, teacher practice efficacy and an effective learning culture" (Alberta Education, 2011, p. 2). Upon reflection it is evident that there has been significant leadership growth gained as a result of the successful implementation

of the HSRDI. The following examples will provide evidence of the learning that took place for myself as a formal leader in School C.

Fostering Effective Relationships

Fostering effective relationships requires administrators to build "trust and foster positive working relationships … within the school community" (Alberta Education, 2011, p. 4). A school community that has been built upon a climate of mutual respect and collaborative problem solving will result in a safe school culture that acts in their students best interest (Alberta Education, 2011, p. 4). Teachers have an important role to play in School C's transformation and, therefore it is critical for administration to develop "and foster positive working relationships" (Alberta Education, 2011, p. 2). The administrative team in School C understands that "if you want to challenge someone to do better, you'd better build a relationship first" (Fullan, 2011, p. 6). Formal leaders have meetings with teams of teachers every Friday to discuss and hear different ideas on how to maintain and improve meeting the needs of students in School C. Through these collegial meetings the "knowledge is valued and the expertise and intelligence of teachers is respected and upheld" (Deal & Peterson, 2009, p. 31). Teachers feel supported and that they have a voice in the decision making that goes on in the school. "By building connections, respect [and] trust … schools and community can become a powerful force for the good of all children" (Deal & Peterson, 2009, p. 195). School communities are more likely to support change when they feel that they have had a genuine voice in the decisions being made. When all stakeholders are included schools will "strengthen bonds, and reinforce their mutual commitment to every child" (Deal & Peterson, 2009, p. 190).

Probably the most important point learned over the last year and a half is the importance of collaboration and fostering effective relationships when making decisions. Through

collaboration, the staff at School C developed "the type of trust that [was] essential for doing the hard work of improving teaching and learning" (Robinson, 2011, p. 17). When teachers were included in the decision-making procedure and saw that their ideas were being used to tweak and improve School C's redesign, they became more actively involved and energized to be a part of the process. By creating an opportunity for all stakeholders to be involved in decision making through focus group meetings and answering surveys, the administration in School C "foster[ed] a culture of inclusion and connection" (Deal & Peterson, 2009, p. 190).

Embodying Visionary Leadership

Being accepted into the AHSRDI embodied visionary leadership by involving "the school community in creating and sustaining shared vision, mission, values, principles and goals" (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012, p. 60). For this initiative to be successful, the administrative team had to make sure "that planning, decision-making, and implementation strategies [were] based on a vision shared by the school community and an understanding of the school culture" (Alberta Education, 2011, p. 5). Through constant reflection and open communication, School C engaged in the collection "of data to determine progress towards achieving school goals" (Alberta Education, 2011, p. 5). When this data was analyzed, it showed that anxiety and stress levels were lower, there was increased student engagement resulting in an increase in academic achievement. The data concluded that School C had come closer to achieving the goal of improving the learning environment for students. Planning and having a clear vision was essential for the success of this initiative. The ability to explain the 'why' helped guide stakeholders in their understanding of the importance and relevance of the initiative. "If schools are to be transformed, those leading the transformation must have a clear image of what is going

on in the schools they are trying to change" (Schlechty, 2009, p. 69). When change makes sense and when educators know that this will benefit their students they will more likely be supportive.

Leading a Learning Community

Leading a learning community is accomplished by "nurtur[ing] and sustain[ing] a school culture that values and supports learning" (Alberta Education, 2011, p. 5). Formal "leaders influence students indirectly by creating the conditions required for the improvement of teaching and learning" (Robinson, 2013, p. 1). Professional learning days at School C were shaped around the needs of the school and individual teachers and what they needed to move forward in their development. "Capacity building is both the end and the means of school transformation" (Schlechty, 2009, p. 224).

The flexibility timetable addressed student needs, as well as created cooperative time once a week to allow teachers to work together as departments or on their interdisciplinary projects. As a school leader it is important to "nurture and sustain a school culture that values and supports learning" (Alberta Education, 2011, p. 5). The time allotted during the day "promote[d] and facilitate[d] meaningful professional development for teachers and other staff" (Alberta Education, 2011, p. 5). This professional learning time would be used to improve the student centric learning environment of the school to support "deep change in classroom practice that influences student learning" (Timperley, 2011, p. xii).

Professional Learning Communities improve teacher practice because they can share the knowledge and practice with others. Teachers will naturally "learn more and improve more if [they] are able to work, plan, and make decisions with other teachers rather than having to make everything up or bear every burden by [themselves]" (Alberta Education, 2011, p. 6). For teachers to develop and improve their practice, opportunities must be provided for them to work

with other professionals. Educators left on their own to professionally develop often find it difficult to do so because "isolation and individualism [can be] a toxic cocktail" (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012, p. 102).

Providing Instructional Leadership

Instructional leadership was provided by administration to assist teachers in the acquisition of the skills needed to use and understand the emerging technologies that support teaching and learning (Alberta Education, 2011, p. 5). Administrators who practice instructional leadership to help teachers improve their own practice will "ensure that each student has access to quality teaching and the opportunity to engage in quality learning experiences" (Alberta Education, 2011).

Instructional leadership "ensures that all students have ongoing access to quality teaching opportunities to meet the provincial goals of education" (Alberta Education, 2011, p. 5). At School C administration has introduced collegial learning walks to the school. These learning walks encourage "collaborative conversations among participants about the nature of teaching and learning, which can lead to decisions and actions that are deeply rooted in the classroom experience" (Guilott & Parker, 2012, pp. 93-94). Conversations between staff allow teachers to reflect on their own practice and think about ways that they can improve student learning and engagement. Teachers focused on their classes and evaluated their own students' level of acquisition, meaning making and transfer of knowledge. Some teachers realized that in order to take the learning to transfer for the long term they needed to provide challenging work delivered in an instructional way that is engaging (Guilott & Parker, 2012).

Developing and Facilitating Leadership

"Promot[ing] the development of leadership capacity within the school community …
benefit[s] … the school community and education system" (Alberta Education, 2011, p. 5).
School C has a leadership team that meets once a month with the goal to empower teachers "to
become involved in the decision-making process" (Bush, 2011, p. 202). This collective decision-
making values the expertise of the staff and also "mentors teachers for future educational
leadership roles (Alberta Education, 2011, p. 6). Using a leadership team increases the
commitment of these teachers because they are invested in the decisions and in the direction that
the school is moving. Through the process of collaborative decision making, "teachers and
leaders are more likely to be enthusiastic about change when they own it rather than having it
imposed on them" (Bush, 2011, p. 7). The development of leadership capacity in teachers can
create a powerful learning community within the school. Leadership models which disperse
decision making to formal and informal leaders will have "a greater influence on schools and
students [because] it is widely distributed" (Bush, 2011, p. 202).

Managing School Operations and Resources

"A well-run school is an essential prior condition for learning" (Robinson, 2013, p. 1). By
properly managing school operations and resources, administrators will "ensure a safe and
caring, and effective learning environment" (Alberta Education, 2011, p. 6). School C is an older
facility and requires renovations to support new learning models. To create flexible learning
space and a functional learning commons area, administration "advocate[d] for the community's
support of the school" (Alberta Education, 2011, p. 6). School Council was presented with a few
ideas of what was required to create collaborative workspaces for students throughout the
building. The parents eagerly put together a fundraiser with the money going towards new

furniture. School Division R supported this effort and gave additional money towards new furniture for the learning commons.

Understanding and Responding to the Larger Societal Context

The survey given to both students and parents further solidified the leadership dimension of understanding and responding to the larger societal context. By gathering evidence from both parents and students, administration "advocate[d] for the community's support of the school and the larger education system" (Alberta Education, 2011, p. 6). By creating a responsive and interactive system focused on improving student outcomes, administration created "a good reputation with present and prospective parents, … and the local community" (Bush, 2011, p. 58).

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Reflections

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At times the High School Redesign journey has been difficult and teachers were tired and frustrated with all of the changes. But the staff at School C is strong, determined, and persevered to see their school transformed to improve the learning environment for their students. Schlechty (2009) points out that, "it takes a great deal of courage and commitment for those associated with the change to ride through these rough spots." (p. 231). After a year and a half of being involved in the AHSRDI School C will continue to focus on instructional design and assessment to meet the individualized needs of each student. Teachers who are attentive to improving their pedagogy "can ... directly affect the quality of student learning, … studies show that students with better teachers learn more" (Sparks & Hirsh, 2000, pp. 3-4). The successful implementation of the AHSRDI will require continuous effort from the staff at School C. Administration will continue to support professional learning for staff as well as creating conditions that sustain the AHSRI.

Next Steps

E-Portfolios

School C will continue to build understanding among the student body of what it means to be an engaged thinker, an ethical citizen, and have an entrepreneurial spirit. Feedback, steeped in the language of 21st century competencies will offer students a clear understanding of their accomplishments and areas that they need to develop. Students will be encouraged to upload exemplars of their achievement of these competencies from a variety of areas into their e-portfolio. The descriptors of these competencies and achievement indicators are noted in the accompanying chart (See Appendix I).

The idea of e-portfolios was not successful when initially implemented; therefore the administrative team reviewed the reasons why and made the appropriate adjustments. Instead of having all students develop e-portfolios like initially attempted, School C will start with the grade nines and continue as they move into high school. The first step of this was implemented over the exam break and built upon in the second semester (See Appendix J). E-portfolios will support and reinforce learning as an interdisciplinary process rather than as one that is merely subject specific. As these e-portfolios develop, the goal is to create a tool that will allow students to be active in showing evidence of their own learning as well as sharing this collection with parents. "This is an ideal way to have students working harder than their teachers – and the person working the hardest is learning the most" (Herbst & Davies, 2014, p. 83). This will be a shift in thinking but the benefits will definitely be for the students. It will also enhance their understanding of themselves as proficient learners and set the stage for both teachers and students to be self-directed. Educators will then be able to lead "their students to become more

active, independent, and successful … by teaching them the strategies that would stimulate them to think more deeply and more competently" (Thibodeau, 2008, p. 57).

Learning Walks

The administrative team will endeavor to give all teachers in School C the opportunity to participate in a learning walk to support teacher development. "A key reason why so many schools … are unwittingly less effective than they might is that day-to-day teacher planning and instruction are rarely scrutinized against long-term organizational aims" (Alberta Education, 2011, p. 5). These learning walks are organized so teachers can observe student participation in a variety of subject areas and at various grade levels. "The team-based structure of a Collegial Learning Walk encourages collaborative conversations among participants about the nature of teaching and learning, which can lead to decisions and actions that are deeply rooted in the classroom experience" (Guilott & Parker, 2012, pp. 93-94). Learning walks allow teachers to observe other teachers. This gets teachers out of their own autonomous classrooms and into other professionals' rooms to view a variety of different practices. "If you spend all of your day teaching, you are not going to have much opportunity to inquire into, reflect on, and adjust your practice over time" (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012, p. 107).

Interdisciplinary Projects

Interdisciplinary projects will continue to be developed and supported. In order to support a collaborative environment at the high school level interdisciplinary working groups will be provided with time to work together to create innovative and authentic projects to improve student engagement. "Because of the strong subject department structures on which high schools are based. This is one of the reasons that high schools are so notoriously hard to change" (Wiggins & McTighe, 2007, p. 28). In order to support interdisciplinary creativity and encourage

instructional design changes, cross-curricular work time needs to be sustained and improved upon. Administration currently is working with a group of teachers who are developing ideas as to how to create additional time during the day for teachers to work together. "Interdisciplinary collaborative groups can benefit teachers as well as their students" (Thibodeau, 2008, p. 63). Collaborative professional learning teams give "teachers the ongoing opportunity to learn together, apply learning to the classroom, and reflect on what works and why" (Chappuis, Chappuis, & Stiggins, 2009, p. 60).

Instructional Design

Creative instructional design ideas for courses will continue to be supported. A science teacher recently came into my office, excited about an idea for a new course that she wanted to teach. She came up with the name Energy and Environmental Innovations, which would be an elective, designed for students to take in the same semester as Science 10. This would allow the teacher to work with the same students all afternoon for an entire semester. Students could earn up to five career and technology credits related to Alberta's environmental innovations in forestry, water management, oil and gas, and agriculture. Students will gain hands on experience in class and with experts from the local town and area. Projects may include tackling invasive plant species, maintaining biodiversity of plants and animals in our watershed, flood mitigation, urban composting, agricultural and forest land resiliency, linking town food needs with the area's agriculture community, and sustainable building design. Considering where School C is located community members and stakeholders would eagerly participate and contribute.

Another teacher envisioned creating a dual credit psychology course with the local university. After a lot of hard work her dream has become a reality and will be called Psychology 203. This course will be run in the first semester at both School C and the university. The

creation of this dual credit course will allow high school students to have access to a university

psychology course in order to pursue their passion in psychology. This course will provide a

necessary bridge between high school and university life, potentially easing the difficult

transition that many students face. Students will gain a better understanding of their own self-

concept, stress and coping mechanisms, adjustments, communication strategies, and

psychological well-being.

After the drama teacher put together the school performance of Land of the Dead this fall,

he realized how many English outcomes they had achieved. Students learned so much about

Shakespeare and his writing that the drama teacher felt they could have written the most amazing

critical or personal response using that text. The drama teacher felt that by combining Drama 10

and English 10 students would be provided with an opportunity for engaging with text in myriad

ways, including in-class performance. Drama and English are natural friends and working

together, students would be able to participate in authentic and high-end learning opportunities.

Students could explore texts from English using Drama technique and practice performing. The

students would be able to enrich their English experience through Drama. Allowing teachers to

take risks and develop creative ways to teach program of studies outcomes will enrich the

learning for all students in School C. When administrators support instructional design creativity,

there are "higher levels of trust [and] teachers experience a stronger sense of professional

community and are more willing to innovate and take risks" (Robinson, 2011, p. 34).

Collaborative Work Spaces

Although School C was built using the factory model, administrators and teachers want to

create common learning spaces where students can work collaboratively throughout the school.

These spaces could also be used for interdisciplinary work, lectures, small group work, and

"student-directed work, ideally furnished with soft seating, larger and smaller table groupings, floor activity spaces and some types of screening devices" (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012, p. 116). It is in these spaces that "children spend most of their waking hours" (Nair et al., 2013, p. 41). The SCLT went to two recently built high schools this year to get ideas as to how to create more effective learning areas and creatively use the existing space in the school. The Learning Commons will be remodeled to include furniture that supports newer approaches to teaching and facilitate student learning. Through the design of these flexible learning environments, School C will continue to be "forward-looking and mindful of the very different world our children will inherit" (Nair et al., 2013, p. 11).

More schools are trying to create collaborative areas for students to work and interact outside of the typical classroom setting. Tupper et al (2008) "believe[s] that responsible citizenship and the negotiation of individual identities are intimately connected to the spaces that students negotiate as they live within the social and physical structures of schools" (p. 1067). Similarly, *Inspiring Education* (2010) identifies one of the core values that must be embraced by schools is citizenship (p. 20). As Alberta continues to grow, focusing on citizenship will become increasingly more important. Albertans value citizenship and want all "learners [to] have pride in their community and culture [where] they have a sense of belonging and work to improve both the community and the world" (Alberta Education, 2010, p. 21). As schools develop collaborative workspaces for their students as a part of HSR, it is critical to create spaces that support inclusion. These areas should establish an environment where all students feel comfortable working together without excluding a person or group of people.

Conclusion

One of the birthrights of children in Alberta is access to a publicly funded education system that meets the needs of all individual learners. Alberta is "widely acknowledged as among the best in the world" (Alberta Education, 2010, p. 4). In order to continue this high standard, educational practice must change in order to maintain this quality of instruction because "schools have the duty to ensure that students graduate with an understanding of their society and of their place and possibilities within it, that they have the skills required for its perpetuation, and that they hold its values and commitments" (Alberta Education, 2010, p. 4). School C has embraced this reality and its teachers now realize that they have a personal and professional responsibility to improve student learning. They believe in a student centric learning environment that places the individual learner at the center of all academic decisions. Formal leaders in School C have "awaken[ed] the people in the school to alternative perspectives and experiences, and [have] buil[t] an agreement within the school that a continuation of the current way of working is inadequate if the school wants to be effective in the future" (Davies & Davies, 2009, p. 18).

Robinson (2011) contends that, "most school leaders are motivated by the desire to make a difference to their students. They want to lift their students' achievement, increase their confidence, and give them opportunities they would never find elsewhere" (p. 1). Administrators and teachers in School C realize the importance of the work they are doing and are committed to the collaboration and creation of "activities that require creativity to solve complex problems and that make a real difference" (Egan, 1997, p. 11). School C wants to create an environment for all students that will stimulate growth. Through interdisciplinary projects, students will begin to see the relevance of education and become critical thinkers who are engaged, motivated, and

active participants in their own learning. Students leaving school need more than just knowing how to read, write and figuring out math equations. Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) endorse that:

> Students are meant to leave school as not merely learned, but inquisitive; not merely knowledgeable, but capable of using their education for good ends; not merely with technical skills, but with the appropriate habits of mind that determine whether the skill is used wisely, unwisely, or not used at all when needed. (p. 151)

Hattie's (2012) research has determined that "the best predictor of health, wealth, and happiness in later life is not school achievement, but the number of years in schooling" (p. 3). Students that stay in school longer will have increased opportunities and "enjoy the benefits of greater income, health, and happiness" (Hattie, 2012, p. 4). It is critical that education engages, challenges and stimulates creativity in students. Some schools can hold students back from expressing their creativity. Educational leaders who are student centric and support the creative ideas and energies of teachers will foster internal commitment and mobilize everyone's sense of moral purpose (Fullan, 2001).

The administrative team in School C has a "significant responsibility for ensuring quality student learning, teacher practice efficacy, and an effective learning culture" (Alberta Education, 2011, p. 2). It is therefore a school leaders ethical responsibility to redesign their school community to create a more flexible, personalized, collaborative, and engaging learning environment for all. Through this hard work, a school culture will be built where students and teachers are empowered to be creative and where instruction is personalized for all learners now and in the future. Schlechty (2009) acknowledges that "leading transformational change is hard and demanding work" (p. 267). However, after a year and a half of implementing the High

School Redesign initiative it has been worth it. School C has gone from great to exceptional,

"clearly these are exciting times – there is a lot going on" (Fullan, 2001, p. xii).

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Appendix

Appendix A: Universal Learning Environment Understanding By Design Document

Transfer Goal: • What do we want to accomplish as a result of this initiative? • Define what you are doing so there is an action. • We want to _____ so that we can _____	
Enduring Understandings: • What understandings do stakeholders need to meet this goal? • Drive the questions...	
Essential Questions: • What thought provoking questions should guide our actions?	
Knowledge: • What knowledge will stakeholders need to make this a reality?	
Skills/competencies: • What skills will stakeholders need to make this a reality?	
Assessment Evidence • What will count as evidence of success? • What data should we collect?	
Direct Evidence: • What we are looking for?	
Indirect Evidence: • What occurs outside of our focus?	
Action Plan	
• What short term and long-term actions will we take to achieve our goal? • What strategies will help us achieve the desired result? • Who will be responsible? • What resources will be needed?	Short Term: Long Term:
Participants:	

Appendix B: Teacher Flex Block Survey Questions

Throughout this semester we would like to collect teacher reflections in three areas of our student centric learning environment. Your feedback is essential to understanding the success and challenges of these changes. The data collected will inform our professional practice as we continue to transform our school culture.

Student Accountability
Comment on the student accountability process under the following headings:

- Attendance on PowerSchool
- Sign in duo tang
- Google Form

Comment on the student use of flex time.

Comment on the teacher use of flex time.

What suggestions do you have to improve the student accountability process?

What are the consequences you give students who are not completing flex forms, attending or coming in late?

Relationship
What does your relationship look like with your flex students? What steps could you take to enhance your relationship with your flex students?

How is the flex block working for students now?

What could be improved on during flex block over the next month that would enhance student success?

In your observation how well are students managing their stress during the day?

Student Achievement
What effect do you anticipate flex block will have on student achievement?

Staff Experience
What have you observed to be the biggest barrier to flex so far?
What have you observed to be the most positive experience of flex so far?

Appendix C: Student Centric Learning Survey – Student

The purpose of this survey is to collect student feedback on our new student centric learning environment. Your feedback is essential in understanding how the redesign is supporting you as students, and will guide our decisions for the upcoming year.
* Required

Please record your gender.

- ◯ Female
- ◯ Male

What grade are you in?

- ◯ Grade 9
- ◯ Grade 10
- ◯ Grade 11
- ◯ Grade 12

Flex block has enabled you to develop closer relationships with one or more adults in the building? *
Please click the answer that most describes what you believe

- ◯ Strongly Agree
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Undecided
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Strongly Disagree

How do you most use your flex time? *
Please click the answer that most describes what you do in flex.

- ☐ to complete course work
- ☐ to receive tutorial support from your subject teacher
- ☐ to complete group course work
- ☐ to access peer support on a subject of difficulty
- ☐ all of the above
- ☐ don't use flex at all to complete course work

Flex block has enabled you to develop new social relationships outside of your immediate friends. *
Please click the answer that most describes what you believe

- ○ Strongly Agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Undecided
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Strongly Disagree

Flex block has allowed you to develop academic relationships with peers. *
Please click the answer that best describes what you believe.

- ○ Strongly Agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Undecided
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Strongly Disagree

Flex block has supported and/or improved your academic achievement *
Please click the answer that best describes what you believe.

- ○ Strongly Agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Undecided
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Strongly Disagree

Flex block has reduced the amount of stress and anxiety you feel *
Please click the answer that best describes what you believe

- ○ Strongly Agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Undecided
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Strongly Disagree

If your stress and anxiety has been reduced please explain.
Please write in the text box provided.

Would you like to see flex time continue? *

- ○   ○ Yes
- ○   ○ No
- ○   ○ Other:

Why or Why not?

What recommendation(s) would you give to improve the flex block? *

Appendix D: Student Centric Learning Survey – Parent

The purpose of this survey is to collect parent feedback on our new student centric learning environment. Your feedback is essential in understanding how the redesign is supporting your child(ren), and will guide our decisions for the upcoming school year.
* Required

Please indicate what grade your child is in. If you have more than one child please record their grades under other.

- ○ Grade 9
- ○ Grade 10
- ○ Grade 11
- ○ Grade 12
- ○ Other:

Flex block has enabled your child(ren) to develop new social relationships outside of their immediate friends *
Please click the answer that most describes what you believe

- ○ Strongly Agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Undecided
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Strongly Disagree

Flex block has enabled your child to develop closer relationships with one or more adults in the building *
Please click the answer that most describes what you believe

- ○ Strongly Agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Undecided
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Strongly Disagree

How do you believe your child(ren) is/are using their flex time? *
Please click the answer that most describes your child(ren)'s use of flex.

- ○ to complete course work
- ○ to receive tutorial support from your subject teacher
- ○ to complete group course work
- ○ to access peer support on a subject of difficulty
- ○ all of the above
- ○ don't use flex at all to complete course work

Flex block has allowed your child(ren) to develop academic relationships with peers. *
Please click the answer that best describes what you believe.

- ○ Strongly Agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Undecided
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Strongly Disagree

Flex block has supported and/or improved your child(ren)'s academic achievement *
Please click the answer that best describes what you believe.

- ○ Strongly Agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Undecided
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Strongly Disagree

Flex block has reduced the amount of stress and anxiety your child(ren) feel *
Please click the answer that best describes what you believe

- ○ Strongly Agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Undecided
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Strongly Disagree

If you believe your child(ren)'s stress and anxiety has been reduced please explain? *
Please write in the text box provided.

Would you like to see flex block continue? *

- o ◯ Yes
- o ◯ No
- o ◯ Other:

If you agree that flex block should continue, please explain why in the box provided.

What recommendation(s) would you give to enhance the redesign? *

Appendix E: Three E's

Engaged Thinker: who thinks critically and makes discoveries; who uses technology to learn, innovate, communicate, and discover; who works with multiple perspectives and disciplines to identify problems and find the best solutions; who communicates these ideas to others; and who, as a life-long learner, adapts to change with an attitude of optimism and hope for the future.

Ethical Citizen: who builds relationships based on humility, fairness and open-mindedness; who demonstrates respect, empathy and compassion; and who through teamwork, collaboration and communication contributes fully to the community and the world.

Entrepreneurial Spirit: who creates opportunities and achieves goals through hard work, perseverance and discipline; who strives for excellence and earns success; who explores ideas and challenges the status quo; who is competitive, adaptable and resilient; and who has the confidence to take risks and make bold decisions in the face of adversity.

Appendix F: Flex Block Personal Action Plan

	CURRENT MARK	WHAT DO YOU WANT YOUR MARK TO BE?	GOAL? HOW WILL I USE MY FLEX TIME TO ACHIEVE THESE GOALS?
Feb. 3			
Mar. 3			
Apr. 14			
May 5			
June 2			

Appendix G: Academic Goal Setting

How To Make Specific Goals To Achieve Course Goals:

Use the SMART method:
- Specific
- Measurable
- Achievable
- Realistic
- Time-Bound

Examples Of Course Specific Goals:

Social Studies
- I will review political cartoons and identify the irony.
- I will study vocabulary to improve reading comprehension.
- I will watch or read the news three times a week.

General Science
- I will prepare for tests by **completing my vocabulary 2 days** before the Chapter Test so that I can go to flex to ask any questions I have before test day.
- I will prepare for tests by **completing my checklist 2 days** before the Chapter Test so that I can go to flex to ask any questions I have before test day.
- I will limit my socializing in class to 5 minutes max.

English/Language Arts
- I will make connections to the text from my personal book readings.
- I will check in with my Eng/LA teacher for feedback in areas I could improve in whether I feel like I'm struggling or not.
- I will revise a previously submitted essay for re-submission and 'second chances'.

Physics
- I will make sure to complete practice problems on time and to check my solutions with the posted answer keys to ensure that my work is correct.
- I will make sure my algebra skills are adequate to solve physics problems and I will ask for help in this area if required.
- I will make sure that I understand the overall ideas behind the mathematical equations in physics.
- I have completed corrections on the assignments and quizzes (for marks or not) that I can to enhance my understanding concepts and areas of difficulty.
- I have used the skills toolbox on the Moodle to determine my understanding of key concepts using (up arrow, -->, down arrow)
- I have completed all my homework practice before the due time and I am at the grade I would like (or have spoken with my teacher to see how I can get to my desired goal)

Math
- Using Moodle, I will have all my notes completed before the daily lesson.
- I will complete all daily homework assigned.
- I will show all of my work for every question.

Appendix H: School Professional Development Plan

Focus on Culture:

INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN	ASSESSMENT
A) Implement the principles of the School C's Instructional Design Framework to plan or reconstruct units of study Work already done to address the themes: CHS Instructional Design Framework: Engaging all students: Expanding Instructional Practice: School C Alumni: A Facebook page was designed to provide a link between School C and its alumni to provide social and educational networking opportunities. How Our Time Become More Flexible? : **B) Embed IT essentials in an innovative, authentic, collaborative and supportive way.** Digital Boot Camp:	**A) Provide opportunities for demonstrating learning utilizing a variety of modalities that incorporates formative and summative assessment.** Embed the language of the descriptors of the "Three Es" in our communications 3 E's : **Appendix E** **B) Assess student achievement using the 21st century competencies, including a numerical mark. Students demonstrate their competencies in their e-portfolio.** 21st Century Competency Descriptors: **Appendix I**

Appendix I: Competencies and Achievement Indicators

PORTRAIT OF A 21ST CENTURY LEARNER – COMPETENCY SKILLS		
Categories	**Competencies**	**Description of Competencies**
Ways of Thinking	Critical Thinker	Engages in reflective reasoning to build deep understanding that is supported by evidence
	Problem Solver	Identifies strategies and tools to develop, evaluate, and implement solutions
	Innovator	Puts elements together to form a new pattern or structure
Ways of Working & Tools for Working	Communicator	Understands, interprets, and expresses thoughts, ideas and emotions to connect with others
	Collaborator	Builds relationships and works with others to achieve common goals
	Information & Media Literate	Uses technology to explore and build knowledge in an ethical and responsible way
	Financially & Economically Literate	Understands and evaluates personal and global economic issues
Ways of Living in the World	Self-Directed Learner	Takes ownership of their learning
	Globally Aware	Understands an interconnected world and a citizen's role within society
	Civically Engaged	Reflects a commitment to democratic governance, social participation and advocacy

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT REPORTING LEGEND	
INDICATOR:	**ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT:**
Exemplary	Demonstrates exemplary achievement of learning outcomes. Shows an in-depth understanding and an insightful application of the learning in a variety of situations. No support required.
Proficient	Demonstrates proficient achievement of learning outcomes. Shows a solid understanding and significant application of the learning. Rare or infrequent support required.
Satisfactory	Demonstrates satisfactory achievement of learning outcomes. Shows a general understanding and relevant application of the learning. Minimal or initial support required.
Basic	Demonstrates basic achievement of learning outcomes. Shows a basic understanding and initial application of the learning. Moderate support required.

Emerging	Demonstrates emerging achievement of learning outcomes. Shows a beginning understanding and simplistic application of the learning. Consistent support required.
Limited	Demonstrates limited achievement of learning outcomes. Shows an incomplete understanding of the learning. Extensive support required.
IE	Insufficient evidence of learning to accurately assess progress during this reporting period.
NA	The learning outcome has not been assessed this term or there has not been sufficient time in the unit of study to fairly and accurately assess progress in this area.
IPP	The learning outcome has been modified to better support your child's learning need. Please see your child's Individual Program Plan for further details.
ELL	The learning outcome has been modified to better support your child's learning need. Please see your child's English Language Learner Benchmark Assessment for further details.

Appendix J: Grade Nine E-portfolios

E-Portfolios

Home

The purpose of this site is to provide teachers and students with a framework understand the role of e-portfolios and to help us start gathering examples that reflect our learning show who we are as Cobras at School C.

We've broken down today's work into two sections. Please see side bar on the left.

First, spend some time, explore 'Who you are', and gather some resources that show that to us.

After lunch we'll explore the 21st Century Competencies, what those really mean and how you can show that with your class work and projects.

Who Am I

Here's your chance to be creative with Google sites.

Please create pages and list them in your sidebar that respond to the prompts below. Use your imagination and creativity. You can create a new page for each or group them together in ways that make sense. The choice is yours.

REMEMBER ON OF THE KEY RULES OF WEB DESIGN IS THAT IT IS EASY TO NAVIGATE AND FIND INFORMATION. SIMPLER IS RICHER!!
MAKE YOUR SITES EASY TO NAVIGATE SO THAT *EVERYONE* CAN FIND THE INFORMATION YOU WANT THEM TO FIND.

For the Who Am I project please create a space on your sites that includes the following:
- Short paragraph explaining who you are to a future employer or University admittance officer
- Insert a picture of your role model and a short paragraph explaining why
- Explain your values and beliefs in a short paragraph
- Insert a picture of your favorite athlete, team and sport. What draws you to them?
- Explain what friendship means to you. What you value in your friends and what your friends value in you.
- Embed a youtube video of your favorite song, and explain what makes it great
- Embed a youtube trailer of your favorite movie as well as a link to the Internet Movie Database (IMDB) site for that movie
- Provide a link to the Wikipedia page of your favorite book

21st Century Competencies

Now, it's time to start gathering your evidence.

First, read through the descriptions of 21st Century Competencies at the links below:

Here is a basic overview.

More detailed information and useful definitions are below:
http://education.alberta.ca/media/6581166/framework.pdf (Explanations for students)
http://education.alberta.ca/teachers/aisi/themes/21-century.aspx (more detailed information on the 21st century competencies)

Now, gather your information and evidence that shows your understanding in the categories below. As always, feel free to be creative with your Web design. A really simple example and option is here.

- 21st Century Competencies
    - Critical Thinking, Problem Solving and Decision Making
    - Creativity and Innovation
    - Social, Cultural, global and Environmental Responsibility
    - Communication
    - Digital and Technological Fluency
    - Lifelong Learning, Personal Management and Well-being
    - Collaboration and Leadership