

LEADERSHIP UPDATE

Volume 13

A publication for Alberta's school administrators

Number 3



Welcome back everyone!

This edition of the Leadership Update contains valuable information to support you in the work that you do and to inform you of some ways you can access very high quality professional learning activities for school leaders in Alberta throughout the year.

Professional Learning Opportunities and News

To obtain information about upcoming professional learning events and programs for school leaders you need only remember the following URL—www.uLead.ca—to access up-to-date news about school leadership in Alberta, provincial and regional professional learning events, and the uLead conference that takes place every year. This year, uLead will take place from April 9–12 in Banff. There will also be a French Immersion and Francophone uLead summit taking place in Calgary from April 7–9. Please visit uLead.ca on a regular basis as the events and news will change frequently.

Teacher Growth, Supervision and Evaluation Seminar

We are pleased to announce that the ATA will offer a Teacher Growth, Supervision and Evaluation Seminar in Calgary on February 2–3, 2017. This seminar is integrally tied to the work of all Alberta school leaders and it typically fills up quickly. The seminar is open to school- and district-based administrators only.

The provincial Teacher Growth, Supervision and Evaluation (TGSE) policy 2.1.5 deals with accountability and continuous professional growth and ensures that a teacher's professional practice is under ongoing supervision. The TGSE policy defines the process and the Teaching Quality Standard defines the competencies for professional practice. This workshop focuses on the principal's critical role and the duties he or she must perform as outlined in the *School Act* and policy 2.1.5.

To register for this seminar, please visit <https://event-wizard.com/TGSE2017/0/register/>. You can also find out more information by calling Member Services at 780 447-9400.

Education
is your
greatest
weapon.
Study, learn,
help one
another
always.

—Chief Plenty
Coups



Council for
School Leadership

Increasing Your Confidence in Classroom Assessment

As the province awaits ministerial approval for the new professional practice standards for teachers, school leaders and system leaders, this is a good time to get a head start on preparing for some of the key competencies and indicators within those documents. Assessment is specifically mentioned in all three of the draft documents, and while the most detailed references to assessment are found within the Teaching Quality Standard, many of the indicators within the School Principal Quality Standard refer to supporting teachers.

Therefore, that brings the focus back to the title of this article—increasing your confidence as a school leader in classroom assessment practice. Some school leaders had no coursework in assessment during teacher preparation programs. While there have been many opportunities for professional learning in assessment, including a significant provincial focus during the AISI years, there are so many different resources available that it can be challenging for school leaders to discern which resources can be of most benefit to moving assessment practices forward.

Among initiative-weary teachers and leaders, assessment has often sadly been relegated to the “flavour of the month” club as they try yet one more technique or strategy to try to achieve the promised results of formative assessment, leading some to declare that “We’ve already done assessment.”

The Alberta Assessment Consortium (AAC) has taken a different approach to supporting instructional leadership in

assessment. Over the past four years, the AAC has worked with Alberta Education grants as well as school/ jurisdiction specific projects. Working with small cohorts of school leaders and working deeply over time, the AAC has kept assessment as both the content and the process of the professional learning.

Content

School leaders were often surprised at how much there was to learn about classroom assessment and how deeply assessment is connected to curriculum and instruction. Using specific resources from world-renowned authors, along with AAC print and web resources that place the principles of the assessment process within the Alberta context, school leaders deepened their understanding in order to help them be more effective in supporting teachers.

Process

Throughout the AAC project, school leaders were given permission to be learners. Teachers were invited into the cohort at various times to provide a real-life context to the work. School leaders were asked to “park” their evaluative role during these sessions and work collaboratively with their teachers. It has been as result of these collaborative gatherings that we have coined the phrase, “Formative assessment isn’t just for kids!”

The results have been nothing short of amazing—but don’t just take our

word for it. Here are some of the comments from project participants:

I have been doing a lot of reading just in the assessment area, but for me is still feels like a fairly new journey. I still feel like there are big gaps between where we are for the most part and where we would like to go.

When I read a chapter of Dylan William, I am no authority on assessment. I am still learning. Am I informed enough that I can ask the right questions?

When our district first announced that we were doing assessment, it was probably the first thing that our district had chosen as a focus that I didn’t feel I had already had a head start with. I felt like this is the one that is going to be the largest journey for me as well.

In this model, for instance, to have the teachers as part of that in a trusting relationship and collaborative sense really helps me as a leader because it is not just top-down. I like the model because it involves the teachers and it isn’t just about the leaders getting together and talking about how to deliver assessment practices to teachers.

Bringing along that teacher to work with, now I can use that person as a lead teacher within the school to help spearhead these ideas forward too. In talking with her, and her reflecting on her previous practice, she has explained to me that she has learned a lot through this process and will be able to then take it forward as well. So I am looking forward

to that in having an extra support within the building so we can go forward.

While this project was focused on the instructional leadership dimension, participant comments reveal it has also impacted several of the other leadership competencies, including effective relationships, commitment to professional learning, visionary leadership, leading a learning community, and developing leadership capacity. As such, time spent enhancing leaders' skill in the area of classroom assessment can be the starting point for significant leadership development.

Want to learn more? Check out the following links on the AAC website and contact the Alberta Assessment Consortium (AAC) at info@aac.ab.ca.

<http://www.aac.ab.ca/instructional-leadership-in-assessment/>

<http://www.aac.ab.ca/projects-grants/instructional-leadership-in-assessment/>

Foundations of Improvement Sprints: A Practical Process for Improving Student Achievement in Your School

We are pleased to share the news that a professional learning day for school leaders with Simon Breakspear will take place in Calgary on Friday, April 7, 2017. In this dynamic introductory session participants will come to understand and apply the key methodologies of improvement sprints. They will build confidence in applying the process to enable educator teams to rapidly improve outcomes and develop effective practice.

KEY LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Explore the challenge of ensuring learning growth for diverse students.
- Understand the core methodologies of improvement sprints.
- Consider how to apply improvement sprints in your unique school context by using the time and resources that are already available.

OVERVIEW

The expectations for improving student learning outcomes across schools around the world have never been higher. Leaders and educators need more effective approaches to meeting the needs of diverse learners and ensuring that all students are making growth in literacy and numeracy, as well as other valued educational outcomes.

THE APPROACH

An improvement sprint is a team-based method for improving student outcomes in your school. Harnessing the collaborative time that you already have available, this approach can help your school to rapidly improve outcomes through building the collective efficacy of your teachers. Our process draws on the latest research and highly effective improvement processes from both inside and outside education.

Spend the day in a dynamic workshop with Dr. Simon Breakspear as we unpack improvement sprints for you and your leadership team.

You are encouraged to register a school leadership team for this day with principals, assistant principals and/or teacher-leaders attending.

To register visit <https://event-wizard.com/CSLSPRINT/0/welcome/> or tinyurl.com/SPRINT-CALGARY.

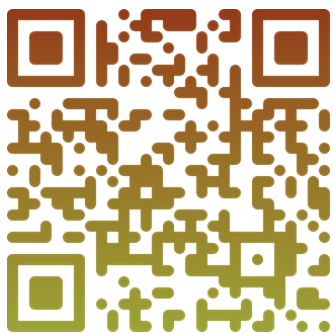
Council for School Leadership

As an Alberta school principal or Assistant principal you are encouraged to select the Council for School Leadership as your automatically renewing specialist council. If you are not already a member of the Council for School Leadership please take a moment today to follow this link, bit.ly/joincsl, and follow the steps to join this school leadership specialist council. It is custom-made for school leaders and aspiring school leaders.



Alberta Teachers on iTunes U

This month we highlight several new courses to support leadership for inclusive education called Winning Strategies for Struggling Students, Differentiated Instruction: Leveraging Learning Preferences, and Addressing Learning Disabilities in the Inclusive Classroom. These are well worth subscribing to and are full of good ideas that principals and assistant principals should consider regarding their leadership work in this area, and they are also valuable for all Alberta classroom teachers. The courses provide an opportunity to look in-depth at best practices for inclusive education within the Alberta context. Watch for a variety of new courses in January to support you in your leadership role. To access the site, please visit tinyurl.com/ATAiTunes or scan the QR code on this page.



Distinguished Leadership Awards

The Council for School Leadership is pleased to invite nominations from throughout Alberta for the CSL Alberta Distinguished Leadership Awards, with recipients being honoured in May.

The CSL Distinguished Leadership Awards create a learning community of outstanding principals throughout Alberta who can share professionally, interact collegially and act as mentors to new colleagues. The awards provide avenues for research and sharing of best practices. The cadre of distinguished Alberta school leaders are people who are looking to challenge the status quo, improve learning in their contexts, and be equipped for higher levels of leadership. These individuals will become role models in a vibrant network of educational leaders with the confidence and capabilities to lead innovative change for 21st century learning in the Council for School Leadership.

Please consider nominating a deserving school leader for consideration for this honour.

To nominate a school leader, click on the following link and complete your nomination online at <http://tinyurl.com/CSL-Leadership>.

Once you have entered the nomination site you will be asked to make a short comment related to your nominee's leadership in each of Alberta's Principal Quality Leadership dimensions. The CSL Distinguished Leadership Awards primer that follows will provide you with additional information about how to complete the nomination form once you click on the link to nominate a colleague.

The deadline for nominations is midnight, March 31, 2017. All nominees must be active members of the Council for School Leadership to be eligible to receive the award.

“What will I need to do?”

- Once you have entered the nomination site you will be asked to make a short comment related to your nominee's leadership in each of Alberta's Principal Quality Practice Leadership dimensions.
- You will be asked to provide an indication that your nominee has consented to being nominated (required) and provide the nominee's school name, school telephone number and e-mail address. Your nominee must be a member of the Council for School

Leadership to be eligible to receive the award. Nominees can join the CSL now at bit.ly/joincsl.

- You will then be asked to enter your supporting evidence (several sentences) for your nominee's leadership for each of Alberta's Principal Quality Practice Competencies including
 - fostering effective leadership,
 - embodying visionary leadership,
 - leading a learning community,
 - providing instructional leadership,
 - developing and facilitating leadership,
 - managing school operations and resources and
 - understanding and responding to the larger societal context.

You will also be asked to describe a promising practice in leadership that your nominee, if selected to receive the award, would be prepared to share at a Council for School Leadership professional learning event in the following year.

Prior to submitting the survey you will also have an opportunity to enter additional comments regarding the nominee, should you wish to do so. Please consider nominating a worthy candidate today.

French Immersion Leadership Summit

We are pleased to share that the Council for School Leadership is hosting a very special conference for French immersion and francophone school leadership teams from April 7–9, 2017 in Calgary at the Hyatt Regency Hotel. This professional learning event is being designed for French immersion and francophone school leaders to optimize growth within their schools by engaging school leadership teams from their sites together in impactful professional learning activities that will be of benefit both to the administrators in the school and teacher-leaders. On the agenda are keynote sessions, plenary sessions, panel discussions and workshops to support school principals and teachers working in French immersion and francophone schools.

There will be a wide range of insightful sessions from education thought leaders. Sessions will be in French, but a number of sessions will also be offered in English for dual-stream French immersion school leaders whose first language may not be French.

Watch in January for information about an exciting list of keynote speakers for this event. Principals are encouraged to bring teacher leadership teams from their schools to this exciting professional learning event dedicated to French immersion and francophone programming.

Registration for the Francophone/French Immersion Summit in Calgary is now open—find out more here: <https://event-wizard.com/uLeadFR/0/welcome/>.

uLead 2017 Conference in Banff—April 9–12, 2017

About uLead 2017 — The Summit of Educational Leadership, Part Three of a Three-Year Trilogy of uLead Summit Events

This year's uLead conference will be part three of a three-year trilogy of uLead summit events. At uLead 2015 we explored challenges and harm arising from the Global Education Reform Movement (G.E.R.M.) worldwide. At uLead 2016, we explored new narratives for education and school leadership that are emerging through the world and engaged in a conversation about how to make those narratives live within our schools, school districts and provinces.

This year the conference will seek to equip those attending with the tools to create their own education story that can thrive and meet the needs of today's students. The focus is on agile leadership and will seek to answer the kind of questions that will allow the agile leader to lead a learning community driven by a vision that seeks to get better all the time. They ask, "where am I going to take this school or community next?" and "how will I lead this school or learning community on a radical incremental journey of growth, using the best of the past while designing for the future?"

Confirmed keynote presenters include Alberta's minister of education, David Eggen, New South Wales' minister of education, Adrian Piccoli, Queensland's minister of education, Kate Jones, Simon Breakspear (Sydney, Australia), Carol Campbell (OISE), Jelmer Evers (the Netherlands and author of *Flip the System*), Gillian Hamilton (Glasgow), Dr Jim Watterston, director-general of education in the Queensland government and also the president of the Australian Council for Educational Leaders, Dr Reshan Richards (Columbia University), Hannah Williams (Oxfordshire and co-creator of the #WomenED movement), Dr Dennis Shirley (Boston College), Pasi Sahlberg (Finland), and talented educational leaders from around the world. Several additional ministers of education from around the world will also attend and participate in a panel discussion.

There are two major uLead events this year: an international francophone and French immersion summit taking place at the Hyatt Hotel in Calgary beginning on Friday, April 7 and ending on Sunday, April 9. This will immediately be followed by the uLead English-Language conference in Banff from April 9–12, 2017 in Banff, Canada. More information about the Banff conference is available by visiting tinyurl.com/ULEAD17.

To register for the uLead Banff conference now at super-early-bird rates go to <http://ulead.ca/Welcome.html>. Early-bird rates are in place until January 31.

To register for the Francophone/French Immersion Summit in Calgary, go to tinyurl.com/uleadfr.



Great Sources of News for School Leaders

Are you searching for interesting articles and ideas about school leadership? You will find some very timely articles in a range of school leadership documents that are available online.

CAP—Canadian Association of Principals

The *CAP Journal* is published quarterly and is the official voice of the Canadian Association of Principals. The winter edition contains a very interesting article entitled “Aboriginal Student Success: Principals Nurturing Relationships.”

<http://cdnprincipals.org/blog/2016/06/20/winter-2016-cap-journal/>

ESHA—European School Heads Association

The *ESHA Magazine* is published regularly throughout the year and contains very interesting articles that highlight issues Alberta school leaders share with their European colleagues. The most recent issue contains interesting discussions on the topic of entrepreneurial leadership. <http://www.esha.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/ESHA-magazine-December-2016.pdf>

NAESP—National Association of Elementary School Principals

Principal is a monthly magazine published by the NAESP. This month’s issue features a great article about new approaches to instruction. http://www.nxtbook.com/nxtbooks/manifest/principal_20161112. You may also wish

to check out their principal’s blog, which is full of great tips for school leaders, at <https://www.naesp.org/front-page-blog-archive>.

NASSP—National Association of Secondary School Principals

Principal Leadership is a magazine published monthly from September to May by the NASSP. It focuses on school leaders’ real needs, offering them practical, hands-on strategies for improving their schools in a constantly evolving educational environment. <https://www.nassp.org/news-and-resources/publications/principal-leadership/principal-leadership-archives/principal-leadership-volume-17-2016-17/principal-leadership-december-2016>

AITSL—Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership

The AITSL’s School Leadership eCollection is a massive, searchable and free collection of scholarly research materials on school leadership. <http://www.aitsl.edu.au/school-leadership-e-collection>

iTunes U—Alberta Teachers on iTunes U

Each month, new courses and materials are added to the Alberta Teachers on iTunes U site at tinyurl.com/ATAiTunes. Currently, a range of new courses on Alberta’s School Leader Standards is being added to the site.

To find archived issues of *Leadership Update*, go to www.teachers.ab.ca and click on Other Publications (under Publications), then go to School Administrators.

Feedback is welcome. Please contact Jeff Johnson, executive staff officer, Professional Development, at jeff.johnson@ata.ab.ca.

Networked Innovation Communities for K–9 Numeracy Achievement

The Networked Innovation Communities (NIC) is a collaborative initiative which seeks to boost the quality and equity of Alberta's education system and increase our ability to create a learning ecosystem where all students can demonstrate their numeracy skills at a level that reflects their potential. More than 70 classroom teachers, together with their school leadership teams and a district lead teacher from each participating school district, have been engaged in a process that sees networked teams come together in a design hub to create and contextualise targeted teaching practices to enhance K–9 numeracy outcomes for their students. The NIC program is fully scaleable—it will grow because as teachers and school leaders learn the techniques involved in driving positive change in their schools. They, in turn, can train the next cohort (or innovation hub) and pass on the how-to of the process.

In August 2016, the current NIC cohort met at Barnett House to learn together and identify potential focus areas for each individual teacher for the 2017/18 school year. They learned how to design and implement improvement sprints, team-based methods for

improving student outcomes in their classrooms and schools. They also set goals for conducting an improvement sprint in their classrooms between August and November. An improvement sprint involves each teacher defining a teaching or learning challenge, understanding what is causing that challenge, designing a solution for the challenge, and implementing the designed solution in a sprint over a one- to four-week period. The teacher then engages in a review of the process and a subsequent reset. If the solution worked, it is scaled up within the school. If the proposed solution did not work, then the teacher goes through another quick sprint process in an attempt to solve the challenge he or she has identified. A key to the success of this process is that it is the teacher in the classroom who is identifying the challenges he or she wishes to address. These challenges are not identified for the teacher through district or provincial standardized tests, for example, but are set by each teacher in a way that makes sense for the teacher's classroom and school. School leaders are an integral part of each school team and participate fully in the process. Teachers in the cohort are not

just scaling up their solutions within their school with their peers.

Innovative solutions to the numeracy challenges the teachers have been identifying are being shared with colleagues from other schools in the cohort and will be shared provincewide as well. On Wednesday, November 23, 2016 the NIC cohort met again to review the work they have been doing in improvement sprints since the beginning of the school year. They discussed implementation challenges and also discussed successful approaches that they have been engaged in. The participants discussed the impact of their work on student learning and also on their own practices in the classroom. There is a great deal of interest throughout the province in the NIC program. One of the most positive elements of the program is that it represents teacher-driven change from the classroom level and incorporates classroom teachers, school leaders and district-level leaders working together collaboratively, by design. More information about participant reactions to the NIC program is available at tinyurl.com/ATA-LEADS or by contacting Jeff Johnson at jeff.johnson@ata.ab.ca.

