E D M O N T O N   P U B L I C   S C H O O L S

October 13, 2009

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: E. Schmidt, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Improving Student Achievement: An Update on AISI Cycle 4

ORIGINATOR: J. Bidulock, Assistant Superintendent

RESOURCE
STAFF: Laurie Beggs, Corrie Ziegler

INFORMATION

The Alberta Initiative for School Improvement (AISI) is entering its fourth 3-year cycle across the province and within Edmonton Public Schools. The goal of AISI Cycle 4 is stated as, "To improve student learning through initiatives that enhance student engagement and performance."   (AISI Cycle 4 Handbook). Teaching and Learning Support Services Leadership Staff members are the AISI Coordinators for the District and have been charged with the responsibility of leading and facilitating this work at the District and school level.

Alberta Education establishes the parameters for AISI projects. Alberta Education, for the first time, has afforded school jurisdictions the opportunity to go into greater depth on previous themes. In addition, the following new foci were identified:
- student engagement
- the complexity of innovation and change processes

Using these parameters as a starting point, the District's AISI Coordinators undertook extensive consultation and research to ensure that AISI Cycle 4 work reflects the needs of District stakeholders and also targets student achievement. District teachers, principals, school staff, consultants, parents, students, community partners and the Executive Team have all been involved in an iterative consultation process. Further, the District's successes from previous AISI cycles have been embedded in the planning for AISI Cycle 4

For all Edmonton Public Schools, AISI work will be conducted as action research related to the following question: "How does a focus on student engagement, through the teaching of 21st century literacies across the curriculum, positively impact student learning?" (Appendix I) All principals and teachers will participate in purposeful learning networks that support this action research through adult learning experiences and processes to support enhanced student achievement.

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During the fall of 2009, principals will be working with their school communities to determine the nature of the work they need to undertake to meet the goals embedded in the District's AISI proposal. Over the course of the next three years, schools will be supported by Consulting Services staff through professional learning opportunities, teacher and principal network supports and principal committees. Four AISI Leadership Teams (ALTs) have been formed to facilitate and lead schools from four geographic areas of the District. ALT members have been selected as representatives from each area. ALTs are comprised of school and central based members; this builds on the successful work of the past cycle's Project Leadership Teams in which the school voice was recognized and acted upon.

The role of the principal is critical in the work of school improvement. Five Principal Professional Learning (PPL) sessions have been organized and facilitated by AISI Coordinators. PPL sessions will be facilitated conversations that allow and enable principals to learn together; principal feedback and research will inform these sessions. These sessions will support principals in enhancing learning within teacher networks. These actions are informed by research and evidence.

The Guiding Principles in the Framework for Teaching and Learning (Appendix I) reflects current research and thinking; supports deepening the work schools currently are finding success with; provides support yet allows for site based, school specific adaptations; reflects collective voice and, above all, sets a vision for student growth and engagement in learning. As the District works in connected and collaborative ways throughout the next three years the goal remains that every student is successful in their program of studies; we ensure bright futures begin here.

ES:gj

APPENDIX I – AISI Cycle 4: Student Engagement in Learning Through 21st Century Literacies Across the Curriculum – Information Package sent to principals in spring 2009.

E D M O N T O N   P U B L I C   S C H O O L S

April 24, 2009

TO: Principals

FROM: E. Schmidt

SUBJECT: AISI Cycle 4: "Student Engagement in Learning Through 21st Century Literacies Across the Curriculum".

ORIGINATOR: J. Bidulock

RESOURCE
STAFF: Laurie Beggs, John Edey, Debbie Jackson, Kathy McCabe, Louise Osland, Pat Sachse-Brown, Corrie Ziegler

INFORMATION

Schools will engage in action research related to the following question:

How does a focus on student engagement, through the teaching of 21st century literacies across the curriculum, positively impact student learning?

The Framework for Teaching and Learning 2009 - 2012 (as attached) shares a District vision that ensures all areas related to school improvement are addressed and create coherence for this work. The Framework also allows schools the flexibility required to participate in action research.

CZ:gj

<u>**Definitions**</u>

Student Engagement: Students are engaged when they are involved in their learning, persist despite challenges and obstacles, and take visible delight in accomplishing their work. Student engagement also refers to students' willingness, need, desire, and compulsion to participate in, and be successful in, the learning process. (AISI Cycle 4 handbook)

Literacies: The literacies considered most relevant, according to recent research, are the ability to read a range of print, oral, visual and multimedia texts, to master the new and evolving technologies, to manage information and to engage critically with media and other texts. If literacy is to have a transformational effect on students' lives, it must be understood as a broad set of skills that can be integrated across a range of contexts.

Literacy is about learning to learn, solving problems, developing critical–thinking skills, using numeracy and digital literacies, and collaborating and communicating. Literacy requires a teaching and learning process (including assessment) that is focused on meaning-making, rather than merely reproducing uncritically what they have been taught, learners should be able to make sense of the world and develop their own perspectives. This implies both an understanding of the world and the capacity to critically evaluate the world.

Literacy is "the ability to **acquire, create, connect** and **communicate meaning** by interacting with **texts** in a wide variety of formats and in a wide variety of **contexts**." The following explanations clarify the terminology used in the definition.
- **Acquire** — knowing how to collect and/or retrieve information
- **Create** — making meaning by adapting, applying, designing, inventing, re-purposing or authoring information
- **Connect** — interpret and represent; make judgements about the quality, relevance, usefulness or efficiency of information; finding and understanding relationships between concepts; and using and transferring knowledge
- **Communicate** — exchanging information by various means
- **Meaning** — making sense and bringing order and understanding to information
- **Texts** — may include oral (such as storytelling, speechmaking), print (such as books, journals, newspapers), visual (such as pictures, diagrams, nonverbal communication), and multimedia (such as oral presentations, videos and films, demonstrations, drum dancing, Internet)
- **Context** — includes any element present in a communication situation that influences the creation and interpretation of text. (From Alberta Education's K-12 Draft Literacy Discussion Paper)

Framework for Teaching and Learning 2009-2012

The *Framework for Teaching and Learning* provides guiding principles to assist schools in meeting the priorities set by the Board. It provides overall direction and coherence while maintaining flexibility for schools to meet the unique learning needs of their community.

1. **Focus on Student Engagement to Improve Student Learning**
The school community clearly articulates a shared vision of what student engagement means within the context of their learning community. In addition, the school community clearly articulates how high quality teaching of 21st century literacies across the curriculum will result in high levels of engagement, learning and achievement. Teachers and principals use this vision to guide planning for instruction and intervention.

2. **Engage in Professional Collaboration**
Through meaningful and productive collaboration, school staff reflect on and enhance teaching practice related to engaging all teachers and students in learning. Principals and teachers are committed members of intentional, purposeful teacher and/or administrator networks, led by skilled facilitators. Networks, both within schools and across schools meet regularly to discuss information about individual student learning needs. Networks engage collaboratively with other professionals to: identify students' strengths, gaps and barriers to their learning; plan appropriate interventions and measure student engagement and learning. Teachers and principals use appropriate protocols and processes to coach and support each other. They support and collectively accept responsibility for reaching the goal of all students engaged in learning.

3. **Engage in Action Research Related to the Impact of Research-based Pedagogy on Student Engagement and Learning**
Teacher networks engage in action research to examine practices in light of their impact on student learning. Meaningful engagement of students in learning results in high quality education for every child. Teachers demonstrate effective use of assessment *of* and *for* learning, differentiation, literacy practices and integration of technologies across the curriculum. Students are provided with ongoing opportunities to describe their own growth and learning, are able to identify how they best learn, and demonstrate responsibility and ownership for their learning. Teachers have professional dialogue to help them understand the learning needs of each student and use this information to guide instruction.

4. **Collaboratively Plan Ongoing Professional Learning**
Precise, relevant and effective professional learning is ongoing. It connects directly to the teacher's own classroom learning needs as well as the school's and District's vision of engaging students in learning through literacies across the curriculum. Staff work collaboratively to plan for teachers' engagement in learning as it relates to students' engagement in learning. Within and across schools, staff are mutually responsible for the implementation of professional learning plans. This work results in personal and collective commitments to learning and growth.

5. Maximize Resources
Staff within and across schools engage in ongoing reflection and monitoring of all resources (time, money, expertise, family and community supports, research, etc.). Resources are used to their fullest potential and support deep engagement in learning. Staff demonstrate flexible, responsive and creative utilization of resources.

6. Engage Families and Community
Student engagement and learning is enhanced through meaningful engagement of families and the broader community. Through purposeful collaborative work with family and community partners, the social, emotional, and physical health of students is supported.

7. Use Data to Inform Decisions
Based on an in-depth knowledge of curriculum and standards, teachers use ongoing assessment *for* learning to inform and adjust instruction and increase student ownership of their learning. Teachers gather quantitative and qualitative data related to student engagement in learning on an ongoing basis. This data informs decision making about student and teacher learning in relation to targets set.

8. Engaged Instructional Leaders
Principals, working collaboratively with instructional leaders, both within and across schools, demonstrate knowledge and skill in supporting all of the above guiding principles. Principals effectively facilitate the establishment of collaborative networks to enhance teacher learning. As instructional leaders, they manage change to enhance student engagement and use effective processes for coaching teachers and other leaders.

Supporting Details

1. AISI Cycle 4 will build on learnings from previous AISI cycles.
2. All schools are asked to create a preliminary plan related to the action research-based question:

    > *How does a focus on student engagement, through the teaching of 21st century literacies across the curriculum, positively impact student learning?*

    This plan needs to be submitted on **May 15, 2009**.
3. All schools will receive a base allocation of $20,000, plus a student-driven allocation of $40 per student, based on the weighted student enrolment. (The amount of the additional allocation may change once the final allocation from Alberta Education is received.) AISI funds need to be expended in the year they are allocated. If a school ends the year with a surplus, the amount of that surplus will be deducted from their allocation in subsequent years of this AISI Cycle.
4. Schools may spend their allocation on staffing (maximum 25%), equipment (maximum 10%), professional learning opportunities and supply release time for professional learning offered through Edmonton Public Schools, Edmonton Regional Learning Consortium or the Alberta Assessment Consortium.
5. Use of funds beyond the areas outlined in #4 will be by application to the Director, Teaching and Learning Support Services.
6. AISI work in the district will be guided by Project Leadership Teams. Each project leadership team will consist of representatives from schools and central, and will be facilitated by staff from Consulting Services. Assistant Superintendents will serve as ex-officio members of the Project Leadership Teams.
7. Principals will meet on a regular basis, to review research, engage in facilitated conversation, and plan for implementation of ideas discussed.
8. By the end of November, for each year of this AISI Cycle, principals and teachers will organize themselves into intentional, purposeful teams. They will identify: a purpose; SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-bound) goals for the year; professional learning activities to support their goal; norms to guide their collaborative processes; schedule of meeting times; coaching support; and evidence of success. Goals outlined can become part of the principals' and/or teachers' professional growth plans.
9. Consulting Services will work collaboratively with schools to facilitate on-going, job-embedded professional learning. Examples include: providing targeted professional learning for teacher networks, principal networks, entire schools, or cohorts; hosting webinars; organizing video conferences; facilitating walk-throughs; facilitating professional conversations; coordinating presentations from key note speakers supported by follow up sessions at school/cohort level; providing in-service modules; coordinating/assisting with share fairs at year end. A listing of professional learning opportunities will be available in early May on the Consulting Services website.
10. Please submit your questions regarding AISI Cycle 4 online through this link by **May 10, 2009**. All questions will be synthesized and responses will be posted on the District's AISI website under AISI Cycle 4, FAQ's.

Further research-based information related to student engagement can be accessed on the District's AISI website, including articles by Phillip Schlecty and the Metiri Group.

AISI Cycle 4 Preliminary Action Plan

The goal of AISI Cycle 4 is that all students are engaged in their learning. Through the action research question below, schools will explore how to meet this goal.

How does a focus on student engagement, through the teaching of 21st century literacies across the curriculum, positively impact student learning?

1. Considering your school context, what do you plan to do in relation to the AISI goal stated above?
2. Why have you chosen to begin here?
3. What evidence will you accept to show progress towards meeting this goal?
4. What are the implications for   your school?
5. What resources will you require to achieve this goal?

Please click on the following link to submit your preliminary action plan electronically. The form asks for your responses to the questions above. It is recommended that you develop your responses in the template on page 7 of this document and then **copy and paste your responses into the online form**. In this way you will be able to spell check your work and you will have a copy of your work readily available at the school.

Your Preliminary Action Plan needs to be submitted by May 15, 2009.

You may wish to refer to the ATA's website for information about action research, available by clicking here.

Preliminary Action Plan Template
This template is to be used for planning purposes only.
Completed Plans needed to be **submitted online by May 15, 2009**, by clicking here.

The goal of AISI Cycle 4 is that all students are engaged in deep learning.
Through the action research question below, schools will explore how to meet this goal.

How does a focus on student engagement, through the teaching of 21st century literacies across the curriculum, positively impact student learning?

Question	
1. Considering your school context, what do you plan to do in relation to the AISI goal stated above?	
2. Why have you chosen to begin here?	
3. What evidence will you accept to show progress towards meeting this goal?	
4. What are the implications for your school?	
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