

This series of resources presents effective practices implemented by some of the 27 schools involved in the original High School Flexibility Enhancement Pilot Project (HSFEPP) as they explored ways to use flexibility to increase student engagement and achievement and to support quality teaching in their schools.

This series represents a sampling of the effective practices being implemented in redesign schools across the province.

TEACHER COLLABORATIVE TIME

Four years ago, students at Spruce Grove Composite High School were increasingly disengaged. Teachers found that students either needed more time for mastery or they were forced to sit in classes, bored to tears. Teachers found that they themselves needed to improve and revise their practices, but even more fundamentally, that they needed to clarify and revise their ideas and images of what “student success” means. Teacher Collaborative Time is the result of an exploration of the meaning of student success undertaken by staff at Spruce Grove Composite High School.

What is Teacher Collaborative Time?

Teacher Collaborative Time (TCT) is a designated 2-hour block of time that occurs twice a month for the purpose of promoting learning and mastery for teachers. Teachers talk about what kind of curriculum outcomes they can expect and how to use them to improve student success. Sharing these perceptions helps to broaden the definitions of curriculum outcomes so that a variety of forms of student success can be more readily identified.

Discussion of Assessment for Learning (AFL) is another example of honing perceptions about student success. Teachers discuss questions they can ask students to help assess student progress. In addition, teachers spend time sharing and creating Assessment As Learning (AAL) tools/activities for student self-assessment. AAL is important so that students clearly know what the target is, where they are in reaching that target, ‘what they know and don’t know’, and where they need to go to get help.

Teachers share ways to achieve outcomes and have talked about how deeply to go into the curriculum, how much time to spend on a concept, and what kind of activities not only get the point across but also let students move away from busy seat work.

Also, teachers share best practices related to student-centred activities, with the focus on competencies as well as knowledge. They discuss ways to pair or group students so that they are helping each other. It’s a best practice among the teachers involved in TCT to spend more time on what students do not understand and less time on what they already know. Teachers have come to not only share this information, but to post exemplars of what excellence looks like and what a weak response looks like.

With regular, scheduled TCT, the depth and breadth of conversations can be quite inspiring. Some of these conversations focus on sharing teaching practices, questioning an analysis to validate what “good” questions are, and analyzing data from school-awarded marks and diploma marks. As well, teachers meet with feeder schools, invite the learning coach to meetings to talk about and model lesson plans, and revamp common materials to make them more interactive/project based.

Other TCT conversations focus on descriptor-based reports. Spruce Grove Composite High School is no longer giving out midterm report cards, but rather it is providing feedback once a month (on HomeLogic). The feedback gives updates on student learning with specific descriptors of what they know and don’t know, tying it back to curriculum outcomes. Staff are providing students with strategies for improvement, using evolving comments so that students and parents can see the growth – and success.

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What is not covered during TCT is marking or creating or working on individual lesson plans and entering marks. The time is for collaboration and the sharing of best, or effective, practices. Note that during these two-hour TCT sessions, students do not need to attend school, though for those who must take a bus, the school sets up large learning centres supervised by non-teaching staff. Essentially, all class-time responsibilities are taken care of so that teachers can learn from one another.



How data served to inform and change practice

The school collected hard numbers from the Accountability Pillar, School Logic generated reports, the *TELL Them FROM Me* survey and focus group sessions with students and parents. Four years ago, the school's data indicated:

- Teachers did not have true collaboration, only meeting time, to take care of business.
- Learning needed to be the constant and time the variable.
- The focus needed to be more on the process skills and competencies rather than just curriculum.

Four years after we implemented the effective practices:

High school completion 3 years:	80% - up from 72.4%
Dropout rate:	2.3% - down from 4.3%
Rutherford Scholarships:	68.7% - up from less than 50%

Academic success on blended diploma marks for all students ranges from 94.4% successful completion to 100% successful completion varying across subject areas.

- Very positive comments from students that they could not be without PLT and Seminar Time.
- Very strong parental support for student personalized program.
- Very positive experience for teacher growth and mentorship through Teacher Collaborative Time.

What we learned

From the school's perspective, the staff will continue to find more opportunities for students to connect with teachers or subject specialists. The school will provide and pursue:

- More time for teacher collaboration.
- Continued involvement in "High School Redesign" to support new schools coming on board.
- Opportunities to participate in curriculum prototyping as per proposal put forth by Calgary School Board to form a "consortium."
- Time to dig deeper into project based learning, cross curricular outcomes, engaging students in meaningful activities, improving AFL [Assessment for Learning] and AAL [Assessment As Learning] strategies, providing more student choice and opportunity to "own their learning."

For more on Teacher Collaborative Time, contact:
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