

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 PROFESSIONAL PLANNING TIME

While teachers may attend professional development sessions and conferences, the reality is there is just not enough time to implement what is learned at a conference once teachers return to the school. Tammy Tchir, assistant principal of M.E. Lazerte High School in Edmonton, and her staff found that what was needed was regular, structured time for teachers to implement changes.

What is Teacher Professional Planning Time?

At M.E. Lazerte High School, teachers access top notch professional development, according to Tchir: “We have a great school culture here, and for the last five years, we’ve implemented a practice that allows our teachers to get the most out of their professional development experiences.” In regular monthly meetings, teachers share what they have learned from professional development, and they collaborate with one another.

Teachers meet three mornings every month. They meet: 1) as staff, 2) as a school following the model for professional learning established by AISI and 3) as a department.

For the departmental meetings, each teacher prepares an annual growth plan with goals that are aligned with the departmental plan. The meetings are a time to share successes; to personally reflect about whether to change or continue a practice; and to analyse how to best implement a practice in the classroom. Ten minutes of the meetings are reminders about best practices, which may include a motivational video.

“The monthly meetings allow us to stop and reflect – essentially to do that action research process. That’s the beauty of the meetings and their results – it gives teachers time.”

“The monthly meetings allow us to stop and reflect – essentially to do that action research process. That’s the beauty of the meetings and their results – it gives teachers time.”

*Tammy Tchir, Assistant Principal,
M.E. Lazerte High School*



Why the school implemented Teacher Professional Planning Time

Different departments need different kinds of structure in the Teacher Professional Planning Time meetings. “We have more than doubled our time for professional collaboration. Regular reflection on annual growth plans allows insight into individual teaching practices and effectively ‘sets the bar’ for performance expectations.”

How success is measured

Success is measured by student results, such as course completion and diploma exam results. Success is also measured anecdotally, through conversations with one another.

It’s important for students that teachers clearly state the learning goals and outcomes. “Teachers plan backwards,” says Tchir. “Teachers have to know the curriculum outcomes well, so well that they can tell students ‘this week you will focus on this outcome or skill’ so the students can come away knowing what they need to do.” The school has focused on Assessment for Learning in which strategies are practised, not graded. During the reflection time of the Teacher Professional Planning Time a teacher might question, “Is this activity getting me the skill I need for that Assessment of Learning? Is it getting at the heart of what the kids need to know?”

What we learned

Planning time can be derailed by teachers wanting to do paperwork during the meeting rather than reflecting and focusing on professional development and planning.

The meeting time can be structured in different ways to motivate teachers to participate. “Last year,” Tchir explains, “we had a leader researching the implementation of professional development.” Some of the learnings from that research have informed the way that planning time is structured. Tchir explains that the school did find that one time per month is more immediate, and teachers can effect change. “Having the planning time once a month pushes accountability.”

Planning to teach curriculum knowledge has to be adjusted from year to year. “A plan they designed last year may have fit the outcome, but this year the process may need to be tweaked,” says Tchir.

“The meetings are a time to share successes; to personally reflect about whether to change or continue a practice; and to analyse how to best implement a practice in the classroom.”



For more on Teacher Professional Planning Time, contact:

Tammy Tchir, Assistant Principal or
Terry Colp, English Department Head
M.E. Lazerte High School, Edmonton
www.melazerte.com

MORE RESOURCES IN THE EFFECTIVE PRACTICES SERIES: Building Communities in the School · Collaborative Partnerships · Continuous Progress Courses · Flex Block for Course Completion · Flex Program · Focus Blocks · iPLAN · Mastery Learning & Task Design · Ongoing Feedback · Personalized Learning Time · Pods for Learning · Student-Led Conferences · Teacher Advisor · Teacher Advisory Program · Teacher Advisory System · Teacher Collaborative Time · Team Teaching & Collaboration