

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.

iPLAN

Learning for the 21st century requires that teachers do more than aim for the middle. It requires that teachers meet individual students' needs, whatever they are. It also requires that students find a way to learn as individuals. How can teachers and their students make such a leap? Bear in mind this leap has a cultural dimension of increased openness, as well as a sheer physical dimension of departing from regular classroom arrangements.

What is iPLAN?

At Peace Wapiti Academy, all students have a scheduled a personal learning time called "iPLAN," which is helping students and teachers make that transition. It offers students choices about what to study and where to do it. They can ask teachers and educational assistants for help; they can look for help through virtual learning environments in tutorial rooms; and they can meet with mentors (i.e., peer mentorship, First Responders, Big Sisters). They can also:

- work on homework with classmates – create a peer study group
- work on group projects
- complete various assessments (online or at the testing room)
- go to an open room to get help from the teacher "on call"
- use the fitness room/art room/foods lab/building construction shop/ cosmetology centre
- complete CTS credits that need extra time
- sign up for a CONNECT course (may include: cores, extension CTS, forensics, forestry, computer modules, accounting, etc.)
- complete Alberta High School CALM requirements (Grade 10)
- meet with their AIM teacher
- engage in intramural activities (when the gym has an assigned teacher)
- engage in extra-curricular activities that might be scheduled
- access school counselling services

"I really like how there is iPLAN to allow us to not have so much homework. When we have iPLAN it gives a chance to work harder on assignments and complete to my best ability."

Student, Peace Wapiti Academy

Students can make a different choice for iPLAN each day. The practice works best when students are kept to a single choice per day, i.e. they choose one learning environment in which to spend their iPlan time. This ensures that students don't roam in search of the best learning environment. Students who do not meet the necessary requirements within their scheduled classes will be re-directed during iPLAN to a classroom with a supervising teacher. Once they have met the necessary requirements, they may return to a traditional iPLAN.

Every student has the right and responsibility to make individual choices for the iPLAN block; however, this plan may be made in consultation with the AIM teacher depending on the skill set of each student. At the end of each iPLAN block, each day, students must present their agenda with the signature of the teacher with whom they spent the iPLAN block to their AIM teacher.

iPLAN for teachers

Classroom teachers have the ability to work one-on-one with more students through iPLAN. This creates a culture of openness between staff members and students; students are beginning to feel they are getting the help they need when they need it. One student said, "My teachers are always willing to help me when I need it and are always willing to find ways to help me do better and to strive for excellence in everything that I do."

One teacher said, "In the past, students that required extra time ... would have to miss instructional time in another class to finish their work. With iPLAN and course extensions, extra time for these students does not come at the expense of other learning."

Assessment is focusing more on mastery of outcomes than simply assigning a mark. Also, teachers are accepting students redoing work for reassessment. They are seeing recovery as something that can be done within the semester timeline. As well, iPLAN time is great for teacher prep and collaboration. "The amazing thing I have noticed is the difference in the atmosphere/stress level," said one.



Accountability Pillar Survey Data for Students Attending Peace Wapiti Academy

2007-2009 2010-2011

I can get help at my school with problems not related to school work.



My teachers care about me.



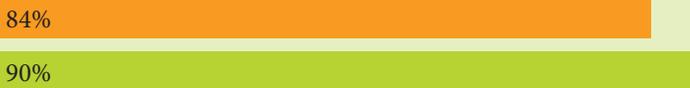
I am treated fairly by adults at my school.



I am satisfied with the variety of courses available at school.



I am satisfied with the quality of teaching at my school.



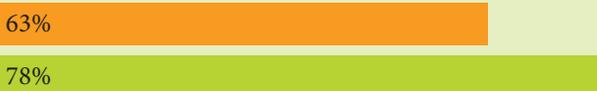
At school, I am encouraged to get involved in activities that help people in my community.



At school, I am encouraged to try my best.



At school, students help each other.



What the data showed

The Accountability Pillar data was one of the leading pieces that both led Peace Wapiti Academy to make a change, and also affirmed that the changes were beneficial.

In the May 2013 *TELL Them FROM Me* survey, 83 of 264 responses mentioned iPLAN. Of those, 98 per cent were positive. Students comments included:

- “I really like how there is iPLAN to allow us to not have so much homework. When we have iPLAN it gives a chance to work harder on assignments and complete to my best ability.”
- “I find the iPLAN block incredibly beneficial. After missing days from school for sports, iPLAN helps a lot in lowering the amount of homework I have. This time also allows me to get any help from teachers that I would not have the time to get help from otherwise.”

What we learned

As 21st century practices grow and develop, iPLAN requires constant analysis. Some ongoing adaptations include:

- Ensuring the schedule is more accessible to students (more digital signage, easier to access on the SMART devices, online and on bulletin boards).
- A testing centre was opened during iPLAN that allowed for students to write or rewrite tests/ quizzes they'd missed. This testing centre is now necessary not only in iPLAN, but every block.
- Staff now plan to attend workshops during iPLAN in small groups. Peace Wapiti Academy will soon be offering “block-off” weeks for specific disciplines to use iPLAN as a time to meet with their Professional Learning Community.
- Ongoing mentoring of our new teachers is required. Peace Wapiti Academy recognizes that students will use iPLAN most effectively when their classroom instruction models self-directed learning, project based instruction and team-work challenges.

For more about iPLAN, contact:

Josie Nagtegaal or Wanda Gerard
Peace Wapiti Academy, Grande Prairie
www.pwsd76.ab.ca/schools/pwa

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 · 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 · Teacher Professional Planning Time · Team Teaching & Collaboration