

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.

## COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS

“In the CTS classes we want what we are learning in the classroom to come alive. It’s not just about words in a classroom, but how things become more applicable.”

*Student, James Fowler High School*

### What are Collaborative Partnerships?

“We have created partnerships with post-secondary and service providers to break down the notion that school only occurs within the walls of the classroom,” says Keith Johnson, Principal of James Fowler High School. Collaborative Partnerships are built upon shared interests between the school, parents, businesses and the community. All high school students can benefit from Collaborative Partnerships that allow them to job shadow in the business sector or offer them the support of a career mentor.

A student describes his experience with an industry partner (Local 496 of the Plumbers and Pipefitters): “We are learning how to do both residential and commercial work. We started with plastics, and now we are moving to metals. The work is complicated, and it also teaches me welding. I am getting credit for the study of workplace safety and five credits for the semester for this partnership. It is a pre-apprenticeship program, and there are opportunities for an apprenticeship.”

Building Collaborative Partnerships takes time and effort. Besides the Pipefitters, the school has worked with the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology (SAIT) in Calgary in the Pharmacy Assistant Program. Johnson explains, “While completing their high school diploma, a group of our students will also receive a certificate for a Pharmacy Assistant and be qualified to work as one following high school.”

Other CTS students have participated in “Case Clash,” where students presented a business model during a field trip at SAIT and received additional credits for their work. “This was a very relevant and rigorous academic pursuit of a realistic experience for students through a partnership with a post-secondary institution.”

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*Keith Johnson, Principal, James Fowler High School*



## Why the school implemented Collaborative Partnerships

Because of Collaborative Partnerships, Johnson says, “students are very motivated to pursue their work and feel more comfortable with the transition to a post-secondary institution like SAIT.”

Collaborative Partnerships benefit parents, businesses, and communities too. A teacher explains, “Collaborative Partnerships serve or have the potential to serve common interests. For example, Careers the Next Generation is a non-profit organization with which we work to place students in work experience positions that will evolve into apprenticeships. Startec Solutions has recently approached our school to partner with them in maintaining a highly trained work force, and Momentum is another group. As an off-campus coordinator/teacher, I have become aware of a significant number of our students who would not have completed their high school diploma without opportunities such as these. It has become my passion and purpose to engage in more of these types of partnerships.”

He adds, “In conversation with parents, I have come to believe that many see this as a way to motivate and assist their children to succeed in ‘walking the stage,’ diploma in hand.”

## How success is measured

Success will be measured by school completions and the number of students who transition to post-secondary or industry-related fields. But collaborative partnerships extend students’ learning beyond the school, and the wins, big or small, have to be measured in the business sector, at home and in the community. One teacher says, “Successes will be measured by the engagement and happiness which comes with a sense of purpose.”

A student commented that “It has changed things for me. A lot of the stuff we are learning is applicable to real life: not busy work, but [it feels like] the work we are doing could lead to something. It allowed me to see other student’s work from other schools. The kids from West Island College were using first year university concepts from their economics course, and I realized if I am going to do well, this kind of thinking is what I am going to have to compete with.”

“Collaborative Partnerships can and need to be improved by going out to more industries, organizations, and businesses to begin or continue a dialogue about this issue.”

*Teacher, James Fowler High School*

## What we learned

A student commented that “I think it would be good for more students to have this opportunity and to have it in other programs from the school.” Another student agrees, saying, “There should be more tools for the students who want to take it. There could also be a bigger room, but not more kids in the space or it would be too crowded.”

One teacher says, “Collaborative Partnerships can and need to be improved by going out to more industries, organizations, and businesses to begin or continue a dialogue about this issue.” Obviously, there is plenty of scope for building new partnerships beyond the school. For Johnson, expanding these opportunities for students, particularly in the various vocational-related fields in Calgary and area, is a focus for the future.

For more on Collaborative Partnerships, contact:

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