



Christ the Teacher R.C.S.S.D. #212

Investing in Teachers

Nominated by: Christ the Teacher Catholic Schools

For the 2014 Premier's Board of Education Award

For Innovation and Excellence in Education

September 2014

Board Chair: Angie Rogalski

Director of Education: Darrell Zaba

Goal of the Program

Christ the Teacher Catholic School Division Board of Education is committed to engaging and challenging all learners by supporting their teachers to grow in their expertise and proficiency. Research indicates that although many factors contribute to a student's academic performance, including individual characteristics and family and neighbourhood experiences, the impact of a teacher matters the most. When it comes to students' performance, a teacher is estimated to have two to three times the impact of any other school factor, including services, facilities, and leadership. While our Board of Education has long known the important role that teachers play in our division, recent educational developments in Saskatchewan, including the Education Sector Strategic Plan, are setting bold goals for student learning that have reinforced the importance of quality teachers on student achievement.

In understanding the critical role that teachers play it is important for our school division to invest in our teachers. The goals of the *Investing in Teachers* initiative are to:

- support all prekindergarten to grade 12 teachers to utilize identified practices in instruction and assessment;
- continue to increase the success of our students.

The *Investing in Teachers* initiative provides targeted professional learning for teachers in prekindergarten to grade twelve based on promising practice research and division-level data. In year one of the five-year plan, professional learning focused on early learning and assessment practices.

Early Learning

- Prekindergarten and kindergarten teachers explored the science and brain research behind play and how it connects with the learning needs of their students; redesigned the learning environment to highlight the interests of students (supported by three Ministry Site Tours focusing on inquiry and the learning environment); and action-planned based on the Early Years Evaluation (EYE) data with teachers, school administration and school and division-level support personnel. Four days of scheduled professional learning occurred.
- Grades one and two teachers used their classroom level reading data to drive the focus of their learning. An in-depth look at the essential skills needed for students to progress as readers was coupled with self-selected opportunities for teachers to meet and observe their colleagues in action. Five days of scheduled professional learning occurred.

Assessment

- The shift to assessment by level when tracking student progress toward specific outcomes was supported by the creation of criteria to determine levels of achievement. Teachers in grades one to nine participated in the creation of criteria rubrics for social studies, sciences humaines, science, English language arts, French language arts, physical education, health

and religion. The rubrics were designed to track evidence of student learning based on products, conversations, and observations. The rubrics work in conjunction with the curriculum, as teachers utilize the curriculum indicators as suggested ways that students can demonstrate the achievement of outcomes. Thirty-four days of criteria development included forty-nine teachers.

- Grades nine to twelve teachers, as part of their High School Renewal Plan, focused on foundational assessment practices including student-led conferences and formative assessment techniques.

Year two of the five-year plan was revised at the end of the 2013-14 school year to reflect the feedback and needs of the teachers as well as the evidence the student achievement data provided. Year two of the plan will include the following professional learning:

Early Learning

- Prekindergarten teachers and associates will explore documenting children's learning and will work together to create a learning environment that is responsive to the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale (ECERS) data which was instrumental in determining this plan.
- Kindergarten teachers will refine the use of digital tools to communicate with parents and to document learning. Teachers reported the impact of observing sites of excellence, resulting in once again participating in a Ministry-sponsored site tour.
- Teachers in grades one to three will have multiple opportunities for differentiated learning based on the Education Sector Strategic Plan's Hoshin for High-Impact Instruction, Assessment and Intervention in Reading. Teachers will self-select sessions to create in-depth understanding of the reading approaches that research identifies as having the greatest impact on student learning.

Assessment

- Creation of criteria for the French Immersion integrated curricula in grades one and two, mathematics, kindergarten, arts education, band, career education, core French, practical and applied arts and academy classes is scheduled for 2014-15.
- Grades nine to twelve teachers will continue to focus on formative assessment techniques including giving quality feedback and using pre-assessments to design instruction.

Innovative Nature of the Initiative

Knowing that the Board of Education wants teachers in our division to have the professional learning that they need and for all students in our division to be successful the question then became, how do we support our teachers in being the best they can be? Though there have been numerous studies about the most effective ways to increase teacher effectiveness, almost all note some common themes:

- 1) Professional learning should be linked to student learning
- 2) Professional learning should be differentiated to support the unique learning needs of the teachers
- 3) Motivation for professional learning is linked to relevance, meaning and choice
- 4) Effective professional learning must include varied learning processes and practices
- 5) Effective professional learning requires time, resources and supportive structures

Fullan, Hill & Crevola, (2006) claim that professional learning that focuses on contextually-based, personalized, data-driven instruction is critical to successful educational reform and will noticeably improve and sustain learning for students and teachers alike. In their view, teachers must be learning in their classrooms every day.

Christ the Teacher Catholic School Division's *Investing in Teachers* initiative is innovative in nature because of the multiple small-group, grade-alike professional learning sessions that are offered and tailored to meet the needs of the students and teachers at those levels. The professional learning sessions are based on data and feedback reflecting accurately the needs of the division. Further differentiated learning follows the sessions when teachers are supported in the classroom, one-on-one by the Instruction and Assessment team. These individual coaching sessions allow the teachers to use the promising practices suggested in the learning sessions while being guided or coached. Built-in opportunities for reflection aid teachers to set individual goals and monitor their progress.

Evidence of Direct Board Influence

The Christ the Teacher Board of Education has been instrumental in the success of the *Investing in Teacher* initiative. The direct role of the Board of Education began in June 2013 with the allocation of significant monies to support all costs related to the initiative. These costs included:

- Substitute and travel costs associated with teachers receiving targeted professional learning opportunities;
- All materials needed for professional learning including specific resources for each teacher in prekindergarten to grade two;
- Costs of bringing in external personnel to support the assessment learning for high school teachers;
- Costs related to Ministry sponsored site tours;
- Hiring of a division Instructional Coach to provide the professional learning sessions and follow-up classroom support.

The Board of Education is not only involved in the initiative financially, their work with *Investing in Teachers* also includes frequent monitoring:

- Updates at Board Meetings including the type of professional learning opportunities and feedback from the teacher participants;
- Tracking the progress of student achievement through regular Student Learning Updates;

- Wall walks examining student achievement data directly linked to the professional learning opportunities of teachers;
- Ensuring the *Investing in Teachers* initiative is part of the division's annual report to the Ministry;
- Communication of the student achievement data and updated plans for teacher professional learning at the Board sponsored Opening Day.

Sustainability

The Board of Education's *Investing in Teachers* initiative was designed to be a long-term (five year) plan that would be sustainable within the division. Many sustainability factors contributed to the planning and implementation of the initiative including:

- Built-in opportunities for teachers new to the division (in years two to five of the plan) to receive the same learning opportunities as their colleagues in the previous year;
- Follow-up coaching after each professional learning session to help the learning become actualized in the classroom. Research indicates that when teachers can live the promising practices with their own students there is a much greater chance that it will become part of their regular routine;
- All teachers in the division will have professional learning opportunities throughout the five year plan. The Board of Education realizes that when all teachers, not just a small group of key individuals, are part of the professional learning, large-scale change is more likely to occur.

Costs Related to Benefits

Christ the Teacher Catholic School Division Board of Education designated:

- \$300 000 to support all costs of the five-year professional learning plan; and,
- \$380 000 per year to hire Learning Achievement Coaches and an Instructional Coach.

This is a significant cost for the Board of Education; however, resources allocated to *Investing in Teachers* have resulted in tremendous achievements for our students.

Client Support for Innovation

The Investing in Teachers initiative has been well received by teachers in the division. Educators have welcomed the opportunity for differentiated professional learning and are excited to continue to see the growth in their students.

“This learning was amazing! I saw huge growth in my students and I know it was because of the learning that we did as a grade one and two team about how to systematically move our students along. And the best part was that I didn’t have to do it alone! The support of my colleagues and the Instructional Coach helping me make it a reality was exactly what I needed.” ~Grade 2 Teacher~

“It was great to see the change in the teacher. I know that this will continue because it has been a reality in the classroom, not just a great workshop, but a chance to live it every day.”
~Principal~

“I was so happy to have someone there to appreciate and support the transformations that took place in my classroom.” ~Kindergarten Teacher~

Partnerships

Following the implementation of year one of the *Investing in Teacher* initiative, Christ the Teacher Catholic Schools was contacted by two divisions (Good Spirit School Division and Regina Catholic Schools) in hopes of partnering to create criteria for curricular outcomes.

During the 2014-15 school year, Christ the Teacher Catholic Schools will be partnering with Good Spirit School Division for criteria development in the curricula area of mathematics, kindergarten, band, core French, arts education and career education. Teachers from both divisions will work together during professional learning sessions to create rubrics that will be used in both divisions to help support best practice in assessment.

Christ the Teacher Catholic Schools will also be partnering with Regina Catholic Schools for criteria development of the French Immersion integrated curricula in grades one and two. The opportunity to collaborate with French Immersion colleagues in the province is exciting for our teachers.

The division and its teachers will benefit from these partnerships as we continue to support the achievement of our student learning goals!

Evidence of Improved Student Achievement

System data collected throughout the year indicates the success of the *Investing in Teachers* initiative. Supporting early learners and emergent readers has been a priority during year one of the *Investing in Teachers* initiative. We celebrate our literacy results with 89% of grade one and 88% of grade two students reading at or above grade level as measured by provincial benchmarks! We also celebrate our kindergarten readiness data with 92% of kindergarten students scoring within the appropriate range in four of the five early learning areas measured by the provincial Early Years Evaluation!

Yearly Results

System data collected shows the success of the *Investing in Teachers* initiative.

