

Prairie South Schools 210



Pathways to Success Practical and Applied Arts Enhancement Project

2015 Premier's Board of Education
Award for Innovation and Excellence in Education
September 2015

Nominated by: Prairie South Schools #210
Board Chair: Dr. Shawn Davidson
Director of Education: Mr. Anthony Baldwin

Board Support

In 2010, the Prairie South Schools Board of Education recognized a need for innovative strategies to align middle years and high school programs with Saskatchewan Labour Market demands and provide career exploration opportunities that exemplify the three “R’s”: rigor, relevance, and relationships. As stated in ***Saskatchewan Plan for Growth: Vision 2020 and Beyond***, “Improving education completion rates, strengthening links between schools and careers, and ensuring greater coordination between post-secondary institutions and employers are needed to meet current and future labour force needs.”

The Prairie South School Board listened to students and parents in our rural areas. The Board identified inequities between rural and urban Practical and Applied Arts course offerings and was willing to commit funding and administration time to see the Practical and Applied Arts Enhancement Project become a reality.

Through building relationship with industry and business, Prairie South Schools has formalized our partnerships across our division and province. These partnerships have brought new insights to our students, things that one would never have imagined. These enhanced opportunities will help each student further their education and career pathway exploration.

*We could not be more proud of those who have worked so hard to bring this program to where it is today and a special thanks to those who have partnered with us.
~ Trustee*

Prior to the PAA Project, not all high school students in Prairie South had equitable access to the PAA credit options offered through the Ministry of Education. In fact, in 2010 rural students only had access to 4 credits on average, while their urban counterparts had access to 14 credits. Through a variety of delivery options, flexible learning programs, centralized equipment purchasing and innovative partnerships, all Prairie South students now have the opportunity, regardless of geographical location and the size of their school, to access a wider variety of PAA credit options.

Phase One 2012: Initial Steps

- The Director of Education assigned a Superintendent to focus on barriers and innovative solutions to narrow the gap of inequity and to support the Continuous Improvement Plan
- Initial work focused on research and data collection
- Leadership: A working group consisting of Trustees and senior administration staff recognized inequity in schools regarding access opportunities to get involved in and be exposed to experiences as they related to Practical and Applied Arts
- A metric was established to measure improvement

Phase Two 2012-2014: Rural Opportunities

- Focused on rural K-12 schools
- Resource allocation: June 2012, the Prairie South Schools Board of Education approved the Equitable Opportunities Committee recommendation to target \$3 million of resources over three to five years to develop and enhance Practical and Applied Arts opportunities in Prairie South schools
- Established a budget to support innovative strategies
- Hired a Practical and Applied Arts Coordinator for a two year term
- Monitoring: annual accountability reports and bi-monthly committee reports

Phase Three 2014 - 2016 Expansion and Sustainability

- Due to the success of the program, the Board extended the coordinator position for two additional years to expand programs in all Prairie South Schools with middle years and high school programs and implement a sustainability strategy.

Innovative Nature of the Project

This Project provides schools with the opportunity to offer a greater diversity of experiences, encouraging school and community partnerships designed to share resources, and to work together to provide an enhanced learning program. The investment in PAA will develop employment skills, life skills, and assist our students in making informed decisions as they transition from school to career.

The innovative engagement strategies narrow the gap of inequities found in a large and diverse geographical school division. Prairie South Schools has 40 schools located within 19 rural and urban communities. The Division encompasses 32,747 square kilometres (12,643 square miles) of southern Saskatchewan. It spans a geographic area from Coronach in the south, Mankota in the west, Rouleau in the east and Craik in the north.

Four engagement strategies were developed to narrow the gap of inequities through informing, involving, and engaging students and the community.

Prairie South's Vision

Engage our schools and students to narrow the gap of inequities found in Practical and Applied Arts opportunities

Improving High School Practical and Applied Arts Credit Offering

Increasing Industry Recognized Certification

Collaborating with Industry and Business

Meeting the Challenges

Engagement Strategy – Improve PAA high school credit availability for students

Outcome: By September 2015, all students registered in Grades 10, 11 and 12 in Prairie South Schools will have the choice of a minimum of six pure PAA credits through a variety of delivery options regardless of location and size of school as measured by *Administrator Course Offering Survey* developed by Prairie South.

Measurement: The 2010-2011 baseline data reported the average for PAA course options in urban high schools was 14 and in K-12 rural schools was 4. The **2014-2015 baseline** data reported the average for PAA course options in urban high schools was 14 and in K-12 rural schools was 12.

Actions

- Developed and delivered three online PAA credits: Cow/Calf 30, Energy and Mines 30, Cosmetology 30.
- In partnership with SaskPower and Technical Safety Authority of Saskatchewan, wrote online blended-learning curricula for *Introduction to Power Engineering 20L and 30L* approved by the Ministry of Education as Locally Developed Courses. After several strategic planning meetings with provincial partners, courses were piloted in 2014-2015, rolled out to all Prairie South high schools in

2015-2016 with provincial roll out in 2016-2017. Courses include a fifty hour work study component at SaskPower Stations.

Engagement Strategy – Industry Recognized Certification

Outcome: By September 2014, all students registered in Grades 10, 11 and 12 in Prairie South schools will have four options for industry recognized certification to enhance PAA pathways and prepare for direct entry to work or post-secondary.

Measurement: The 2010-2011 high school students had *one* industry recognized certification option. The 2013-2015 high school students had *eight* industry recognized certification options.

Actions

- *Early Safety Training Program (ESTP)* – Grade 12 students had the opportunity to receive four industry recognized safety certifications at no cost: Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System, Young Worker Readiness, First Aid/CPR, and open elective. This opportunity was available to students through collaboration and partnership with Saskatchewan Safety Council. To date, 93 students completed ESTP certification.
- *Focus on Information Technology (FIT) Certification* – Presently FIT certification is available to all Prairie South students. The FIT program is part of Information and Communications Technology Council's (ICTC) youth initiative that focuses on providing tools to explore career possibilities in Canada's ICT sector. Prairie South teachers worked with ICTC to align Saskatchewan curricula with FIT competencies required for certification.
- *Saskatchewan Youth Apprenticeship (SYA)* – SYA enhances student career development by exploring the world of opportunities skilled trades offer Saskatchewan youth. A total of 123 students have been registered since 2011. Middle years' lesson plans have been developed to introduce SYA to grades 7 to 9 students.
- *Service Best Certification* – Service Best certification provides students with the opportunity to practice Service Best techniques, demonstrate skills when handling difficult customers, and develop and maintain a positive attitude for superior service and confidence in the role of service. Prairie South provided training for 16 teachers to be Service Best Certifiers. Currently, 204 students have completed Service Best Certification.

Enhancement Strategy – Collaborate with Business and Industry

Outcome: By September 2014, four formal Division-wide partnerships will be developed with business and industry to enhance PAA exploration opportunities for students.

Measurement: To date, twelve Division-wide partnerships have been formalized. The estimated value to enhance the Project is estimated at \$115,000.00.

Actions

- Hosted two Open-Space forums to bring education, industry and business together to investigate innovative ways to connect sectors and develop program opportunities for high school students. Fifty representatives from business, industry, and education representing twenty-five organizations attended the events. Information shared at the forum guided action plans for the Project.

- Presently forming a south industry and education advisory group to engage in a collaborative approach to the education and training of the next generation of workers that would produce important social as well as economic returns on investment – for education that translates to improved graduation rates.
- Current Prairie South Schools’ partners
 - Ministry of Agriculture
 - South Country Equipment
 - SaskTel
 - SaskPower
 - Work Safe Saskatchewan
 - Technical Safety Authority of Saskatchewan (TSask)
 - Information and Communications Technology Council (ICTC)
 - Workers Compensation Board and Youth Prevention
 - Saskatchewan Polytechnic
 - Saskatchewan Safety Council
 - Safe Saskatchewan
 - RM of Mankota
 - Saskatoon Industry and Education Council
- Partnerships currently in development
 - Cargill
 - Saskatchewan Association of Agricultural Societies & Exhibitions (SAASE)
 - Moose Jaw Construction Association
 - Saskatchewan Construction Association (SCA)
 - Moose Jaw Exhibition Company
 - C & S Builders
 - Saskatchewan Construction Safety Association (SCSA)
 - Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission
 - Junior Achievement Saskatchewan
- With industry partners, Prairie South developed three “Think Career” opportunities. The focus of these events is to provide hands-on, on-site experiences in a variety of sectors.
 - **Think Agriculture** – Partnered with South Country Equipment and the Ministry of Agriculture to provide a one day on-site experience for students to learn first-hand about some of the career opportunities present in the Agriculture industry. 56 students from 9 schools over two years have attended Think Ag.
 - **Think Construction** – Partnered with local trade contractors, Saskatchewan Construction Association, Trade Up Saskatchewan, and Moose Jaw Construction Association to engage 28 students from 7 schools in one year to learn about careers, safety and innovation in the construction industry.
 - **Think Information Technology** – Partnered with Saskatchewan Polytechnic and SaskTel to offer a three day workshop to engage students in: learning the principles of mobile application development; game development; emerging interfaces; graphic design fundamentals; and IT career options and opportunities. 96 students from 12 schools over two years participated.

Enhancement Strategy – Meeting the Challenges

Outcome: By September 2015, obstacles to deliver PAA courses will be reduced by 50% based on *PAA K-12 Principal Survey, Sept. 2012*.

Measurement: Baseline data reported lack of ‘teacher expertise’ an obstacle for 81% of schools; lack of ‘facilities’ as 56%; and lack of ‘equipment’ as 44%.

Actions

- Innovative Program Delivery Options - researched and implemented innovative delivery options for Practical and Applied Arts credits. Developed Magnet Program in three rural communities where students travel to central location to receive face-to-face instruction from expert teachers using state of the art equipment. Professional development was provided for teachers, equipment and transportation costs are covered by PAA funds allocated for the Project.
- Equipment Lending Library - PAA Project invested in a variety of equipment to be loaned out on a short term basis to schools. We applied and received the Stanley DeWalt Tool Grant through Skills Canada National Competition.
- Teacher Development - Provided Professional Learning days which focussed on enhancing teacher PAA skills and knowledge.
- Developed and distributed PAA marketing brochures to all K-12 high school students. Engaged Career Development Consultants in marketing PAA credit options and certifications to staff, students, and parents.

Sustainability and Costs of the Innovation Related to Benefits Achieved

The Prairie South Schools Board of Education made a significant capital investment with a goal of moving the Project into the operational budget so strategies would be sustainable within our division for many years. Career Development Consultants, supported by the designated Superintendent, will continue to build capacity with schools and communities to engage in innovative programs and connections with industry and business.

Through industry and business partnerships, we have developed an element of cost assumed by external benefactors. The contributions, which include financial commitment and in-kind resources to support programs, are substantial. Assisting with this significant impact of funding, the Board's commitment from the projected \$3 million was reduced to \$1.2 million.

The Practical and Applied Arts Enhancement Project opens the door to innovative strategies that can help broaden the range for students to gain meaningful work and educational experiences. The impact on students engaged in authentic learning opportunities is invaluable as we work to improve graduation rates in Prairie South Schools.

Evidence of Improved Student Learning

Student

"At South Country Equipment, I was able to learn about more than just tractors, parts and other basic agricultural related things. The Snapshot got us interacting in so many aspects of the John Deere business, making the experience memorable and fun. It is funny to think back and look at how that one day event opened the door for so many new possibilities." ~ Student who attended Think Career Exploration Opportunity

"Every day 5 I get to go to welding. I never wake up mad on a day 5 because I know it is a welding day." ~ Magnet Program Student

Parent

“Jess has really struggled with seeing the point of school but perhaps now sees a connection between what she can take in school and an eventual career in some kind of visual arts. Good motivation for her as it has allowed her to see bit of the bigger picture.” ~ Think IT Parent

“Daniel enjoyed talking to people who were knowledgeable about where he can take architecture and what he can expect to actually do once he has his training.” ~ Think Construction Parent

Teacher

“I have seen the Magnet Program positively impact students overall academic achievement by allowing them to build confidence by finding success in a school setting.” ~ Magnet Program Welding Teacher

“This event was very practical and informative for not only the students but myself as a teacher in the field. The people and events all lent themselves to ensuring the students got to see the real nature of construction and all that goes into the making of a successful Project. I can take away a multitude of ideas to incorporate into my own classroom to better prepare the students for a future in this field.” ~ Construction & Carpentry Teacher

“Being able to offer Energy and Mines in Prairie South School Division not only provides our students with a wonderful opportunity, but also all students in Saskatchewan as it is open to everyone. I believe that there is no other course that is as Saskatchewan-centric as this course is. Students not only learn about the energy and mining industries, but they learn about the geological history of Saskatchewan and they learn about our economy and various communities found here in Saskatchewan as well. I think it is highly commendable that we have had the vision and foresight to bring such an opportunity to our students on such a mass scale.” ~ Energy and Mines Teacher

Administrator

“The equipment we used from the PAA Project has provided tremendous opportunities for so many of our students.” ~ K to 12 Administrator

“The PAA Enhancement Project, and specifically the Magnet Program, has given our students choices and opportunities which they wouldn’t have had in each of the individual schools. We did not have the human and financial resources to provide a variety of pure PAA courses. In the Magnet Program, each school brings to the table a certain skill set that we are now able to share with the students in three schools, instead of just one. Without the money and support of Prairie South and its partners, we wouldn’t be able to develop a program like welding in our small rural schools, and we know that offering a program that is hands-on, engaging and can lead to a future career, is really priceless. The Magnet Program has already made such a difference in our students because it did influence a number of career plans just in the first year.” ~ Magnet Program Administrator

“The PAA Enhancement Project has given opportunity to our students to see the ‘real picture’ of what each field of endeavour has to offer. Our students enjoyed the Think Construction and Think Ag due to the hands-on nature of the activities and the real life look at what is really going on behind the scenes. These type of activities have spurred new interest in our PAA programs in school and made students take note of the many other opportunities that are available through such programs as Think IT. Students have returned with new knowledge and appreciation from the field that they can use to make informed choices about their future.” ~ Principal

“The PAA Project provides for cross-curricular connections with math and introduces middle years’ students to the possibility of a career in the trades. In developing the Think Construction with SCA, SCSA, C&S Builders, and Moose Jaw Construction Association, I am working with industry who want to tie-in the construction industry with what students are doing in the classroom.” ~ PAA Coordinator

Division Partners

“We thought if we encourage (young) people to get their certificates, they might see the promise of a good job in their home community and they are most likely to be engaged employees who want to stay.” ~ SaskPower

“The workshop gave the students a chance to use tools and see if they had an aptitude and interest in pursuing a career in the trades.” ~ Saskatchewan Construction Association

“The Ministry’s key focus for the Think AG program is to give students the opportunity to explore the potential in agriculture careers. It helps demonstrate the diversity of the industry and presents networking events for students to form lasting impressions of the opportunities in agriculture.” ~ Ministry of Agriculture

Conclusion

The implementation of this Project reminds us that in order to provide equitable opportunities for our students we must develop a more effective and holistic strategy with sector partners to engage students in a variety of experiences. This Project provides systemic innovation with benefits for every school and every student regardless of geographic location. Innovative strategies to increase student engagement in school are one of our focus areas as we implement the Education Sector Strategic Plan in Prairie South Schools. We are delighted that graduation rates across Prairie South have increased during the Project pilot period, and we are working to determine to what extent the PAA Project is responsible for this.

The development and maintenance of partnerships with other educational institutions and with business requires a significant commitment of time; however, the Board continues to support this work because of the differences this is making for students across Prairie South Schools. As we move forward with the development of new opportunities for children, we embrace our mission of *“Learning together”* as a community of stakeholders who take collective responsibility for our students.

