

The Alberta Initiative for School Improvement (AISI) Grants are available to school districts across the province to develop innovative projects with the goal of improving student learning through initiatives that enhance student engagement.

Edmonton Catholic Schools will implement five new AISI projects this September that will run for the next three years. The Grant amount for 2009-2010 is \$4,404,901.00.

Literacy Strategies for the 21st Century

Literacy in the 21st century is much broader than knowing how to read and write. Students of the 21st century must know how to use information processing, communication, and research tools to access, manage, integrate, evaluate, create and communicate information in a variety of forms and contexts. This project will have four main themes: basic literacy, digital literacy, content literacy, and balanced literacy.

Basic Literacy:

- Students who struggle with basic reading will be supported through a variety of strategies in this project. Pull-out programs, differentiated instruction, computer-assisted instruction, and a diagnostic reading assessment tool are just a few of the supports that will be provided for these students. Although the primary focus will be on students in grades 7-10, supports for grades 1-6 students that were established in our Cycle 3 literacy project will be sustained.

-Tracking students' reading abilities from grade to grade will identify struggling readers, and effective program supports will be provided.

Digital Literacy:

-Digital technology and communication tools will be integrated across many subject areas. In Math, Science, Social Studies, Language Arts, and Fine Arts, students will "interpret, use, appreciate, and create images and video" (Metiri, 2003) using a variety of media. Students will also use a variety of information and communication technologies to gather, create, and communicate information.

Content Literacy:

- Across many subject areas, instructional strategies such as reciprocal teaching, graphic organizers, writing to learn, note taking, anticipation guides and so forth will be used. These language and literacy skills will be transparent and transportable across grades and subjects.

-Instructional strategies to support students with comprehension of expository text will support literacy in many content areas.

Balanced Literacy:

- Balanced literacy strategies (successfully used with elementary students in Cycles 2 and 3) will be extended to grades 7-10, in both English and second language programs.

A variety of professional development models will be included: peer coaching, inter-visitation, the interactive web 2.0 district portal, iLead Leadership Technology, and consultant teams organized by triads (serving schools of similar demographic composition).

The project will also bridge with the high school completion AISI project #40012, to support literacy skills of struggling grade 10 students.

High School Completion

The overarching goal of this project is to improve high school completion rates with a focus on the interventions needed as the stimuli to change the path of non-completing students. The five strategies outlined in the Alberta High School Completion Framework (2009) will be addressed.

Thirty schools will build their capacity in the delivery of responsive and effective interventions to improve the overall rate of high school completion.

Tracking Progress:

This project will define and expand criteria to identify non-completer students and the specific obstacles that deter them from high school completion. The criteria will be expanded to explicitly include FNMI, ESL and special needs. We will identify the unique barriers that deter particular populations from completing high school.

The project will also include monitoring of targeted students earning Grade 10 credits and a Course Mark Inquiry for all Grade 12 students to ensure they have requirements for high school diplomas.

Successful Transitions:

This project will continue using effective strategies from Cycle 3 to support students making transitions between schools, grades, and beyond school. Strategies include: transition plans for identified junior high students, high school completion checklists, exit plans for high school students, and third-year non-completer strategies for high school students. Targeted grade twelve students will be supported in their transition from school to work or post-secondary. In addition, a grade 9.5 class will be started in high school where grade nine repeaters can complete grade nine requirements in semester one and begin grade 10 credits in the second semester.

To make school more relevant for students and to improve transitions from school to the workplace/post-secondary, career exploration, Career and Technology Studies, and community resources will be explored.

Positive Connections:

Students who have been expelled or at-risk for expulsion will be supported through the Assessment, Support and Intervention Success Team (ASIST). Our mentorship program

will be enhanced to support targeted grade 9-12 students. Mentors (AISI reps) will work with students to develop school completion plans, career transition plans, and where necessary, receive counseling and academic support. Targeted students will receive support in the completion of English and Social Studies - the courses that most students lack after three years. An English/Social Studies consultant will work directly with identified students to provide this support.

Personalized Learning:

The project will develop responsive approaches to addressing individual student's abilities and interests. This will include more opportunities for distance learning, infusing culture or language into courses, and providing more flexible programming. In one school a pilot project for identified grade 10 students will begin in the fall of 2009. This will be a distinct designer program for identified students taking English and Social Studies in a specific high school. This program will have its own teacher to work with a group of approximately fifteen Grade 10 students taking English and Social Studies. The project will include a dedicated consultant to support FNMI and ESL students as well as an English/Social Studies consultant. These consultants will work directly with teachers and students to support that are develop a plan for improving student success.

Collaborative Partnerships:

Staff from this project will work closely with staff from other departments in the District. This would include: Revelation On Line, ASSIST, Learning Support Services, STAY, Educational and Administrative Technology Services, and other District AISI projects. This project's aim is to work collaboratively with the YMCA Youth Transitions program, high school completion projects from other districts, and Alberta Education staff.

Inquiry Skills for the 21 st. Century

In AISI Cycle IV, Edmonton Catholic Schools, through Inquiry Based Learning, will increase student understanding of learning outcomes for students in grades four to six in the areas of Social Studies, Science and Mathematics. Through professional development sessions, teachers will learn to act as facilitators to guide their students in personalizing their own learning. In order to live and work in the 21st Century, our students need to learn how to think critically, problem solve, analyze new information and communicate their new learning to others. Through Inquiry Based Learning, the student's own curiosity will drive the learning process, heightening student engagement. Students will take ownership of their learning. Students will be directed to ask questions and then investigate to find answers to those questions. This process will create new knowledge and understanding and students will learn how to learn.

Leadership For ALL in the 21st Century

This project will be based on life changing principles that support our students and can bring maximum long-term beneficial results. They become the basis of a person's character and speak to the "sacredness" of a school and school culture. Thus, in order to

increase the individual and collective effectiveness of the students and staff of St. Charles School, and to enhance the effectiveness of the school as an organization designed to meet the needs of its stakeholders in the 21st Century, we will work to learn, teach, share, model, practice and re-enforce the essence of the building of leadership in ALL students.

In short, this initiative will bring about teaching basic leadership principles to young students (K-6) and provide opportunities for students to apply these skills in the classroom, in the school, and in the community. The initiative will improve student achievement and support discipline and character ethics in the classroom and on the playground. Through this initiative we need to bring a professional learning community (PLC) opportunity with the necessary time and resources to move everyone forward by developing common language and the use of current approaches with all students, staff and parents. At the same time it will NOT create "one more thing" for teachers to do, but rather offers a methodology that many describe as "a better way of doing what we were already doing."

Embedded within the current core teaching will be lesson plans and activities that will support the goal of all students becoming leaders. Students will be engaged in class discussions and activities each week as they learn the concepts (principles) and practice and develop the skills inherent in the 7 Habits of Highly Effective People. The classroom activities will include a wide variety of activities and approaches and will frequently be provided within the context of the prescribed Alberta Education curriculum, especially in Language Arts, Social Studies, Religion and Health. Ongoing strategies will be used to develop each principle, concept or skill taught throughout the week as students and teachers work to apply the leadership qualities in their daily interactions as they seek out a variety of 'teachable moments' that arise each day. Students will be engaged in class as well as home activities as they work to make leadership skills habits of effectiveness in their lives.

Body Mind and Spirit

This innovative project from Edmonton Catholic Schools is a comprehensive approach to health promotion involving the home, school, and community. Students require the knowledge of a variety of topics which include healthy eating, physical activity, mental wellness, and spiritual connectiveness to achieve overall wellness. We need to teach the students the skills and reinforce wellness outcomes through the Physical Education, Health and Life Skills and CALM Programs of Studies by engaging them in various activities that will further their ability to constructively make healthy choices. Students will participate in a variety of authentic experiences that promote a healthy body, mind, and spirit. These may include symposiums, community service, philanthropy, student leadership, E-portfolios, digital storytelling, health fairs, pedometer activities, 21st Century physical education endeavours, peer education, skill training and video-conferencing.

During the first year of the project, we will involve all 25 junior high schools, 5 elementary schools and 1 high school.

An important aspect of this project is involving students in leadership roles within the school and community. Participating schools will identify a teacher "Champion" and create a student leadership team that will work together to create and implement strategies towards the development of a healthy body, mind and spirit. Schools will use the Healthy Schools Indicator Tool - a pre and post survey - to assess school culture in the areas of healthy eating, physical activity, mental wellness and spirituality. The team will develop a school Work Plan with SMART Goals and strategies to achieve their goals. This will help create a shared vision with their parents, students, staff and community. This process recognizes the uniqueness within each school and creates a learning environment that promotes the individual needs of each school community and the students within it.

Strong partnerships with various and diverse community agencies will foster innovation and creativity of our 21st century learners. Formal partnerships include: (1) Alberta Health Services, Capital Region, (2) Hope Foundation of Alberta, (3) University of Alberta, (4) Canadian Mental Health Association, (5) HOPSPORTS, and (6) Edmonton Public Schools.

Professional Development will occur throughout the year with the teacher "Champions", School Health Nurses and various partner presentations. The project consultant will coordinate half day sessions, along with an adult and student symposium during the year. The professional sharing and structured collaboration time will provide valuable learning opportunities for participating schools..