



Supporting Classroom Teachers



“Always remember that teaching is not just about communicating content, but about forming young people. You need to understand and love them, to awaken their innate thirst for truth and their yearning for transcendence. Be for them a source of encouragement and strength.

For this to happen, we need to realize in the first place that the path to the fullness of truth calls for complete commitment: it is a path of understanding and love, of reason and faith. We cannot come to know something unless we are moved by love; or, for that matter, love something which does not strike us as reasonable.

“Understanding and love are not in separate compartments: love is rich in understanding and understanding is full of love” (Caritas in Veritate, 30). If truth and goodness go together, so too do knowledge and love. This unity leads to consistency in life and thought, that ability to inspire demanded of every good educator.” (Pope Benedict XVI – August 19, 2011)

Division and School Based Support Services

There is a range of personnel that are available to support teachers with addressing diversity in the classroom. At the school level, this may include a learning coach, the Learning Services Facilitators, the Learning Assistance Teachers, Administration and expertise from other classroom teachers in the school. At the division level, this may include the ELL Lead Teacher, FNMI Teacher, Division Psychologist and the Associate Superintendent of Learning Services. Explanations of the services and supports provided by these staff members can be found in the roles and responsibilities section of this document.

Learning Assistants and Behaviour Associates

The Paraprofessional’s Guide to the Inclusive Classroom: Working as a Team by Mary Beth Doyle

Learning Assistants and Behaviour Associates assist students and teachers in inclusion-oriented classroom communities in a variety of ways. They provide direct and indirect support to classroom teachers, to individual students, and to all students in the classroom, and they engage in positive interactions with other members of the instructional team (e.g., educators, therapists, other learning assistants and behaviour associates). Caring and supportive school personnel, including learning assistants and behavioural associates, can make a difference in a student’s ability or inability to manage stress, avoid self-destructive behaviour, and grow into an emotionally healthy adult.

Learning assistants and behaviour associates specific responsibilities may include preparing materials or making adaptations to support individual student’s learning, providing assistance with instructional delivery, implementing teacher-designed individualized instruction, and assisting with classroom management. These tasks may be carried out in the general education classrooms, in a variety of common spaces throughout the school, in support centers in the school or in the community depending on the student’s age and individualized program plan.

Reform, Professional Learning and Capacity Building

Professional learning increases the knowledge and skills that teachers bring to the craft and science of teaching. Perpetual professional learning is the groundwork for positive changes in our schools. Professional learning must include knowledge creation and knowledge sharing (Earl and Katz, 2005) to ensure that all voices are represented and that we recognize that there is no essential knowledge but rather a continued quest towards deeper representation of all with our knowledge base.

Distributed, deep and sustained changes in practice and structures in school are key elements of professional learning and have impact on student learning, engagement and success in a knowledge society (Earl and Katz, 2005). Professional Learning works to engage all learners and strives for student success and includes the following:

- Changes in thinking and practices of teachers
- Collaborative inquiry at various levels within the school
- Pursuit of innovation (Katz, Earl and Jaafar, 2009)

Professional learning for general and special education staff should be linked to improved educational outcomes for all students. Administrators, Learning Services staff and other teacher leaders provide leadership to align general and special education reform and improvement with respect to the creation of a community of learners that is inclusive of all students.

AISI Cycle 5: Differentiated Instruction

Differentiated instruction is a philosophy and an approach to teaching in which teachers and school communities actively work to support the learning of all students through strategic assessment, thoughtful planning and targeted, flexible instruction.

Differentiating instruction has been described as ‘shaking up’ what goes on in the classroom so students have multiple opportunities for taking in information, making sense of ideas and expressing what they learn.

Most teachers naturally incorporate elements of differentiated instruction to some degree in their classrooms every day. Every time you use a pre-test to help you plan a learning activity, present information in multiple ways or offer choice in the format for a final project, you are reflecting the key belief of differentiated instruction—that all students can learn, in their own ways and in their own time. In other words, making a commitment to a more differentiated classroom does not mean starting over, but rather building on current best instructional practices in an explicit, intentional, focused and systematic manner.

AISI Project Cycle V Guiding Statement: Medicine Hat Catholic Board of Education will maximize learning by supporting teachers in their capacity to assess and deliver differentiated instruction that supports the diverse needs of all students.

Project Description:

Within Medicine Hat Catholic Board of Education, we plan to link our journey with Assessment for Learning to Differentiated Instruction so there is alignment between assessment and instructional practices. The division will maximize learning by supporting teachers in their capacity to assess and provide differentiated instruction that supports the diverse needs of all students.

To differentiate instruction, teachers will intentionally plan to make the curriculum, instruction and learning environment meaningful and appropriate for each student. By offering multiple avenues and options for students to access curricular content, process concepts and skills and demonstrate learning, student diversity will be accommodated.

This project will support the teachers and the students in the learning environments for all subject areas through learning coaches and professional learning communities.

By building on the success of assessment for learning in the past AISI cycles, Differentiated Instruction provides a logical progression to answer the question “now that we know where students are at, how we reach them at their instructional level?” Evidence of increased engagement in student learning and active participation in learning environments will be demonstrated through increased academic achievement and interest in learning.

Project Focus: MHCBE will use a variety of pedagogies and a differentiated instruction approach to respond to a diverse range of student abilities, interests and needs.

Areas identified from schools included...

- collaborative planning and modeling of differentiated lessons/units so that content, process, and product are addressed.
- response to intervention in literacy or numeracy
- improving reading through balanced literacy

Student Learning:

- increased engagement of students will lead to increased student learning
- Increased reading levels (interventions)
- Increased numeracy levels
- Continue using a variety of assessment methods/portfolios
- Increased ownership of learning

Instructional Strategies:

- Multiple Intelligences
- Engagement Strategies
- Balanced Literacy and LLI
- Planning for differentiation – tiering and scaffolding
- Learning centers
- Guided practice
- Students showing knowledge in a variety of ways
- Flexible grouping
- Technology – Raz kids/digital sites (elementary)
- Integration of fine arts in all assignments (fine arts elementary)
- Project-based learning
- Inquiry-based learning

School Community

- Parental involvement in developing learning plans with students
- Parent involvement in the form of volunteers in reading
- Involve high school students in the form of volunteers in reading
- Parent meetings on differentiation (open forum)
- School Council input
- Engagement activities – use community facilities to enhance awareness
- Social media to obtain input
- Parent association – obtain input and communicate to school councils

Knowledge Dissemination:

- Newsletters
- Brochures
- PLC division and school
- Survey results – post on website
- Media – successes
- Parent-teacher interviews

AISI Themes: Differentiated Instruction Link:

<http://education.alberta.ca/admin/aisi/themes/differentiated-instruction.aspx>

***Making a Difference: Meeting Diverse Learning Needs with Differentiated Instruction* Link:**

<http://education.alberta.ca/teachers/resources/cross/making-a-difference.aspx>