

Affirm Refine Aspire

HS Learning Services Newsletter - January 2021

Happy New Year!

For many, the new year is the time to set resolutions. These resolutions usually have us resolving to stop doing certain things, or to start doing other things. Often, resolutions are short-lived and long-forgotten! This year, I would like to challenge all of our Holy Spirit staff to view their **professional 'resolutions'** in a different light.



For the last year and a half, 'Affirm, Refine, Aspire' has been the theme of not only our monthly Learning Services newsletters, but also guided our Collaboration Days, and continues to be a phrase we use often. These three simple words are the lens through which I am pursuing my own professional learning and growth, as well as the learning and opportunities for growth we have undertaken as an entire Division. This concept originates from the book "Creating Thinking Classrooms: Leading Educational Change for This Century" by Garfield Gini-Newman & Roland Case (Corwin, 2018), and perfectly encapsulates **an approach to growing and improving our teaching practice:**

Affirm: *Recognizing and sharing the great work that we already do.*

Refine: *What is one element of our practice we can easily modify or do more effectively that will support the changes we wish to see?*

Aspire: *What is the long term vision/goal for change? What are some more significant changes we can make? How will we know when we've been successful?*

When we view our goals for professional growth and learning "...as an ongoing renovation rather than a short-lived abrupt change," (Gini-Newman & Case, p. 66) we have a much more sustainable plan for reflective practice and ongoing growth. ***What will you "Affirm, Refine, Aspire" to this year?***

Carmen Larsen
Director of Learning



Assessment

Continued learning for all students needs to build on what they can do and understand at this point in time - they have no choice but to begin from where they are. By this point in the school year (even an unusual one such as this!) teachers have collected a great deal of information, both formally and informally, about the skills and understandings their students currently have. The following ideas address how we might help students to take the next step forward in their learning.

Share exemplars, and have students identify where they see quality work in these samples. When students understand the destination, they are much more likely to get there. One caution: Use exemplars that are within students' reach.

Create a single-point rubric to clarify the criterion for success. These simple rubrics, with just one column of criteria, are faster to create, more likely to be read and understood by students, and lead to more targeted feedback. Read more about single-point rubrics [here](#).



Indigenous Education for All

Iiyika'kimaa is a Blackfoot term, meaning "Try hard" or "Try your best".

On November 20, we were very blessed to have **Dr. Dustin Louie from the University of Calgary work with us for a half day to take us through a presentation called Decolonizing and Indigenizing Approaches to Education**. This work fits in with our Board Priority, First Nations, Metis and Inuit Education For All. For those of you who would like to watch or re-watch the presentation, please refer to Joann Bartley's email from Dec 9, or contact her to request the link.

The resource Dr. Louie referenced in his presentation can be found here: [Decolonizing Methodologies](#).

Educational resources to support reconciliation can be found here: [Empowering the Spirit](#).

Coursera offers the course: ["Indigenous Canada"](#) presented by University of Alberta.



Literacy

Professional Learning for K-6 Teachers: Layers of Reading Development: Moving Research into Best Practice

If you've ever wondered about the miracle of how children learn to read, this free professional learning opportunity is for you! This comprehensive six-part series will address phonological awareness and phonics, word study, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension, as well as a follow-up conversation and planning session. If there's a cohort of teachers interested in participating, we could also explore opportunities for collaborative work. Check it out [here](#).

Professional Learning for Grades 7 - 12 ELA teachers: Learn. Design. Apply: Writing.

This series includes three sessions with Kelly Gallagher, as well as opportunities to discuss and collaborate with colleagues from around the province on how the ideas and strategies might look in the context of Alberta curriculum. Session titles are: The Importance of Volume: Motivating Adolescent Writers; Moving Writers from Compliance to Engagement; and

Give feedback students can use by naming what they are already doing and clarifying how to move forward. Try to set aside judgment, make feedback actionable, and focus on the learning rather than the task.

Teach self-assessment by providing a structure such as Plus-Minus-Interesting. Using this strategy, students would identify positives in their work, areas for growth, and things they tried or want to explore further.

Alberta Assessment Consortium professional learning opportunities [here](#).

We would like to acknowledge that the land on which we gather is the traditional territories of the Blackfoot Nations and the people of the Treaty 7 region in Southern Alberta.

The lessons within the following workshop may specifically refer to Cree, Dene, and other Indigenous groups that are in Treaty 8 Territory:

Infusing Indigenous Knowledge into the Curriculum:
[Mamawhitowin "Coming Together" 2020 - Series 3.](#)

Assessment and Grading Practices that Encourage Growth in Writers. For more information, click [here](#).

Professional Collaboration for Elementary Writing Teachers Writing is a challenge for many elementary students . . . and teachers! If you are interested in **exploring instructional strategies and sharing ideas with colleagues for supporting young writers**, see the attached form: <https://forms.gle/NBJyk7ip1iTzBLt68>

A Word About Cultures of Thinking...

Click Here!

Thinking Classrooms in Action...

Click Here!

How to Build Relationships with Students...

Click Here!



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