All collegiate students will be engaged in their learning so that they graduate as competent, active participants in lifelong learning and as responsible, caring, culturally responsive citizens in the community, nation, and world. In pursuit of this goal, we will focus intensively on the engagement, achievement, and graduation rates of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis students.
Introduction

Over the last decade in Collegiate Renewal, the work to grow student learning and engagement has been accomplished through professional learning to refine classroom practices, and through direct intervention with students. School-based leaders, with support from division leaders, have reframed our schools as places where many more students are academically successful because students’ needs drive instruction and professional learning. We are now seeing improvements in credit attainment as a result.

Focused Professional Learning

The increases in student engagement and achievement that we have seen in our collegiates are directly linked to the professional learning of our teachers. This year, as we celebrated the successes of ten years of Collegiate Renewal as a priority in Saskatoon Public Schools, we took the opportunity to complete a review of all professional learning processes in secondary schools. Over the course of six months, a 20 person working group engaged in gathering and analyzing data from secondary schools and viewing division-wide data. The group determined the relative impacts of various structures using the Standards for Professional Learning from Learning Forward and made recommendations to improve the effectiveness of professional learning for secondary educators, including:

1. Making feedback and collaboration the main focal points of professional learning;
2. Changing the secondary schedule to provide more effective time for professional learning;
3. Reframing Teacher Learning Group (TLG) time as collaboration time;
4. Making instructional coaching and feedback the main roles of Learning Leaders;
5. Focusing data teams on making decisions based on data and monitoring the impact of those decisions;
6. Making structural changes to Common Department Meetings (CDM);

Secondary and senior administrators suggested the implementation of the recommendations in 2017-18. A trial of changes in recommendations one, three, and six this spring gave initial anecdotal indication of positive impact on teacher practice. The recommendation regarding Learning Leaders was the focus of work that concluded in the spring of 2017. Learning Coordinators will assume some of the instructional leadership no longer provided by Learning Leaders. There was a 9% decrease in the staff perception survey results of staff saying, “I have sufficient opportunities for professional development”. As a whole, changes to professional learning will address the desire of secondary teachers for more opportunities to develop professionally. We look forward to the effect these changes will have on teacher practice and student learning, especially in the implementation of formative, outcomes-based assessment, and responsive instruction in all secondary classes.

Data Teams

Each high school had a data team focused on the ongoing collection of data to plan interventions for students in need of additional supports. The teams collected school-wide data. In an April 2017 survey, seven of the data teams rated themselves as “good” or “very good” at “helping teachers review data to identify struggling learners.” Most schools identified “helping teachers make plans to support students” as an important next step.

Evidence of the progress of data teams is best viewed by looking at credit attainment, particularly in the grade ten year, when students are first required to gain credits. While 3% more Saskatoon Public Schools students carried a full course load according to provincial on-time graduation data from 2017, it is the data about credit completion that is most exciting. There was an 8% increase in grade 10 students completing enough credits in the grade 10 year to be on track to graduate on time. The number of students on track increased from mid-term to end of term in each semester, indicating successful interventions when students struggle. Next year, we will continue to support secondary data teams as they lead school initiatives that respond to student learning needs.
Literacy

Our continued literacy work focused on assessing the reading skills that students need to be effective readers in core subject areas at the high school level. Working with our locally developed assessment tool, Secondary Literacy Assessment Matters (SLAM), we worked with seven pilot school teams. Each pilot school team included a curricular representative from grades 9 or 10 English Language Arts, History, Science, and Math. The teams also included one or more members in an instructional support role such as Learning Leader, resource teacher, English as an additional language (EAL) teacher, or teacher librarian. Teachers ran two assessment cycles per semester, calibrated scoring, and developed instructional responses to develop specific literacy skills of their students. Teachers reported that the SLAM assessment deepened their understanding of discipline literacy skills, increased the variety of text forms used in their subject areas, and increased collaboration and shared responsibility for assessing reading skills across the content areas. Results from the SLAM assessment indicate students in discipline areas need: experiences that build on prior knowledge, assistance in making connections, and support in reflecting on strategic learning habits. Next year, expect us to widen the circle of colleagues using the SLAM assessment to identify and address the literacy needs of struggling students.

In addition to fostering reading skills, teachers focused on growing grade 9 writers. As part of the provincial strategic planning process, teachers used the newly developed Ministry of Education writing rubric. Informational writing skills required for English Language Arts 9 were collaboratively assessed in second term. This year’s initial results indicate students demonstrated strengths in mechanics, punctuation, grammar, and content, but organization, word choice and variety of sentence structure were areas of greater concern. Teachers reported their students demonstrated a wide range of needs and attended responsive instructional support sessions to learn strategies designed to help students build those skills. Next year, expect us to assess writing skills through a writing portfolio throughout both semesters.

First Nation, Inuit, and Métis Supports

The 2016-17 school year allowed for the continuation of two existing initiatives to support First Nation, Inuit, and Métis students. The First Nation, Inuit, and Métis Student Achievement program continued in six Saskatoon Public Schools Collegiates and contributed to increased credit attainment. In Semester 1 of the 2016-17 school year, 396 students received support. Of these students, 78.1% successfully obtained the credit in question.

The second initiative is the role of the Learning Leader: First Nation, Inuit and Métis Student Success, which was a position in four Saskatoon Public Schools Collegiates. The teachers in these positions engaged colleagues in data discussions about the success of Indigenous students and facilitated learning sessions to support growth and success for all First Nation, Inuit, and Métis students. These teacher leaders also led experiences for staff such as the KAIROS Blanket Exercise, which supported staff to develop their professional cultural competence.

Curriculum Renewal in Science

Secondary Science educators focused their professional learning on providing safe, inquiry-based instruction that is culturally responsive. Science teachers engaged in this learning through school-based Teacher Learning Groups (TLGs), division-wide common department meetings, and subject specific curriculum focus groups. Science teachers have been growing collaborative communities to support effective implementation of Science 10, 20, and 30 courses. Additional Science curriculum focus in the 2016-17 school year has been the writing and renewal of Computer Science 20/30, Robotics 10/20/30, Science 10, Science 11, and Health Science 21.

Saskatoon Public Schools science teachers are leaders on the provincial writing, pilot and implementation support teams. Our science teacher leaders described this process as revitalizing. 2017/2018 will see us continue this work, while broadening our understanding of Indigenous ways of knowing and integrating these strategies into science instruction. This school year is the final year where senior sciences are the main focus of curriculum renewal; renewal in social sciences, the arts, French, and practical and applied arts resumes in the fall of 2017. Expect to see maintenance work in the sciences and expanded work on curriculum renewal in the other new curricula as they are completed.
Mathematics

In 2016-17, secondary mathematics teachers continued to engage in professional learning at the school and division level focused on meeting the needs of students who struggle with mathematics, including:

- Culturally responsive instruction in mathematics;
- Discussing instructional best practices in mathematics as described by researcher John Hattie;
- Exploring effective instruction of Math 9 over two semesters with the infusion of Practical and Applied Arts outcomes.

Secondary Learning Coordinators helped to create screeners for a variety of math courses as common formative assessments for 20 level Math courses. Learning Coordinators met for three half days to create screeners, and to discuss professional learning for secondary math teachers. The screeners will be piloted during the 2017-18 school year.

Tommy Douglas, Mount Royal, and Bedford Road Collegiates made significant alterations to the previous Math 9+ delivery model. Teachers have reported that student learning has been positively affected. We anticipate that similar changes, alongside intervention best practices, will form the foundation of a new Math 9+ framework.

Instructional Coaching

Instructional coaching is designed to help teachers with implementation of new practices they are learning. In the fall of 2016, 11% of Learning Leaders rated themselves as experienced coaches, with the remainder stating they started coaching within the last year. By December 2017, 77% were observing in classrooms and 47% reported the feedback they provided teachers occurred bi-monthly. Collegiate Renewal team members supported Learning Leaders in using effective coaching practices through one-on-one support. Indicators of the impact of instructional coaching on student engagement can be found in the division’s Our School results from November 2016. The number of students reporting high skills and high challenge were still noteworthy and consistent at 11% above national norms. However, students reported the frequency of responsive instruction dropped slightly.

Teacher sharing with colleagues, which is a hallmark of good coaching and professional learning, increased this year. In the teacher Tell Them From Me survey, teachers reported increases in frequency of:

- Discussing personal learning goals with colleagues;
- Discussing instructional strategies with specific students with colleagues;
- Discussing assessment strategies with each other;
- Sharing lesson plans with each other;
- Sharing student engagement plans with each other;
- Collaboratively developing cross-curricular learning;
- Teachers providing each other with useful feedback about teaching.

The final two, collaboration and feedback, were reported least frequently. Given these results, assistance for implementation of responsive instruction will be provided by administrators in 2017-18. Learning Coordinators and the data team will also support consistent, high-quality instruction and assessment. Feedback and collaboration will be mainstays of this work.

Conclusion

Professional learning in 2017-18 will focus on ongoing expectations for formative assessment and responsive instruction, and increased support for culturally competent/responsive instruction. In addition, secondary teachers will be learning to use outcomes-based assessment to understand and respond to specific learning expectations with students who are experiencing difficulty. School administrators will observe in classrooms to see these practices and provide feedback so that all teachers can be increasingly successful with the use of research-based instruction. The updated assessment
handbook and a focused professional learning agenda will support teachers in implementing outcomes-based assessment in at least one course each semester in 2017-18.

Next year, the Collegiate Renewal team will support school-based leaders with three specific skills:

- Interpreting data to make strong decisions at the school level;
- Ensuring the expected practices of formative assessment and responsive instruction;
- Providing useful feedback and coaching teachers to implement outcomes-based assessment.

Secondary administrators and teacher leaders will apply these skills to their leadership of student centered professional learning. With the assistance of their leaders, SPS teachers will continue to refine their ability to precisely identify students’ learning needs and respond with increasingly effective supports. We look forward to improvements in measures of student engagement and learning as all secondary educators and central office leaders pursue these common targets throughout 2017-18.