

# SD68 Project Success

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*We need each other to test out ideas, to share what we're learning, to help us see in new ways, to listen to our stories.*

*We need each other to forgive us when we fail, to trust us with our dreams, to offer their hope when we've lost our own.*

*Margaret Wheatley*

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## Executive Summary

We need many eyes, Margaret Wheatley says, to be wise: “Whatever we know, it is not sufficient. We can’t see enough of the whole. We can’t figure it out alone. Somebody sees something that the rest of us might need.” Nowhere is this more important than in education, where our goal is to find a learning path for a spectrum of unique individuals. At no time is this more important than now, as our world changes at a dizzying pace.



Project Success is a simple idea, begun last year, to tackle a complex issue: how can we improve success for our vulnerable learners? We gave interested schools a small grant to allow them to collaborate to explore that question in return for their commitment to attend six district meetings to share what they learned and to learn with others. Many eyes, we believe, will make us all wiser. This year we added the “strands”. These strands focus our attention in particular areas that we believe will strengthen our schools projects by extending and deepening support and also our broader project: success for all.

**Grade Two Strand:** Will focusing on interventions for grade twos who are not yet meeting expectations on reading performance standards improve success?

**Technology Strand:** Will learning together to use technology effectively enhance the success of school projects?

**Teacher-Librarian Strand:** Will learning together to support collaboration, inquiry and technology enhance the success of school projects?

## Key Learnings

- The more people actively involved in the inquiry, the more meaningful the project becomes for the whole school and for each child.
- Trust is the key factor in effective and meaningful collaboration.
- Planning together is essential for effective collaboration and to create a blueprint for action to ensure follow-up.
- Sharing of actions and celebration of progress inspires continued effort.
- Structures for ongoing learning, if co-created and organized by the whole team (PLCs, for example, or commitment to coaching, book clubs, or workshop series), provide the support necessary for continued effort.
- “Learning by doing” strategies with supportive team members and opportunities for reflection accelerate progress.
- Peer learning structures facilitate learning, distribute leadership, and promote a learning culture that accelerates progress.

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## PROJECT SUCCESS INQUIRIES

### Will focussed district-wide collaborative inquiry improve success for vulnerable learners?

**BAYVIEW:** Will providing students with a variety of field trips and in-school experiences improve language development in oral and written communication? Will using formative assessment strategies improve written communication?

**Highlight:** Using fieldtrips to build common experience and common language for writing.

**CEDAR:** How can we promote and encourage academic uses for handheld electronic devices, social media and web based software to promote and encourage learning in our student body?

**Highlight:** Using iPods, web 2.0 tools, Khan Academy, and Facebook to engage and connect students.

**CHASE RIVER:** How can we use assistive technology to support literacy development and increase written output?

**Highlight:** Building social relationships (between staff, with students, for students with learning challenges) through technology with a focus on assistive technology and developing basic skills of staff.

**CILAIRE:** Will working together to create, find or share resources support our vulnerable learners?

**Highlight:** Developing identification strategies and multiple intervention tools to ensure each child is supported to read (focus on guided reading, Reading Recovery and online tools for reading - Tumble Readables and Accelerated Reader).

**CINNABAR:** Will a collaborative, focused approach on teacher professional learning in multiple classrooms support and improve student understanding of how to use and make meaningful assessment?

**Highlight:** Using e-portfolios as reflective assessment for students, teachers, parents.

**COAL TYEE:** How can we use technology to support vulnerable learners?

**Highlight:** Mentoring – teacher-teacher; teacher-student, student-teacher, student-student – to find effective ways to improve math and to use technology (iPods, iPads, laptops) to support diverse learners.



John Barsby's PLC team

**DAVIS ROAD:** Will mathematical concept development be improved with the application of the Reading Power strategy “making connections”, in addition to last year’s focus on “visualization”?

**Highlight:** Building math optimism through play and collaboration between students and teachers (focus on making connections in math).

**DEPARTURE BAY:** Will the implementation of a School-Wide Social Responsibility program have an impact on vulnerable students?

**Highlight:** Building common experiences, common language and concrete examples of empowering habits across the school and multiple opportunities for student leadership (focus on the 7 Habits).

**DOVER BAY:** How can co-planning in cross curricular teaching partnerships support student learning at the secondary level?

**Highlight:** Cross-curricular partnership to extend and deepen learning (focus on inquiry, peer coaching, engagement and personalization).

**FAIRVIEW:** How do we engage and educate diverse learners within our vulnerable community?

**Highlight:** Hands-on, creative approaches to content learning.

**FOREST PARK:** Will utilizing technology in the classroom with some of our most vulnerable learners improve their writing skills and attitudes?

**Highlight:** Using various digital and small-group approaches to engage students in purposeful writing so that they see themselves as writers.



**Proactive Departure Bay Teachers**



**Imaginative Math at Gabriola**

**FRANK J NEY:** Will hosting a series of “Project Learning” events actively engage our vulnerable students and increase their sense of belonging?

**Highlight:** Engaging staff and students in project-based learning.

**GABRIOLA:** How can we develop the numeracy literacy of all students by incorporating imagination and play into our teaching?

**Highlight:** Whole-school engagement in multiple strategies and cross-grade projects to learn math imaginatively.

**GEORGIA:** Will learning together to use math related literature and mathematical manipulatives across the grades help to improve students’ mathematical enjoyment?

**Highlight:** Building professional development (workshops and demo classes), math resources (manipulatives and literature-based lessons) and peer teaching to build confidence and joy in math learning.



**HAMMOND BAY:** Will creating a culture of Professional Learning Communities within our school increase the time and the opportunities for us to work together to better support our vulnerable learners?



Hammond Bay Teacher-Directed Inquiries

**Highlight:** Using teacher-chosen inquiry and buddy classes engaged in meaningful activities to drive purposeful ongoing professional development.

**JOHN BARSBY:** Will continued implementation of our professional learning community lead to improved student achievement in all areas?

**Highlight:** Sustaining a school-wide PLC/intervention model.

**LADYSMITH INTERMEDIATE:** How can we use educational technology and new media to create ramps that overcome written language difficulties in order to make non-fiction content accessible to all?

**Highlight:** Identifying barriers to collaboration and implementing technology: thoughtful planning and commitment are necessary.

**LADYSMITH PRIMARY:** How can we use technology to support learning?

**Highlight:** Using in-school support and commitment to learning together to integrate technology with very little technology experience.

**MCGIRR:** Will focusing on using a Writing Clothesline from grades K to 7 improve success for vulnerable learners when writing for meaning?

**Highlight:** Using a writing clothesline as a staff-wide project during PLC time to build common language and tools for “next steps” for developing writers as well as student autonomy to assess their own work and grow as writers.

### Story of One: Forest Park

After the writing group (a small focused group to support struggling writers), one student's attitude about his writing in several areas had improved as shown on the rubric. Also, comparing writing compositions from before and after the project, the organization of his writing improved quite substantially. He now writes more confidently, using topic sentences, related details and conclusions. Also his sense of understanding of voice is now apparent and he says that he learned to enjoy writing much more since the group. He particularly enjoyed writing leads and using the iPad's video camera feature to be taped reading his writing pieces. He plans to be a comedian in the future and has said that learning to write better will help him not only now but also in his career.

**MOUNTAIN VIEW:** Will opportunities to integrate the reading and writing growth of early emergent, emergent and fluent readers through the use of technology improve learning?

**Highlight:** Using iPads to engage students, encourage independence and peer learning, and level the playing field, so each child has the tools to improve learning.

**NDSS:** Will identifying and applying specific strategies with students increase their motivation and ability to succeed in school?

**Highlight:** Using web 2.0 tools, e-texts and peer learning to engage *all* students in deeper learning.

**NORTH CEDAR:** How can technology be used to support vulnerable learners?

**Highlight:** Used digital projectors, webcams, PA system (for a school wide art project), varied instructional websites, online programs, iPods and ipads to increase engagement, participation, collaboration and contribution, level the playing field, assist output, and free up the teacher for intervention.



Pleasant Valley Writing Samples: Grade One

**PLEASANT VALLEY:** Will using focused collaborative time in grade groups increase writing skills for our vulnerable learners?

**Highlight:** Used collaboration time to develop shared understanding of writing (writing clothesline, Excellence in Writing) for meaningful collaboration and co-created tools to provide a valuable starting point for improving student learning.

Adrienne Gear's *Reading Power* strategies to mathematical concept development improve student achievement from kindergarten to grade 7 in language-based numeracy as measured by the BC Performance Standards for Numeracy?

**Highlight:** Engaging in visualizing as a powerful strategy for math and to connect with literacy.

**QUARTERWAY:** Will the application of

**RANDERSON:** How will learning together across disciplines about assessment, diversity and responsive teaching strategies, support diversity and deepen engaged learning for each student?

**Highlight:** Peer coaching strategies to enhance engagement and provide teachers opportunities to engage in difficult conversations about effective practice.

**ROCK CITY:** Will continued support for implementing Reading Power and Writing Power strategies continue to improve reading and writing scores?

**Highlight:** Developed Writing Power resources and co-teaching time of the strategies to provide a common support for all writers.

**RUTHERFORD:** Will providing a variety of school leadership opportunities encourage vulnerable learners to participate in the school?

**Highlight:** Used project collaboration to build confidence in school-based expertise and capacity to embrace the challenge of technology.

**SENIOR LEARNING ALTERNATIVES:** Will a comprehensive school-wide literacy intervention called, **Book Ends** improve the success for the vulnerable learners?

**Highlight:** Developed a school-wide daily reading program to inspire vulnerable youth, including visual tracking, prizes and digital titles.

**SOUTH WELLINGTON:** Will the use of technology in the class and in small groups improve student's engagement and success in reading (decoding and comprehension) and writing?

**Highlight:** Persisted together, despite challenges to engage and support student learning with a wide range of technology tools.



Wellington student engages in work experience project.



District Meetings: sharing Ideas.



**UPLANDS:** Will the implementation of a positive behavior support intervention program increase student competence and opportunities for success through increased self-regulation?

**Highlight:** Working together on a common program (PBIS) to increase consistency and reduce major office referrals.

**WELLINGTON:** Will communicating about, developing learning strategies for, and focusing on vulnerable students improve their learning?

**Highlight:** Found “just-right” (not too big, not so small that it can’t have impact) projects that were a “right-fit” for teachers and learners to support vulnerable students.

**WOODLANDS:** How can we use study groups for students and professional learning groups for teachers to increase student success?

**Highlight:** Working together with a coach to deepen inquiry practice supports all learners.

### **The Story of One: Wellington Secondary**

What a domino effect! Project Success offered us release time for collaboration, development of ideas and sharing....we decided to use one or two days of release time to spearhead a work experience project...we got support from the Principal...within three weeks we had students picked by our school-based team who might benefit...the students were offered the program....the parents were informed and asked for their permission....the class began.... Employers were contacted and set up...and we were rolling! One student was in the Senior Alternate program here, trying to finish some prerequisites for graduation and had not done well academically in past years due to health and various issues. She was not seeming too keen on the WE program, but accepted the opportunity. A discussion with her counselor revealed that she thought we were just trying to get her out of the school early; that she was not wanted here. Wow, that changed how we informed the students about this opportunity and what a great experience we thought it would be. Over the next weeks, she began to work for a very demanding employer 2 ½ afternoons per week, and attended the WE class alternate mornings. With her history of non-completion of tasks, and passive resistance I thought this was a deal-breaker, but she persevered to our surprise. Now, 18 weeks later, she has become so proud of her accomplishments, her employer is ready to give her a glowing reference for the “real world”, she is smiling (!), she is acknowledging that she had to learn to push herself and that it has helped her so much with her self-image, etc. She is a true success story, due in part to the attention she received from the staff here who identified her as a vulnerable student needing a change.

## TECHNOLOGY STRAND

### Will learning together to use technology effectively enhance the success of school projects?

Although we do not yet have the infrastructure, the organizational support or the training in place for mobile technology, particularly the iPods and iPads, we decided to put the cart (quite literally) before the horse. Every six weeks we provided seven schools with a set of iPads, iPods or laptops, along with a wi-fi unit and a two and a half hour training session. We agreed that we would bring an explorer or pioneer mindset to the challenge, since we knew we'd have to invent, jimmy things together, problem-solve continually and above all, help each other and share our learning. We agreed to each start small and focus on using these tools to amplify our most powerful practices. As one of our "explorers" said, we didn't want to use these devices to make better worksheets. We wanted to maximize our students' ability to learn, to create, to express, to analyze, to wonder, to share.

#### Project One: October 14 - November 23

Cedar: Laptops

Brechin: Laptops

Chase River: iPads

Woodlands: iPads

Hammond Bay: iPads

NDSS: iPods

Cinnabar: iPods

#### Project Two: November 28 - January 25

NDSS: Laptops

Cilaire: Laptops

Forest Park: iPads

Ladysmith Intermediate: iPads

Quarterway: iPads

South Wellington: iPods

Coal Tyee: iPods

#### Project Three: January 30th - March 7

Bayview: Laptops

NDSS: Laptops

Mountain View: iPads

Ladysmith Primary: iPads

Pauline Haarer: iPads

Coal Tyee: iPods

Fairview: iPods

#### Coal Tyee Reflection: It takes a village....

What we rediscovered this week is just how important it is to take time to regularly come together to collaborate, support and reflect on our experiences. We are reminded of just how important it is to have a trusting and encouraging learning community to lean on, to share both the successes and frustrations with, as we embrace change.

Unintentionally, we drifted back into individual classrooms these past two weeks, leaving some members of our team feeling isolated and overwhelmed with how to best integrate the iPods into their day. So we are recommitting to once again connect and communicate more often.



Woodlands student helps at Brechin.

**Project Four:** March 26 - May 2

Wellington: laptops

NDSS: laptops

Bayview: iPads

Randerson: iPads

Davis Road: iPads

Coal Tyee: iPods

North Cedar: iPods

**Project Five:** May 7 - June 14

Wellington: laptops

Rock City: laptops

Barsby: iPads

Rutherford: iPads

NDSS: iPads

Randerson: iPods

Bayview: iPods

**Behind the scenes: making the technology strand possible.****Key Learnings:**

**Working together is essential:** It's easy to get caught up in the day-to-day very busy-ness of schools. Unless we share ideas, work together to buddy up, nudge, coach and support each other, it's very hard to learn new things. And adding technology isn't just about the technology; it demands a shift in how we organize students, present information, and structure our lessons!

*Technology is fun, interesting, exciting,  
empowering and it's the great equalizer.*

*Sue Schlitz, Chase River*

**Play!** We'll never be "ready"! We realized we just had to take the leap – and play (adults, too). Because we are not acting as experts, the teachers, as Lori Williams notes, "become a role model of learning." Randerson Ridge teacher Deanna Ulrich told us, "I was absolutely terrified when I got the iPads in my class for the first time. But I told the kids that we were all learners together; we experimented, the kids were a big help to me and to each other, and we all had fun."

**Ask!** Someone has the answer you are looking for. We can't try to do everything alone; that's a recipe for failure! There's too much to learn – and we still have our everyday work to do.

**Learn *with* students:** Get students to help problem-solve, figure out, create and team-teach with you while you learn with them.

**Don't assume:** We think that because students are comfortable with technology that they know how to use it as a learning tool. It turns out (unsurprisingly when you think of it) that they know very little about using some key programs or how to save their work or how to interact responsibly online or even within a classroom or school digital space. Students need to learn basic etiquette for the virtual world that they increasingly inhabit.

### Story of One: Using iPods at Coal Tyee

G came into grade 1 knowing 24/26 of her letters and 12/26 of her sounds. She did not know what a word was. She could not hear rhymes. When given the sounds c-a-t, she was unable to blend them together to tell what the word was. Using the ABC Magic Reading 1 app, she was able to practice daily blending sounds together into words and building three letter short vowel words. With Little Speller Sight Words, she practiced building sight words. With the engaging repetition, she learned what a word was! The hope for her this year was to learn and understand what a word was. She exceeded expectations by actually acquiring a

**Be flexible:** Especially when you are planning a lesson that requires Internet access, it's always important to have Plan B ready! We are still "pioneers" – trying to implement technology without the infrastructure yet in place. We have to have a "MacGyver" attitude and be prepared to figure out a different way of doing things when things don't go quite as we planned. This sort of flexible attitude will support us in the future, not just with technology, but as we rethink teacher-directed learning.

**Create space for peer learning and collaboration:** Pairing students, pairing classes, team teaching and shared learning spaces accelerated the learning for students and teachers. Teachers repeatedly remarked on how technology facilitated social interaction, student leadership and teacher collaboration. We deliberately send 15 devices to the school. Teachers are disappointed at first; now they say they don't want 30. They notice that the students learn together in unexpected ways, that the conversation, the peer support, the ongoing modelling of shared learning creates a learning community.

**Technology engages learners:** Over and over we heard that students were very engaged by technology in their classroom, that it supported, in particular, our most vulnerable learners, and provided an equal space for learning for all students. Although we didn't expect to see a significant impact on learning in such a short time (six weeks), we're all already thinking about the next phase - how we can move from engaging learners to engaging them in deep and significant learning?



**Technology supports diversity:** What we all see quickly when we use any technology is the possibility for personalization, for just right learning, for our unique learners to move at a pace that makes sense, to show their learning in a variety of ways, and nonetheless to participate meaningfully in our collective experiences. We are seeing the capacity for students to go deeper, to spread their learning wings, to engage in what matters to them, to create something beautiful, to have success and to realize, through that success, that learning is what they do best.

### **Story of One: NDSS Laptop Project in Socials Studies 11**

Socials Studies 11 is a required course for graduation and includes a provincial exam. This classroom had extended use of a laptops and eText allowing access to the textbook online. The student can read, highlight and make note annotations on line. Additionally, most assignments were project based using web 2.0 applications thereby providing an alternate way to demonstrate understanding.

- Grade 12 graduation year
- Designated student: autistic
- A range of support service utilized in high school with an IEP include EA time, literacy class, support room blocks, and online courses
- De-designated in his graduating year and did not have a support block while taking Social Studies 11

This student typically refuses to take handwritten notes because he can “remember everything.” He frequently does not follow or meet the required criteria for assignments. Assessment for learning opportunities with self, peer and teacher feedback allows him to complete ALL assignment, and ALL assignments were graded at a passing or higher level. The ability to save work digitally affords the ongoing building of learning and demonstration of learning without having to ‘redo’ assignments. The “re-doing” has been problematic as he would ‘give up’ when he received a low mark and just wait for the next assignment hoping to improve.

As a student with autism, he has difficulty with social interactions. I have no evidence of any peer friendships in or out of class. He likes to argue (debate) and is easily off track during class discussion. Accessing the internet on his desk with a laptop allows him to check his “facts” before arguing a case. He became a valued participant in class discussion promoting a community of learners rather than the brunt of classmates’ snickers.

### **Marks in Social Studies**

**Grade 10** 55%

**Grade 11** 62% Provincial exam mark 76% blended mark 67%

## TEACHER-LIBRARIAN STRAND

### Will learning together to support collaboration, inquiry and technology enhance the success of school projects?

Libraries have always been key partners in collaboration, inquiry and technology, but the new tools of the 21st century have provided an opportunity to expand that role by opening libraries to the global context, to digital content and tools, to connected learning. To make the possible a reality, however, we needed to begin with our own learning. Our SD68 team has spent the year “learning by doing.” We held eight one and a half hour meetings and committed to ongoing work through homework (see our homework list at <http://workingtogether.pbworks.com/tl68>) and posting to our collaborative blog at <http://tl68.posterous.com>. We used digital media to learn about it; collaborated together to learn how to effectively connect with each other, with our community and globally; identified the good ideas that have allowed libraries to support learners in the past and used new media to spread and highlight them. Throughout our year of learning, we continually ask: how can we reimagine libraries - using technology, collaboration and inquiry - to ensure powerful personalized learning for each child? Our learning model has allowed us to open our libraries to the world and invite the world into our libraries; to support teachers and learners through personalized curation in a sea of information; and to connect our most vulnerable learners to important ideas and tools to share their voice.

### Key Learnings:

**Increase in knowledge, expertise and confidence in technology** meant increased support for teachers and students: classroom collaboration, co-teaching, library time, sharing with parents, professional development, personalized support for students.

**Learning curation tools** has allowed us to “stay calm” in a barrage of information to work together to support relevant tools and information.

**Online tools have increased communication** with parents, staff and students.

- 69% of Project Success TLs used the tools such as blogs, wikis, Facebook, twitter, web page, delicious bookmarks, SharePoint for professional communication

**With support, students are now using web tools to aid in their learning.**

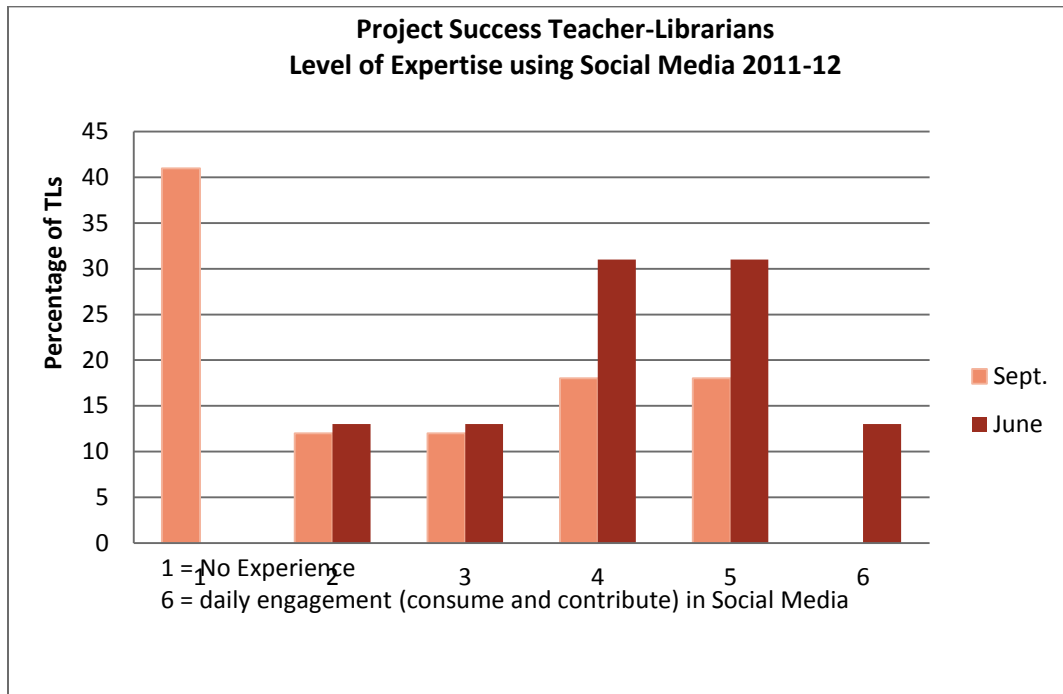
- 81% of Project Success TLs engaged and supported students through tools such as blogs, TarHeel Reader, Prezi, VoiceThread, YouTube, WebQuests, Animoto, PicLits, iPad and iPod apps, TedTalks, Shelfari for book reviews, Ebsco databases, wiki, class website, Google docs/forms.



**With support, teachers are beginning to use web tools that support and engage learners.**

- 88% of Project Success TLs provided formal or informal inservice
- Shared social-bookmarking, blogs, wikis, use of databases, search techniques, web 2.0 tools (VoiceThread, Tarheel Reader, Prezi, Google docs/forms), use of Facebook, Twitter

**Use of Twitter and other online tools allows for powerful professional development** to support our own ongoing learning to continue to support teachers and students.



**Mentorship and collaboration improves our learning,** increases/reignites our passion, our satisfaction, our belief in a vision for the future, our ability to change our practice to meet the new demands of a changing world.



#### **Learning by doing accelerated learning.**

Instead of just learning about blogs, we blogged. Our collaborative blogs gave several TLs the confidence to create their own blogs. Instead of just learning about social bookmarking, we used it to co-create lists. Instead of talking about the power of collaboration, we collaborated to co-create a grade level short list of powerful tools and resources on an agreed-upon topic and to “makeover” the DRC. Our projects allowed us to learn together, to think deeply about what’s important and to work on projects collectively that will support the individual teachers in our schools and through them – each child.

## Learning by Doing: Curation Project

In order to both support and encourage teachers to engage in digital media, as well as providing an opportunity to use more inquiry-based, collaborative and personalized approaches to meet the needs of diverse learners, the Teacher-Librarian group decided to curate some digital resources. The rich conversation allowed us to think deeply about what's important to teach

and how to engage both teachers and learners in the content and process. Below are links to the first draft work.



**Socials Studies 2:** Our Community -

<http://bit.ly/NYAqXc>

**Socials Studies 4:** Contact – Resources:

<http://bit.ly/SiLr3T>; Lessons:

<http://bit.ly/SiLNHR>

**Socials Studies 8:** Medieval Studies -

<http://bit.ly/NYEugr>

## Learn by Doing: DRC Makeover

The District Resource Centre provides additional support for each school library. However, because there has not been a district librarian for a number of years, resources have become outdated. Moreover, the system was not designed to maximize the efficiencies of a digital age. We decided to “makeover” the DRC for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, building on what already worked well, revising what no longer made sense and finding ways to use the resources as a bridge to collaboration, inquiry and technology that support teaching and learning.



- Revise bins to ensure clear curricular purpose (grade, curricular area, topic)
- Organize resources to maximize choice and flexibility (mix and match)
- Use an organizational frameworks (IRPs) that will allow us to easily provide “click and get” lesson plans, strategies and matching resources.
- Ensure access to multi-level, engaging text choices to engage all readers.
- Provide supplemental support for inquiry, information or literature circles and other structures that allow students to use different right-fit texts and topics to learn a curricular content.



## GRADE 2 STRAND

**Will focusing on interventions for grade twos who are not yet meeting expectations on reading performance standards improve success?**

The goal was to focus district energy on a do-able action to support our lofty goal of success for all. Three key facts focused the direction: reading proficiency is a prerequisite for success through to graduation; reading proficiency is still the best predictor of student success; early intervention supports reading proficiency. A focus on grade 2 was decided, since at that time, almost all students are developmentally ready for reading. Students who were not yet meeting expectations in grade 1 were identified using the BCPS for reading; this provided a data set against which to measure our intervention success. Based on the number of their students needing support, five schools were invited to join the project: Bayview, Fairview, Georgia, Brechin and Mountain View. Working with school teams was a district team that included literacy, early learning, student support and Aboriginal education.

Due to job action, lack of principal involvement limited the scope of this project. Strong school teams are necessary for coherent action.

**Intervention Focus:** What are new, different and already effective ways to get all children to read more?

### **Intervention Actions:**

#### **Build a common language of practice through shared assessment.**

Marked the DART – a BCPS-based tool - together in December and again in May.

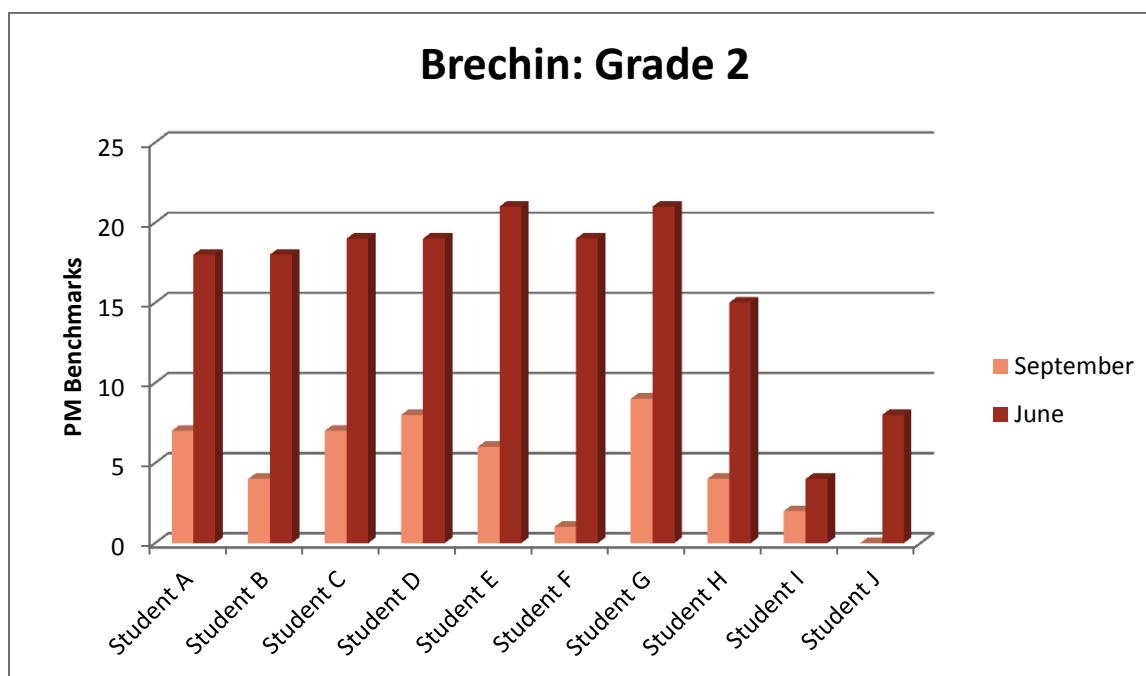
#### **Commit to increase reading by 15 minutes or more each day.**

- Created a list of “sneaky reading” to add reading time into the day like charts, variations on the morning message, songs, games.
- Organized classroom resources to increase the time on text and reduce the time finding a book.
- Mobilized our community to support our readers: worked with buddies, peer coaches, and community to support 1:1 reading; improved home reading programs.
- Focussed on reading across curricula: nonfiction.
- Incorporated technology to increase “just right” texts, eyes on text and engagement.
- Shared ideas at meetings and on our Pinterest page –

<http://pinterest.com/sbeleznay/primary>



## Results:



Students I and J are designated students with IEPs. Represented are 10 of the 11 students identified as not yet meeting expectations in grade one. Students H, I and J are not yet meeting expectations at grade level, but have made significant progress.

### Mountain View

Of the thirteen students identified as not meeting expectation at grade level in grade one, data was available for eleven. Ten of the eleven were meeting expectations in June based on reading assessment and/or Benchmarks.

Due to difficulties of this year, data from the other schools was incomplete, although participation allow them to develop further strategies for continued interventions.

## Key Learnings

**Common assessment, co-marking and working together improved student learning.** Support, reminders of old and new ideas for improved reading, sharing challenges and reviewing expectations refocused attention on what makes the most difference for learners.

**Ensure access to texts.** Listening to the teams, it became evident that we need to ensure that every teacher has a ready supply of just right books. As part of our DRC Makeover (see p. 15), we are developing leveled classroom bins to make that happen, as well as reorganizing our curriculum bins to ensure lots of just-right intriguing texts on

*High achieving students receiving a steady diet of easy texts, text they can read accurately, fluently and with good comprehension consistently outgain both average achieving and lower achieving students year after year.*

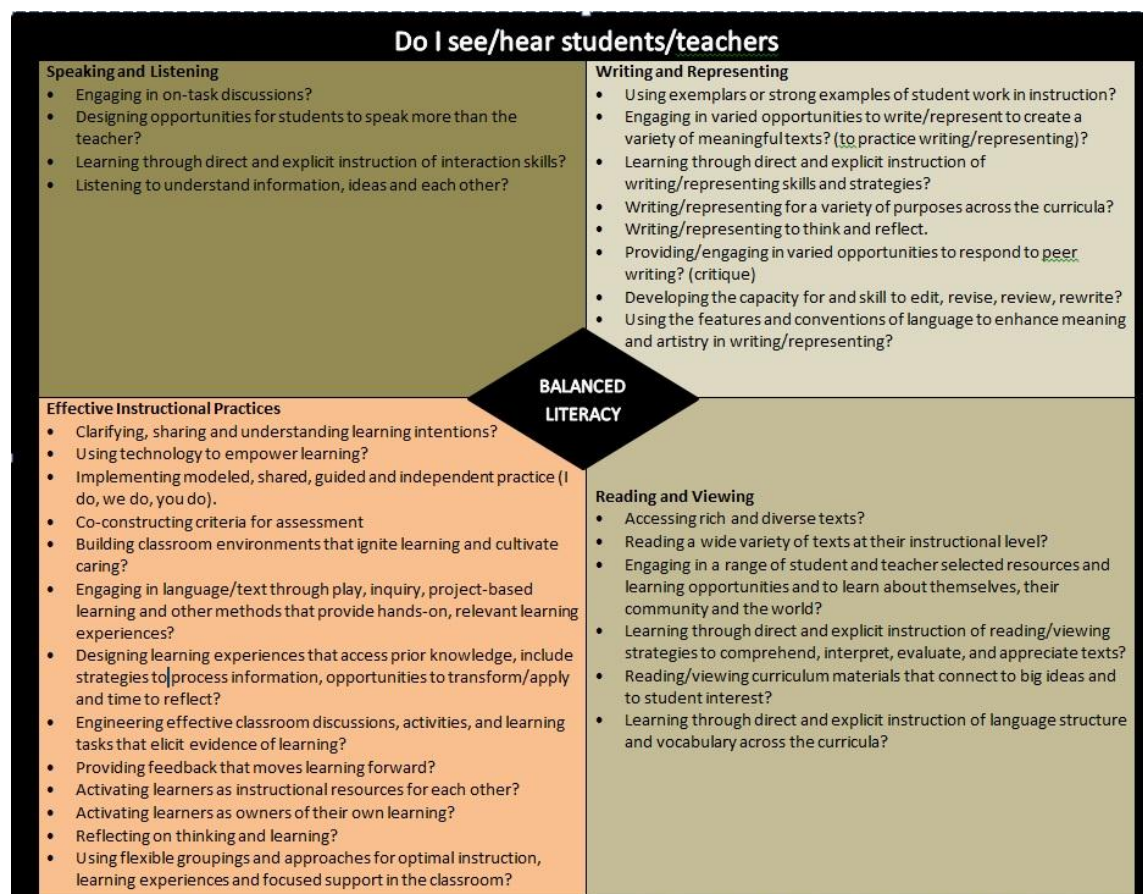
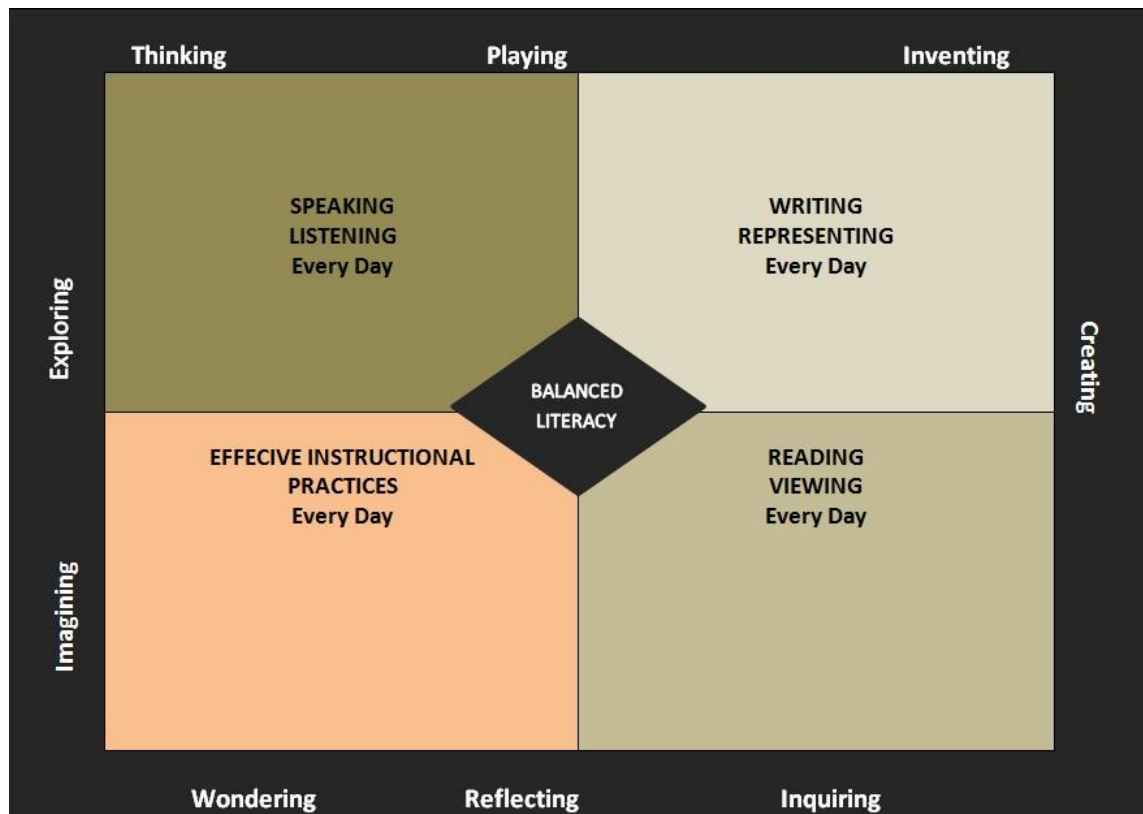
*Richard Allington*

**Developing a balanced literacy framework for our district will allow us to more effectively support each teacher to access the resources they need to ensure each child reads.** As we listened to the teams, it was evident that teachers, particularly new teachers or teachers new to a school or experienced teachers receiving diverse students that they did not have experience with needed consistent support. A framework would allow us

- Based on this information, we gathered a small team of teachers to develop a draft framework as a starting point for deeper work next year.



## Draft Balanced Literacy Framework





## CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

Cathy Davidson writes in *Now You See It*:

The fundamental principal of all crowdsourcing is that difference and diversity – not expertise and uniformity – solves problems. Second, if you predict the result in any way, if you try to force a solution, you limit the participation and therefore the likelihood of success. And third, the community most served by the solution should be chiefly involved in the process of finding it.

We have deliberately kept Project Success open and encourage each school to work with the strengths of its community to solve the problems of the community. By posing one question – how can we improve success for vulnerable learners? – and then sending out teams to tackle the problem from unique and diverse perspectives, we are able to “crowdsource” some key success strategies.

### Key Learnings

**Collaboration underpins success:** A repeated theme has been the power of collaboration to work and learn together. It seems obvious that collaboration is an essential ingredient for learning new things (and with a rapidly changing world, the learning curve is steep) and to support diverse learners for success. No one of us has everything that is necessary for even one child. Nonetheless, many of us resist “collaboration”. As we ponder this resistance – and the ways some schools have gained 100% participate in their project – we have identified that the resistance is against working together to meet goals we haven’t set with methods we don’t agree to and tested against measures that we feel are meaningless. As we reflect on our successes and challenges this year, we have developed some strategies for effective collaboration.

**Invite broad participation:** It isn’t only that the “more, the merrier” and “many hands makes light work,” but that unless there is broad participation, our strength is diminished. For each child to succeed, everyone in the school has to do whatever it takes, to connect at every opportunity, to share their strengths and get supports for challenges. Thus, whatever strategies we consider, we need to ask: will this invite participation? What’s more, when people continually refuse the invitation, we need to ask why. What can we do differently that will make the invitation more appealing?

**Build in choice and flexibility:** To meaningfully engage all educators – and to truly use the strengths in our community – we can’t define the solutions. Schools that have had the most success have used a broad question and encouraged participants to choose how they will tackle the issue. They also allow for flexibility, shifting directions, revising frameworks, adjusting schedules so that participating is *easy* and each person feels that their contribution – at whatever level they are able to provide it – is deeply valued. (See “Growing our Teams.”)

**Create peer learning and partnerships opportunities:** A learning community that is broad and includes all players in that community as learners – student to student, student to teacher, community members to teachers and students, students to parents – yields the richest results.

**Schedule success:** Given a broad question, choice and flexibility, the danger is in “spinning wheels” and shallow dispersed action. Unless the school team schedules meetings to gather, connect, review, celebrate and build collaboratively on individual or small team actions, the impact to student learning will be limited.

**Make learning transparent:** When school or district teams share their learning as they are learning, progress is accelerated. Someone poses a problem, another has an idea, suggests a process, a partner, a resource, a shift in direction and movement continues. What’s more, as the teacher-librarian group noted, reflecting with others as we are learning “increases/reignites our passion, our satisfaction, our belief in a vision for the future.” The grade two group added, “we don’t feel like we are the only ones with this problem!” Blogs, regular meetings or more formal professional learning communities, coaches, mentors, co-teaching, team-teaching, and regular celebrations (not just at the end) allow us to engage deeply in the learning process and gain/give support to further our goal. This transparent process also allows us to replicate and/or build from the work of others.

**Meaningful Measures:** As Margaret Wheatley writes, “Measures are meaningful and important only when generated by those doing the work. Any group can benefit from others’ experience and from experts, but the final measures need to be their creation.” She suggests that measures that most resemble feedback will make the biggest difference.

Feedback	Measurement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Content-dependent</li> <li>• Self-determined: the system choose what to notice.</li> <li>• Information is accepted from anywhere</li> <li>• The system creates own meaning</li> <li>• Newness, surprise are essential</li> <li>• The focus is on adaptability and growth</li> <li>• Meaning evolves</li> <li>• The system co-adapts with its environment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One size fits all</li> <li>• Imposed. Criteria are established externally.</li> <li>• Information is put in fixed categories.</li> <li>• Meaning is predetermined.</li> <li>• Prediction, routine are valued.</li> <li>• The focus is on stability and control.</li> <li>• Meaning remains static.</li> <li>• The system adapts to the measures.</li> </ul>

Margaret Wheatley, *Finding Our Way*

This connects with our own experiences as district or provincial assessments become a point of contention rather than an opportunity for connection. What’s more, as we shift our goals to include success for all students, our current measures often seem inadequate and even counter-productive, pushing us to move at a pace or in a direction that doesn’t serve unique learners.

However, without measures, it’s difficult to identify who needs support, whether the support is working and what is worth doing more. We need to continue to work together to develop measures that matter. As school teams have discovered, not only is this vital work – how can we improve student writing, for example, when we aren’t even clear on what good writing is? – but it is slow work. There aren’t any shortcuts. Like diet programs, the ones that work quickly only work for a short time – if they work at all.

## Growing Our Teams to Meet our Goal: A Checklist

1. Share the goal: success for each student.
2. Invite the identification of vulnerable students for a focus: what do we notice together? What are the needs?
3. Keep the students as the focus.
4. Identify and utilize the personal and professional expertise and interests of staff.
5. Create an inquiry/action *together*: make sure it invites participation, that it is do-able but open-ended. Include choice; find room for adaptation and modification.
6. Continually communicate (consider technology).
7. Build relationships through both formal and informal conversations to support reflection and share ideas. Make it a habit to “plus” each other’s ideas.
8. Create a plan for meeting/learning/creating/working together. Set dates. Order food.
9. Talk about students: use student samples and co-designed criteria to focus conversations.
10. Open doors, share stories, send personal invitations, gather feedback (assess *as* you are learning).
11. Foster a foundation of trust from which to support risk taking and innovation. (It’s okay to fail. It’s okay to not know everything. It’s okay to contribute just a little – everything matters. None of us has all the answers for each child.)
12. Celebrate learning through success and failures *as* learners in our schools.

*Co-created by SD68 Project Success Teams: April 2012*



## Next Steps

### Invite participation

- Work with principals and teacher-leaders to develop a staff session to determine inquiry and implement processes to support broad participation.
- Continue to collaborate with the NDTA to engage educators in structures and processes for meaningful conversations that move learning forward.
- Build on our current successes by sharing ideas and working together to support next steps.

### Create peer learning and partnerships opportunities

- Expand the technology strand to include longer term projects to focus on student learning and to build stronger mentorship.
- Work with Aboriginal Education to incorporate Aboriginal Strand and co-design gatherings.
- Work with Learning Services to connect “teaching to diversity” and co-design gatherings.
- Work with teacher-librarians to develop workshops to support inquiry and technology (connect to school inquiries and IT plan).
- Work with primary teacher-leaders to develop workshops for balanced literacy (connect to school inquiries).
- Organize District Resource Centre, digital resources and communication to support school and district plans and inquiries.
- Work with provincial team to support our grade two (early reading) strand.

### Schedule success

- Share strategies that work to use release time effectively.

### Meaningful measures

- Work with district team to develop an assessment session for the first Project Success gathering.
- Work with district team to develop frameworks for balanced literacy, inquiry, assessment to provide directions for deeper inquiry.

### Use technology to leverage learning

- Support key shifts necessary for teaching in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Use technology to leverage those shifts.
  - ✓ Move from lock-step one-to-all teaching to small flexible, project-based learning.
  - ✓ Move from pull-out to universal design.
  - ✓ Move from “chapters” to inquiry.
  - ✓ Move from “subjects” to cross-disciplinary and discipline-rich projects.
  - ✓ Move toward ubiquitous technology: identify the teaching knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for a new environment.
- Maximize collaboration, networks and peer learning through technology.
  - ✓ Build teacher confidence by increasing practice with digital technologies for communication and collaboration.