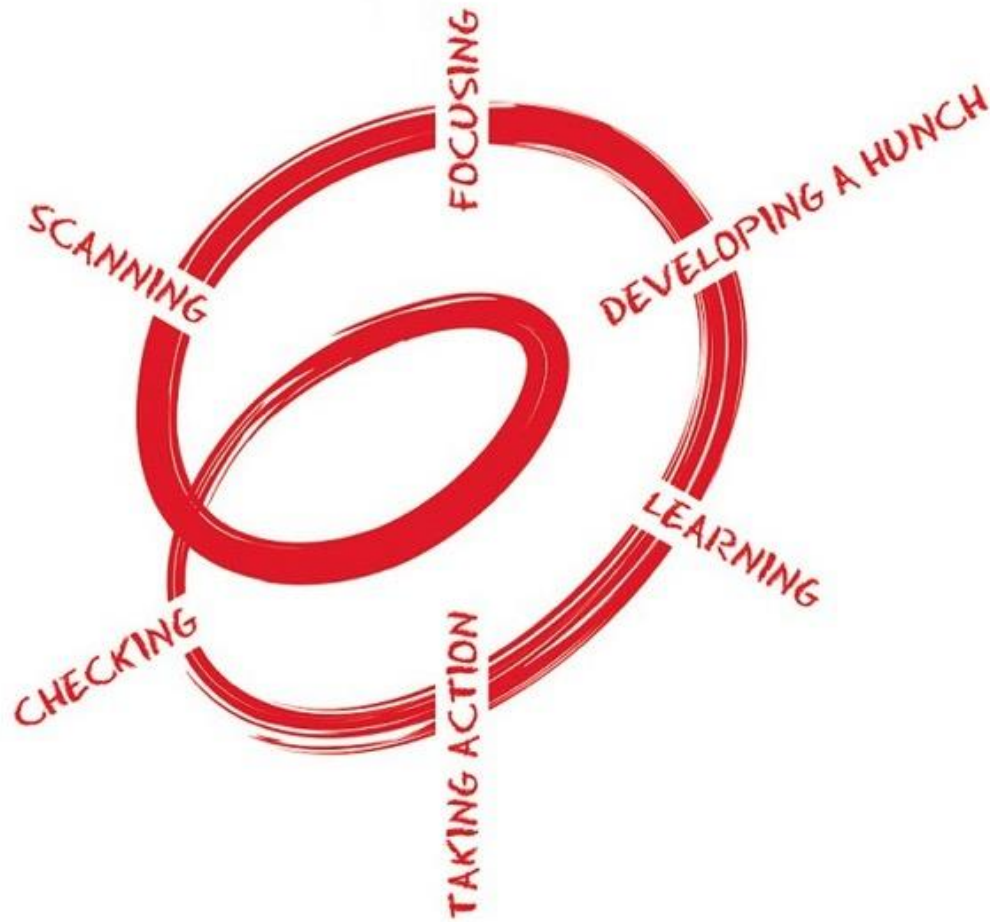




School District No. 67 (Okanagan Skaha) School Growth Plan



"Spirals of Inquiry for equity and quality"
Judy Halbert and Linda Kaser

Draft Plan developed by:



School: Queen's Park Elementary

School Context:

Queen's Park is a thriving school nestled in between Okanagan Lake and the community center. Over the last 6 years we have found great success in building a culture of respect and responsibility through our Leader In Me and 7 Habits program based on the work done by the Franklin Covey institute. We work with many outside agencies to help support both our families and students and have greatly benefitted from our partnerships. We are extremely thankful to Meals on Wheels for their breakfast program which averages well over 50 students a day and we can't stress enough how crucial our \$2.00 lunch program has been in helping students. Amazingly we service over 140 students a day in two separate sittings in this very necessary endeavor. We have a variety of thriving extra-curricular activities headlined by our choir which has over 50 students involved and has won numerous awards, accolades and opportunities to perform with professional musicians playing in Penticton. We very much appreciate the community and parental support we have to help with our Ice Hockey team and talent show, both of which are mainly supported through volunteers.

Inquiry Question: What do you think is driving your plan for student success?

The renewed curriculum along with the new role of the competencies are the driving force behind our decision to investigate how best to incorporate the process of students learning and teachers teaching the core competencies. As a staff we believe that if we can get to a place where students are capable of thoughtfully and authentically reflecting on their learning and who they are as a person, we will be deeply affecting their metacognition which is at the heart of deep and sustained learning.

Our goal(s);

We believe that the best way to infuse the Core Competencies into our student's lives is by using our 7 Habit framework as the vehicle. Our community is well versed and actively incorporates the 7 Habits into their daily lives. Because of the overlap between the 7 Habits and the Core Competencies, we believe we will achieve a deeper understanding and implementation of the Core Competencies (CC) more efficiently.

Scanning: (What do you know about your students – their successes and challenges - what's going on for them?)

Successes

The foundation for the culture at Queen's Park is our work with the Leader In Me and 7 Habits program. The staff universally believes that these programs have enormously impacted the way our students see themselves, interact with each other and with the community. We have seen great successes over the last 5 years with respect to office referrals and positive peer to peer interactions. As well, we use these programs as the conduit for implementing school wide goals and initiatives. "Leadership starts on Time" has been one of these examples which is making an impact on the late and tardy concerns we had for our students.

Based on 2016-17 year end reflections and conclusions we noted, "The more we muddle through the process, the more we see the impact it is having on students." A very interesting outcome at the end of the 2016-17 year was our teachers recognized that students had learned to use the language in their reflections but the teachers also recognized that the students were repeating taught language that indicated a surface level of reflection but at the same time was more "parrot" like language. To an outside observer, the reflections appeared to be very strong but to the teacher who was attuned to their students, they saw a different level of authenticity. As such, they are now looking at tweaking their practices to support students in reflecting at a deeper, more meaningful level that is more accurate and authentic."

As a staff, we were pleased with the progress that was made in our initial foray into the Core Competency world and are looking forward to a more authentic appropriation of the material.

Challenges

Our biggest challenge was, in the end, mired in the actual approach and strategy we chose to take. Because our school had been so successful using the Leader In Me and 7 Habits platform as a framework for our character education and as a shelf to support pedagogy, it had been difficult to introduce and embed the practices of the Core Competencies. The reason it has been difficult is due to the fact that the Core Competencies and 7 Habits significantly overlap in many areas so students and teachers are learning two frameworks that are essentially heading in the same direction but use different terminology and in some ways can seem like they make each other redundant. We really couldn't move forward until the link between the two was made. Since our 7 Habits have been well established over the last 7 years, both students and teachers find that they naturally access the 7 Habits simply out of familiarity. As well, the 7 Habits are supported with great visuals and images that are extremely kid friendly and reinforce the essence of each habit which makes the transition or addition of the Core Competencies a little slower. Once the link was made for teachers, we were able to meaningfully make that connection for students as well.

Something that has been "muddy" for our staff has been the concept of how we know if students are learning and applying the Core Competencies. The CC were purposefully

designed so that the skills and attributes were not meant to be marked or assessed against an age or specific grade. They were specifically created with the thought that rubrics would not be used to assess. They were designed with the intention that they are developmentally based and that teachers support the students where they are with some reference to the concentric circles. Having said that, there are definitely increasing levels of understanding and application by students. Ultimately, we want the students to embody the principles of the competencies. What we find muddy is the balance of seeing growth in our students in using the language and applying the concepts but not always being able to demonstrate their growth in a self-reflective format. We have noticed that when we have talked to our students, listened to them in their conversations and observe their actions, their level of understanding is well above what they can demonstrate in their more formalized self-reflections. This makes sense since the competencies are more about ways of being as opposed to being able to attain specific learning targets. As well, it makes sense when we consider many of our students, especially our primary, simply don't have the language, tools or skills to explain their thinking and actions in a formal self-reflection. As a staff, we are looking at how we can document their oral reflections but this is often difficult as most authentic reflections are spontaneous and proper documentation is missed.

Another challenge that has added a degree of difficulty is the fact that we have been involved in a number of initiatives that require time to specifically teach and embed which impacts the time and focus we can spend specifically on the CCs. Because the competencies are not an engrained practice by the staff or students yet, they still require the time to purposefully teach. As a staff, we are continuing to refine all our initiatives so that they become complementary and support each other. We have worked hard this year making the CC's visible while at the same time finding the balance of not overshadowing our 7 Habits. In the end, the competencies will work in unison with our 7 Habits as the thread that runs through everything but it will take time to embed all our practices to the point that their synthesis will become the focus.

Focusing: (Identify the most important work you can do to improve the success of your students. On which key areas of learning will you focus?)

Evidence/Data to support:

Based on our staff reflections at the end of last year, we started the year feeling that we had developed an anchor in our students that was strong enough to move forward and bring depth to the learning which would produce richer reflections from the students. We felt the best way to support this process was to incorporate our 7 Habit platform since it was firmly rooted in everything we did. The issue with this approach was that intuitively we knew the two frameworks were, in their essence, very closely aligned with a tremendous amount of overlap. However, at first blush it was difficult to see the connections that would bridge the two of them. Moving forward, we decided to utilize John Flockhart from the Covey institute. With John's

facilitation we took the approach of breaking down both frameworks into their fundamental values by analyzing the language for each. We broke the 7 Habits language into its 1) principles, 2) practices/behaviours, and 3) competency points (not to be confused with CC). We followed the same process for the CC by breaking the language down into its 1) sub competency, 2) subskill, and 3) key phrases. The process was invaluable in a number of ways. First, the teachers found that through the process, the learning became deeper which then allowed them to make connections on their own which resulted in a more authentic learning situation for them. As teachers started to see the overlap through the minutia of key phrases and sub learning aspects they were able to make their learning more authentic because they saw the connections for themselves and could see the application in their lessons. It produced a school wide concept of how we can align the practices which was powerful for both teachers and in turn students.

Another focus for us early in the year was to review the “Spirals” process as a team using the Core Competencies as our focus. We believed that the better the staff understood the spirals process using the competencies as our lens, we would be better equipped to ask the difficult, complex and deep questions for our next steps. From this process, we determined that we would continue our monthly focus on a specific 7 Habit but also incorporate the aligned core competency. Through this process we were trying to cement school wide language around the competencies. This was supported through our daily announcements, weekly assemblies and monthly awards where success in competencies was often recognized.

Key Learnings:

The Evolution of “Notice, Name, Nurture. Overall, this whole process was far more difficult for teachers to learn than first anticipated. Even though we worked hard on the CC’s last year and thought we were getting our head around them, we realized this year that we didn’t really synthesis to the level we wanted. knew it last year but really didn’t. And, even after doing it, we had to post it to remind us regularly and to be able to use the terminology more fluently. As the year progressed we found it very interesting that it was far more challenging for the teachers to absorb and acquire the core competency language than we anticipated. As a staff we realized that despite all our work last year and the intense analysis we went through connecting the 7 Habits to the CC we still struggled with being able to access the competency language and skills off the top of our heads or in a genuine learning moment. This was an important reflection as it made us realize the degree of commitment we would need in each class and as a whole school if we truly wanted the students to learn and entrench the competencies for themselves. From this, teachers posted competency materials in more observable ways so that both teachers and students could draw on the language more readily in all lessons and regular interactions throughout the day.

Something that was both interesting and encouraging for the staff was the way student’s adoption of the competency language slowly evolved over the year. The students are now at the point that they will intermingle both the 7 Habit language and the core competency

language when describing situations or in reflection. At the end of last year we had a sense that we needed to go beyond the “Notice, Name, Nurture” aspect of learning and bring it more directly into the lessons each day. As we became more purposeful with our learning intentions in lessons we realized that we needed the constant visuals to remind us of the language in everyday teachable moments. We also came to the conclusion that the “Notice, Name, Nurture” was a crucial step in reinforcing the concepts when they were being taught. Last year we, “Noticed, Named, Nurtured” as a way of introducing the competencies in a subtle way but this year we have realized the power of using “Notice, Name, Nurture” as a reinforcing agent after the lessons. In addition, we are seeing that modeling is an enormous force in helping student’s embed the skills and language in their daily lives. What we are now noticing is that the students are starting to “Notice, Name, Nurture” for themselves and each other which is extremely powerful and heartening.

Developing a Hunch: What is leading to this situation?

Our hunch is that as we progress through our journey and continue to focus on the acquisition and application of the core competency language throughout all aspects of the day, students will continue to grow in their adoption and entrenchment of skills and language. We also suspect that despite the students’ growing familiarity and use of the language, their ability to self-reflect thoughtfully and deeply in prescribed moments using teacher determined tools will not match the level of understanding and use that the students embody in their daily lives. These styles of reflections will understate the true level of understanding and personification that the students actually have which makes sense when you consider the reading, writing and general language our young students actually have.

New Professional Learning: (Summarize new areas for professional learning and how you will go about designing new learning for yourself and your staff that will impact your learners.)

At this point in our journey, we believe the biggest impact on professional learning will be to continue our practice of going into each teacher’s classroom to see what they are doing and how they implement the core competencies. We have found that this is an incredible professional development process for a number of reasons. The most obvious reason is the fact that teachers are seeing what other teachers are doing which spurs rich discussions and allows teachers to support each other. Through these discussions teachers are exposed to various new ways of doing things along with subtle slants that can make a significant difference in the student’s learning. As a principal, I have noticed that these learning rounds are also a fabulous way of celebrating the good work that is going on in each classroom. They provide a chance for teachers to be able to take a step back and recognize the growth in their own learning and be proud of themselves. Through the learning rounds we are noticing that we are developing a very authentic learning community where teachers are formally and informally interacting with each other regardless of grades on a much more regular basis. This in turn, has really supported an open, honest and caring culture that celebrates risk taking.

Taking Action: What will you do differently?

Overall, we will continue on the same path as we are now utilizing the learning rounds as a way of checking in and sharing knowledge. We still struggle with an authentic and accurate way of having students self-reflect which will continue to be a focus for new teacher learning. Next year we will likely spend more time looking at documentation as a way of determining evidence of learning but not something that will necessarily be reported on to parents in a formal method. At this point we will continue the evolution and refining how we incorporate all aspects of the CC's, especially as we continue our deeper association with Reggio influenced learning. As the year comes to a close we are noticing that we have had an unintended trend where the intermediate classes have been utilizing more

Check: (Have we made enough of a difference? How do we know?)

During our learning rounds teachers used an observation sheet with some of our spirals guiding questions as a way of checking in on what we are doing and getting a sense of our impact on students. Again, because of the age of our students and their level of sophistication with language in general and in their ability to explain their thinking and feelings we believe this is a strong indicator in determining the difference we are making. Below is an overall summary of what teachers reflected on in our learning rounds.

Classroom Visit Observation Sheet

Queen's Park Hunch- *If we use the 7-Habits as a framework to teach the Core Competencies we will deepen the understanding, use, and self-reflection of the CC.*

****Note* We can't change their mindset till we change our own. In the reflections I noticed that a lot of what we are doing to support the kids, we are also using to support ourselves. Ex Visuals for adults and for children / placing posters where we as the teacher can reference during our lessons.***

- 1. What are you seeing that is most important to you in measuring and supporting students in their learning and use of the CC. What has helped the students the most.***

**Leading by example to support students understanding of competencies.*

Role Modeling – 'Oh this is something I can/choose do!'

**Notice/Name/Nurture is effective once they have an understanding of competencies. Make it visual.*

**Repetition is useful, especially with younger students. Consistency of language is also necessary.*

**Strong exemplars/real life scenarios have helped students*

- 2. How do we know if it is working? What do we see, hear, feel?***

**Seeing improvement in reflections.*

**Other staff ie, CEA's are starting to use the language.*

**Students are using the language.*

**Students also noticing others using competencies. 'Busting' each other in the act. Gotcha's*

**Teachers are using the language a lot more.*

3. *What has changed in the learning environment that is supporting or being a catalyst for the student's change in understanding and use?*

**Describing / Defining the Language has been a catalyst for change.*

**Visual posters with the children's pictures as exemplars – for adults and children*

**Thinking of the environment as the third teacher.*

**Less reliance on the teacher as source of knowledge. Transfer of responsibility to student.*

**Making the competencies visible.*

4. *What are ways we can get the students to give us meaningful feedback for their learning. What we need to continue our journey.*

**Link competencies to real life scenarios.*

**Simple reflections ie., thumbs up/side/down*

**More activities and books that teach CC to allow students to use and reflect on them.*

**Have them share examples of when they used the CC or saw someone else using them. If students are using the CC, we know they've learned it.*

**Sharing circle as a way to reflect and share. (Ab Ed Component)*

**Video kids explaining it orally*

Communication Strategies: (How will you communicate your inquiry and your results to the school community?)

Overall, we are still in the early stages in this area. This is a little more complicated at first blush due to the fact that we don't actually assess students on their core competencies so we don't have traditional avenues like report cards to help parents understand what is being done. For the most part, our work is communicated to the community through our assemblies, work that goes home, teacher class emails, newsletters, PAC meetings and through teacher/parent conversations.

Parental/Community Involvement: (How will you work together as a school community to do this work?)

This is an area we will explore in the future as we become more comfortable with our own practices and have a chance to experience and reflect on our learning.

Connection to the District Goals: (How does this plan connect to our district goals?)

Connection to the 7 Principles of Learning:

(How do each of these principles align with your plan?)

- 1. Learners at the center**
- 2. Social nature of learning**
- 3. Emotions are integral to learning**
- 4. Recognizing individual differences**
- 5. Stretching all students**
- 6. Assessment for learning**
- 7. Building horizontal connections**

As has been evidenced throughout our report, our work on the core competencies has a direct link to school completion as we have built a foundation of school connectedness through our Leader In Me and 7 Habits work. This, in turn, has allowed us to use the 7 Principles of Learning, The First Peoples Principles of Learning and the 4 Key Questions as a vehicle to enhance our practices. The entire process of student self-reflection is grounded in the 7 Principles of Learning, which has been the very foundation that Queen's Park has built our journey on. **2018- Everything we are doing is supporting the 7 principals of learning- CC, 7 Habits, out door, place based learning, first people principles.**