



## Kaleden Elementary School

Box 350 (152 Linden Ave.)

Kaleden, BC V0H 1K0

Principal: Darcy Mullin

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## SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN (2009-10)

### Kaleden Context

Kaleden is a rural community located 13 kilometres south of Penticton. Kaleden Elementary School provides education to approximately 120 students in Kindergarten through grade 5. As a school community, we value and pride ourselves on an inclusive approach to education, where all students are welcomed and appreciated for the various strengths and talents that they bring.

The Kaleden community is close knit and the school, in many ways, serves as a hub for the community. Kaleden Elementary School is a place where families can be seen gathering socially during and outside of the instructional day. Parents at Kaleden are very supportive and involved, particularly with activities and events that nurture and develop social and emotional development of children.

Kaleden Elementary School:

- strives to ensure that individual students experience personal success
- values open and timely communication with parents
- values and encourages parental support and involvement at the school
- is dedicated to the preparation of caring and responsible learners

Our school is supported by an active PAC. This support provides a meaningful connection to the surrounding environment and offers students the chance for involvement with and in service to others.

### INQUIRY QUESTION

*If we have a school-wide focus on providing students with descriptive feedback, will students feel more connected to the school and will academic achievement improve?*

### RATIONALE: What evidence compelled us to ask this question?

Our question emerged over a three month period through a series of thoughtful conversations.

In August we looked at historical data from our school – primarily school wide assessments. We noticed that the number of students fully meeting and exceeding expectations in reading decreased dramatically in Grades 3-5. We noted this was the time the assessment tool changed format and included a significant writing component. We thought that our question should focus on reading, in particular the reading writing connection.

When we looked at the results from our Reading and Writing assessments in October, the numbers told us that most of our kids were reading at or above grade level. Those who were not were already getting direct support through 1 to 1 reading, Special Education or Learning Assistance. However, our writing data was not as strong. In every classroom writing scores were lower than the reading scores. At that point we felt our question should focus on writing.

It was about that time that we attended the SPC training at Princess Margaret School. We were led through a variety of activities and engaged in a lot of table discussion. The discussion kept coming back to the concept of connectedness. We heard a personal story of a parent who was academically successful, but did not feel any connection to school and almost dropped out. As tables reported out and shared ideas it became clear that the job of schools went far beyond reading and writing.




At our next PAC meeting we reported out on the training session. This led to an engaging discussion about schools and their role in society - specifically what parents wanted kids to learn. While the curriculum is important, more than anything parents wanted their children to be engaged in learning and be on their way to becoming well rounded citizens.

After all the meetings and conversations, we had a staff meeting at KES and we went through the same process. Again, people shared personal stories and we had an engaging and thoughtful discussion about our “real” jobs as teachers. The notion that kept coming back and reemerging time after time was this concept of connectedness. We didn’t know what it meant exactly, but we knew it had to do with the culture of our school and we agreed that it was an area we needed to focus on.





The last part we wrestled with was how to define this term “connectedness”. We looked at a study by John Hattie that compiled data from 500,000 studies on student achievement. His work showed that outside of a student’s cognitive ability, it is teachers that make the largest impact on a student’s achievement. No surprise there, but it gets more interesting. The single factor that had the biggest impact on student’s achievement, even more than cognitive ability was descriptive feedback. It was then that we realized the key to connectedness and achievement was in the relationships that are created when students and teachers engage in descriptive feedback. Research tells us that focusing on descriptive feedback will have an impact on achievement, but what impact will it have on connectedness? That is our question.

## ACTION PLAN






### **OBJECTIVES: Specific Steps to answer our question OR More specific questions?**

-  In our discussion as a staff, we knew that it was not feasible (or necessary) to track all students. We have created two screening tools (primary/intermediate) that will assess student’s connectedness to the school. We believe that if students are connected they can identify a variety of positive relationships at school and feel that they have the ability to be successful. Our screen sets to measure these scales.
-  We will screen (school wide) in May of each year. Late in the year, teachers know their students and will be better able to invigilate the screen and interpret the data. The staff will collaboratively come together to select a cohort group (roughly 10% of our population) that we will track the following year. We will also use the information in developing classes and classroom supports for the next school year.
-  We feel focusing on a cohort allows us to intervene at an early age with those students who may become disengaged over time. We have anecdotal evidence that suggests that even though kids are academically successful, they may not feel connected to the school or school culture. We know these are the students who are most at risk for not completing school and earning their Dogwood.

**STRUCTURES AND STRATEGIES: For all students and our most vulnerable learners.**

-  The instructional focus of the school will be on Descriptive Feedback. As a staff we agree that we will focus on providing students with Feedback that:
 
  - Is specific and constructive
  - Let's students know where they are
  - Gives them strategies "how to get there"
  - Related to learning outcomes or essential learning
  - Provides examples to refer to
  - Promotes dialogue
  - Is timely, so student's can act on it
  - Promotes Learning for Learning's sake – focus on the process, not the outcomes
-  We are focusing on Descriptive Feedback because we know its effect on achievement, but also because it involves a meaningful relationship between student and teacher, which we believe, is the key to connecting kids to school.
-  Our cohort group will receive the same instruction as everyone else, but will have one extra level of support. Each student will have a support plan that will be created collaboratively and instituted by the classroom teacher.
-  The intervention or "plan" will vary from student to student depending on their needs. Students who struggle socially may get implicit teaching in this area (i.e. Role Plays, social stories etc.). A record of interventions and strategies will be compiled and documented for each student in our cohort group. Each student's progress will be monitored throughout the year. The plan will likely change and evolve as the student progresses.

**ASSESSMENT PROCESS & TOOLS: What will we use to measure our success?**

-  In May we will institute the screen school wide and collate the data. Based on the results, teachers will bring students forward who they think should be part of the cohort group for the following year. The decision process will be done collaboratively at a staff meeting.
-  Once identified the individuals in the cohort will be tracked with respect to their areas of need. For instance, one student may be struggling with identifying and creating positive relationships and another may struggle with self concept.
-  We know that Descriptive Feedback will benefit all learners, particularly those who are at-risk academically, but our low achievers may not be disconnected to school, therefore we need to go deeper with our cohort group.
-  Progress will be monitored in our monthly staff meeting. We will problem solve collaboratively, inviting external people/agencies in if warranted.
-  We will monitor academic progress in Language Arts in our School wide assessments (Reading and Writing three times per year). In Mathematics, formative and summative assessments will be used to track student's progress through Grade Level curriculum.

**PROFESSIONAL LEARNING: How will we increase our capacity and collaboration?**

- What does the staff need in order to move our students forward?
  - a. Collaborative work at staff meetings
  - b. Learning meetings – focused on reflective practice and professional growth
  - c. Self Directed Inquiry – working from our definition of what Descriptive Feedback is

**RESOURCES: What do we currently have and what do we need?**

- Seven Strategies of Assessment for Learning (Jan Chappuis)
- How to Give Effective Feedback to Your Students (Susan Brookhart)
- The Differentiated School (Carol Ann Tomlinson)
- Continued emphasis on collaborative time (Staff meetings, release time) to move the work forward.

**PARENT INVOLVEMENT: How parents will become partners in our efforts?**

- This year our energy has been focused on defining our question and setting the course of action. We know and understand the value and importance of involving our parent community. As we move forward into next year this will be an area of focus.

**EVIDENCE****KEY FINDINGS: What did we find out?**


- In May, all teachers completed the screens. In the end, teachers identified 17 students of concern, which is higher than the 10% threshold we anticipated. However, four of those students will not be attending Kaleden Elementary next year, so we will track a cohort of 14 students across all grade levels. The students in the cohort are struggling to connect with the work (academic) or their peers (social). The screens have been collected and we developed individual plans for next year. This will allow us to target and monitor the students more effectively. These plans will be prepared and ready for the teachers in September.

**NARRATIVE: What successes and/or challenges are not reflected in the data?**



- Upon reflection, our process had both successes and challenges. In the early primary Grade (K -1) it was very labour intensive. These students are developing their language skills which resulted in teachers conducting a significant number of student conferences. In the end, most teachers (K -4) were able to predict which students would be part of the cohort.
- At the upper primary and intermediate levels, the screen was quick to administer and easy to score. Both screens will give us information that will allow us to pinpoint areas of focus for our at-risk cohort. Primary teachers noted that although the process was labour intensive, the discussions that were involved in conferencing were an important piece as they provided valuable insight into each students' level of connectedness.
- For next year we will look at adjusting the screen for our lower primary students.

## REFLECTION AND SUMMARY

### **REFLECTIONS: What did we learn? How did it make a difference?**

-  This year our inquiry was really focused on the development of our question and the process of establishing our cohort. However, our discussions leading to our question led to a collective understanding around the importance of getting our students connected to the school. Teachers commented that it made them focus more on the relationships with students, made them more deliberate in their feedback (particularly in teachable moments), and more aware of students who may not be connected.

### **FUTURE PLANNING: Where do we go from here?**

-  Next year the principal will step back as leader of the inquiry. Alicia Moura (Grade 1/2 teacher) will lead the staff through the process next year. The plan is to have teachers develop their own question around descriptive feedback within the framework of our school-wide question. The concept of descriptive feedback is an integral part of our inquiry, however, each staff member has a different knowledge base. By pursuing their own questions, teachers will enter their own professional learning at a place that is comfortable and gives them more ownership as the question can be tailored to the context of their classroom.
-  Once each team member has their individual question, we will use our resources to support their professional learning.

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### **School Planning Council:**

Name (Principal): \_\_\_\_\_

Name (Parent): \_\_\_\_\_

Name (Parent): \_\_\_\_\_

Name (Parent): \_\_\_\_\_