



Penticton Secondary School

154 Eckhardt Avenue East

Penticton, BC V2A 1Z3

Principal: Bill Bidlake

Vice Principal: Sandra Richardson

Vice Principal: Myron Dueck

Vice Principal: Jeff Guy

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN (2009-10)

Penticton Secondary Context

Founded in 1913, Penticton Secondary is situated in the heart of Penticton's downtown area. Known commonly as Pen Hi, this school has a student population of nearly 1300 housed in a building that was newly built and renovated in 2008. Pen Hi offers students a wide array of opportunities in the areas of academics, the arts, athletics and employment training. Perhaps it comes as no surprise that this large student body, when guided by a committed staff of teachers, coaches and mentors, wins numerous provincial and national awards each year. Those who visit Pen Hi are often struck by the student involvement in the community, whether that is leadership in the 10,000 Tonight Food Drive or the assistance offered to those in other places in Canada or the wider world. In essence, it is the focus at Pen Hi to create the very best learning environment by consistently striving to act with integrity, respect, compassion and commitment.

Penticton Secondary School:

- strives to develop students who are well-rounded and equipped to succeed following high school
- values open and timely communication with parents through a variety of methods
- values and encourages parental support and involvement at the school
- is dedicated to the preparation of caring and responsible learners
- values traditions and legacy, while embracing the innovations in education and technology

INQUIRY QUESTION(S)

If we have a school-wide focus on developing the 'love of learning', will students be more engaged?

If we targeted the 'love of learning as a means of engaging students, would key indicators around school completion improve?

If we focused on strategies to improve student connectedness to school, would school completion improve?

Our questions are still in development and we anticipate changes as our staff becomes more deeply involved.

RATIONALE: What evidence compelled us to ask this question/these questions?

- Our staff was polled on three critical questions about Pen Hi:
 - What are you most proud of when you think about Pen Hi?
 - Define what is meant by a 'successful' student at PSS, and suggest something we could do or change to best foster this type of success.
 - What is one thing that could be offered to you as an educator that would most assist you in helping your students to be successful?

Most Frequent Responses:

Most Proud of/what do you like best about PSS:

This question category was fairly open-ended and was a good way to engage in a conversation. Simply stated, we asked what people most liked about Penticton Secondary:

1. **Staff** – One of the most immediate responses to this question was that our faculty members liked being a part of the PSS teaching community. People commented that they felt the staff at PSS was professional, very talented and committed to making Pen Hi a great school. Teachers new to PSS felt that our school was very welcoming towards visitors, students and staff. Another comment that arose with high regularity was that faculty members enjoyed the feeling of collaboration and collegiality.
2. **Opportunities** – Staff recognized the wide range of opportunities open to students at PSS. Furthermore, staff members at Pen Hi see our offerings to students as not only balanced between the trades, arts, academics and athletics, but that these programs are delivered at levels recognized provincially and nationally. A word typically used throughout the interviews when referencing the programs offered at Pen Hi was 'excellence'.
3. **Our work with at-risk students** – This response was linked in many ways to the topic of opportunities in that we have many different facets to our school that cater to various learning styles and needs. On another level, numerous staff members took pride in our ability to work with students who might have been 'turfed out' of school in the past. Some areas mentioned specifically around this point were LAC rooms, Homework Club, Link Crew's Cocoa & Cram, and other interventions. Lastly, in regards to preparing some of our most challenged students for life beyond high school, people recognized the efforts of our Special Education Department.
4. **New building** – A common response was simply that people appreciated, and took pride in, the new facility that is Pen Hi. From the new common area to the gym, including the impressive entrances and parking lot, people enjoy working in a building like ours.
5. **Administration** – A common response was that the staff at PSS felt that the administration was approachable and supportive.

What is success?

This was a question that some people seemed to ponder, whereas others answered immediately. Whatever the case, some key themes came through in nearly all interviews. A strong contention was that success is NOT solely measured by a student's academic standing, but rather is measured through deeper, more intrinsic motives and values. Many people considered a successful student to be one that exhibits a strong work ethic, is responsible and who would be considered to have accountability. Others argued that success is measured by the extent to which an individual reaches his/her potential – that to build one's own capacity and/or competence is the measure of success. As stated by one staff member, 'I would consider a hard-working student attaining 55% to be more successful than an apathetic person at 95%'.

Another theme that emerged during the discussions around success was learning. Some people pointed to the notion that success is found through the sharing and nurturing of ideas and thought. Others stated that the desire to learn, in whatever shape that took, was the key to success. And perhaps on the deepest level, a frequent response was that of metacognition; that successful students are those who are aware of how they learn and who are harnessing the knowledge of how they can increase their own learning.

How do we foster success?

During the interview process, once a staff member was asked to define success, the next question was ‘how might we best foster your version of success?’

Attendance: There was one general response to this question that was clearly number one, and that would be to improve attendance. While many people recognized that absences are standing in the way of student success, there was less commonality in *how* to address this issue. Some people suggested that we increase the awareness and education around attendance both in our student and parent communities. Numerous people explored the idea of offering incentives and rewards for solid attendance, rather than the traditional punishment paradigm. A common concern was that there are too many types of absences and that staff awareness of this problem is also necessary. A caveat worth noting is that many staff who mentioned concerns over attendance issues also recognized that many of the opportunities afforded to our students were the cause of some attendance problems. If people concluded this response in a similar way, it was that staff members would like PSS to focus on citizenship and accountability, and that through these values attendance might be improved.

At-risk Students: Across the interview process, the cohort of students considered to be ‘at-risk’ was frequently mentioned. While ‘at-risk’ is a designation that can result from many different factors, the general idea is that we have a subset of our population that needs interventions in order to be successful. People suggested that we increase our identification, listing and testing of students who are of concern. Care and compassion was seen as critical, whether it is supplying food, calling home or making meaningful personal connections. Many teachers summarized our task as that of building relationships with students. Whether it is care or accountability, a solid connection with an adult in the building was seen as instrumental in developing successful students.

Wish List

The final component to the staff interviews is what we termed the ‘wish list’ – an opportunity to ask for anything that would enable the individual staff member to foster success in the classroom. The variety of responses was considerable. The concrete/pragmatic side to the spectrum saw requests for shelving and storage units or the desire for increased or individualized teaching space. Other straightforward issues included a crack-down on lates and absences. Concerns around a perceived lack of communication between teachers and parents resulted in some asking for clarity around communication expectations and suggestions that we have a sort of legislated/periodic moment in the semester that we all contact parents. Some people spoke to community issues like environmental awareness, reduced smoking presence or that we should promote our own successes more in the school and community. From a learning perspective, teachers requested more opportunities for collaboration, mentorship and cross-curricular sharing. Numerous people asked that Flex-Funds and the access to district helping teachers be maintained. Finally, as with every other question set, the topic of at-risk students emerged. People suggested we introduce a female fit class to address the segment of grade 9 & 10 females that appear disinterested in PE. Another suggestion was that we expand our homework/learning support both inside and outside of instructional time. It was stated clearly that reduced class-size, particularly at grade 9, fostered a better learning environment for at-risk students in particular.

ACTION PLAN

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

1. We need to define as a staff, what we mean by the love of learning.
2. Part of that discussion needs to frame whether 'Love of Learning' is the result of our inquiry or is it the means to achieving something else?
3. Once we have defined the terms we speak of, the staff needs to look into what makes students engaged in learning and to truly delve into the learning process.
4. For the above steps, the same questions could be asked of other, or competing, themes. These could include school connectivity or community.
5. Once we have a number of ideas (6-10), we can seek to narrow our topic to a series of sub-topics or focus groups. (e.g. Is the love of learning increased through opportunities for creativity?)
6. Invite External Inquiry Facilitators (Bev Krieger) to help guide and develop individual learning teams as they focus on sub-topics.

*Note: There is already significant interest on staff for people to join a variety of initiatives and focus groups. These include:

- a. in-school suspension model
- b. attendance policy
- c. assessment strategies
- d. inquiry for students in the classroom

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

1. Senior Attendance proposal/Grade 9 Attendance plan
2. Focus Groups
3. Link Crew
4. Humanities Course – We enroll students who struggled for a variety of reasons in grade 9 SS/Eng and offer a course with an alternative structure and approach.
5. In-school suspension model (Todd)

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

- SOS-Q
- Attendance data
- School Completion data
- Interviews/narrative (humanities course, in-school suspension model)

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

- Assessment/DI group
- Humanities/Arts training
- Pro-D/training opportunity in September with Robb McGirr around an in-school suspension model and drug use self-assessment training for staff

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

- External Inquiry Facilitators (Bev Krieger)
- District Helping Teachers (Judith King)
- Outside facilitators (Robb McGirr)
- SOS-Q: a survey designed to identify the extent to which students may be at risk of not completing high school.

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

To be developed during the 2010-11 school year.

EVIDENCE

KEY FINDINGS: What did we find out?

This section will be completed during the 2010-11 school year after it has been compiled and reflected upon.

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

This section will be completed during the 2010-11 school year after it has been compiled and reflected upon.

REFLECTION AND SUMMARY

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

- We have learned that it may take a bit of time to focus a group as large as our staff around one particular direction or question. We feel now that a general question, most likely around school completion, would be best and then a branching off of more specific directions would be effective.
- It would seem that the survey was a good process to start things off, as it gave us a place to start the conversation about what we like about our building and community, but perhaps more importantly what we would want to do to foster success for all students.
- We found that once people wrap their heads around the basics of inquiry, that there is a natural interest to explore issues and matters that are confronted on a regular basis (eg. suspensions).
- Two important things to mention around inquiry is that (1) your question needs to be one that you do not know the answer to and (2) that is of particular interest to the members of the group.
- Lastly, there is a keen interest with many staff members knowing that there will be time available to venture into this inquiry process. Many staff members are taxed at lunches and other traditional meeting times with an array of committees (awards, school climate, SBT, etc...). Critical to 'buy-in' on this process is a structured allocation of meeting/work time.

FUTURE PLANNING: Where do we go from here?

- In September we will gather together as a staff and look at our over-arching question.
- As stated earlier in the discussion:
 - Once we have a number of ideas (6-10), we can seek to narrow our topic to a series of sub-topics or focus groups. (e.g. Is the love of learning increased through opportunities for creativity?)
 - Invite External Inquiry Facilitators (Bev Krieger) to help guide and develop individual learning teams as they focus on sub-topics.

*Note: There is already significant interest on staff for people to join a variety of initiatives and focus groups.

These include:

- in-school suspension model
- attendance policy
- assessment strategies
- inquiry for students in the classroom

Pen Hi Timeline April → Sept 2010

<u>April</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Myron collates data into general headings and format • Myron gets example inquiry questions from Sharon Sola
<u>May</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Admin team members format data into Myron's template • Dept Heads receive example inquiry questions
<u>June</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff meeting – display data from questions process as well as 'spin-off' ideas from the process (e.g. 'love of learning') • Discuss possible questions at staff meeting (possible visit by Judith at this meeting) • Set direction for establishing question in September
<u>September</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish questions and set work-groups for first collaborative meetings
<u>Areas of focus</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grade 9 in-school suspension/support • Link Crew/mentorship programs • New course in grade 10 – dual SS/English with fine arts component