DW Poppy Secondary School

Action Plan for Learning 2014 – 2015

Langley School District #35

Names and Signatures of School Planning Council

Parent: Jackie Cook

Parent: Wayne Rourke

Parent: Ginette Keglowitsch

Student: Jenna Richmond

Student: Braedon Palmer

Principal: Balan Moorthy

Board Approval

Suzanne Hoffman, Superintendent

Board of Education Chair

Date Approved February 24, 2015

SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 35 (LANGLEY)

Action Plan for Learning
D.W. Poppy Secondary School

Striving to become the best we can be!

Student Rep- Jenna Richmond
Parent Rep – Jackie Cook
Parent Rep – Zoe Rourke
Student Rep- Braedon Palmer
Parent Rep – Ginette Keglowitsch
Staff Rep – Balan Moorthy
Staff Rep – Dean Pacheco

School Context:

D.W. Poppy Secondary School is located in the township of Langley, B.C., which is a suburb of Vancouver, B.C. This year D.W. Poppy enrolls 770 students in grades eight through twelve. The school offers a comprehensive program of courses that includes Advanced Placement courses in the following curricular areas: English Language and Composition, Calculus, English Literature and Composition, Psychology and History. The Fine Arts program includes Band, Choir, Instrumental, Musical Theatre along with Drama, Visual Arts, Sculpture and a wide variety of technical education programs such as Computer, Woodwork, Metalwork and Electronics. D.W. Poppy also has an agreement with Kwantlen Polytechnic University's Excel Program that allows grade 12 students to enroll in one or two first year Liberal Arts courses at the university. D.W. Poppy Secondary has a strong community of Aboriginal Students as well as high percentage of students who are identified as Special Needs.

A highlight of the school is the partnership with the British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT) Electrical Program. As a satellite campus of BCIT, students can qualify for the first year of Apprenticeship in their Grade 12 year.

D.W. Poppy has successfully gained status as a Musical Theatre Academy for the 2015-2016 school year. Over 100 students are involved in the Musical Theatre Program and it is definitely a "lighthouse" program in the school.

D.W. Poppy offers an extensive extracurricular program in the areas of theatre, music, leadership, clubs and athletics. International travel experience programs are available for interested students to many locations around the globe.

Inquiry Question:

Will focusing on increasing student engagement improve learning for students and staff. Secondly, will having departmentally developed Inquiry questions improve staff ownership.

Rationale:

> *"Educational research has also revealed that motivation is a precursor to engagement. Engagement requires a self-determined commitment to learning. Commitment to think deeply and critically, to grapple with ideas, and to make connections in information happens when motivation is intrinsic.*
>
> *A number of measures have been used in the research to determine if students are engaged in their learning. Historically, measures have focused on behaviours such as attendance and quantitative data such as achievement and graduation rates. More recently, researchers are looking at qualitative data focused on engagement in learning. For example, engagement can be measured by the extent to which students identify with and value schooling outcomes, have a sense of belonging at school, participate in academic and non academic activities, strive to meet formal requirements of schooling and make serious personal investment in learning."*
>
> *- Alberta Ministry of Education Webpage, 2014*

Much of the current direction from the BC Ministry of Education supports Inquiry as a process that individual teachers, departments and schools can use to create ownership of educational practice that systematically improves learning and engagement in schools through an ongoing reflective process.

Each department was asked to submit an Inquiry question that would improve engagement in their respective subject areas. Three areas have been identified as a means of measuring engagement: (1) Identifying and connecting with school outcomes and improving learning; (2) Having a sense of belonging at school; and (3) Participating in academic and non-academic school related activities. The departmental Inquiry questions have been categorized in the areas they address.

Identifying and connecting with school outcomes and improving learning.

- English Department
  Will teaching specific pre-reading, during reading, and post-reading strategies and collecting feedback from students, improve critical reading skills?

- Social Studies Department
  Will linking the outcomes in the new Grade 8 and 9 Social Studies curricula to current events deepen the students' understanding of present day conflicts/dilemmas facing Canadians?

- Languages Department
  Will focusing on listening skills improve performance in the areas of reading, speaking and writing?

- Special Education Department
  Will giving at-risk students access to, and training in, a variety of technologies, such as but not limited to Kurzweil, Khan Academy, and Dragon Speak, improve their academic performance?

- Math Department
  Will emphasizing the rationale behind the answer, rather than the answer itself at the grade 8 and 9 improve mathematical fluency in students entering senior courses?

- Science Department
  If teachers move away from recipe-based labs and adopting more self-designed lab activities, will students:
  - be more engaged in the learning process?
  - be better able to communicate written ideas?
  - be better able to communicate data through the use of tables, charts and graphs?
  - be better able to summarize important data?
  - be better able to co-operate in design and execution in small groups with their peers?
  - have a greater understanding of the Scientific Method?

Having a sense of belonging at school.

- International Students Program and ESL Department
  Will there be an improved level of engagement of International students within the larger school community by increasing the quantity and quality of their interactions with the Canadian student body?

Participating in academic and non-academic school related activities.

- Learning Commons
  If the concept of "Learning Commons" is introduced to the whole staff to become contributors to its success, will it improve students' critical and creative thinking, communication skills, and personal and social awareness?

- Technology Education
  Will student engagement and participation in elective courses increase, if closer connections to District Career Initiatives such as ACE IT and SSA programs are included in the content of coursework in those courses?

- Administration
  Will providing a unique cohort for more at-risk students transitioning into Grade 8 increase these students' success and engagement?

Actions:

The following actions are samples of Department feedback from the inquiry questions:

- English Department Action
  1. In first implementing the inquiry question last semester, it was decided to give students from grade 8 to 12 a cross grade pre-reading assignment and, a few months later, a cross grade post-reading assignment. All students from 8 to 12 received the exact same materials for both the pre and post assignments. It's important to note that students were given a different story for each of the pre and post reading, but the assignment was exactly the same. This assignment consisted of a simple sheet divided into the following three categories:

     - Pre-Reading: Access prior knowledge /Predictions
     - During Reading: Images/Visualization / Questions
     - Post-Reading: Summarize (3 or more key points) / Connections

The titles of the categories are self-explanatory in regard to when students were instructed to complete each section.

- Social Studies Action
    1. The Department will work as teams in grade areas to link curriculum to present day conflicts/dilemmas facing Canadians.
    2. Days will be organized to meet, with a ½ day given to each grade group. This would allow time to collaborate and design specific lessons. It would also provide some time for the grade 8 and 9 teachers to review the new curricula as a group.

- Languages Department Actions
    1. Department Members will identify and implement strategies to improve test scores in the area of Listening Comprehension (while continuing to monitor performance in the other domains.) Teachers will also work toward providing consistency in learning strategies and evaluation tools.
    2. Department members will identify and implement measurement tools to determine the impact of students' improved listening skills on the areas of spoken production and interaction. Teachers will also monitor the impact of improved listening in areas such as attention span, ability to concentrate and the transfer of these skills to other subject areas.
    3. Teachers will continue data collection and compare the results of the cohort of grade 10s with the data on their performance in grade to track the longitudinal results of the implementation of instructional strategies that specifically target Listening Comprehension skills.

- International Students Program and ISP
    1. A focus is to develop a Multi-Cultural Mentorship Program. This will be started on a small scale with new students arriving in February, and will be developed for the start of the school year the following fall.

- Special Education Department Actions
    1. At risk students will be given to and access to, and training in, a variety of Technologies that might include the following: Kurzweil (and the related app), Khan Academy videos, Dragon Speak, MindUp, Various apps for note-taking, study skills, building numeracy, reading comprehension etc., Poppy Blocks, Library Cards – to access audio books, Science codes to download textbooks (if available), SET BC equipment, ARC BC resources, ALT chat, Touch Chat with Word Power, Reflex Math, Gadgets and Gizmos.
    2. A full day of in-service for teachers will be planned.

- Learning Commons Actions

    1. The following subset of questions related to the use of the Commons will be asked:
        - Why do so few teachers utilize the resources of the Learning Commons? And, by extension, how are more teachers and student motivated to use the Commons' resources?
        - Why do students mainly use computer only and not books?
        - Why don't students use the Library Web-portal?
        - How will teachers and students be motivated to see that the Commons is the key to Inquiry based learning?

    2. These questions will be answered via a set of surveys with teachers and students. Then:
        - Discuss with Department heads the use of the Learning Commons.
        - Begin by targeting a few teachers for Inquiry and Project based Learning Assignments in the Commons.

- Work directly with these teachers to develop the Assignments.
- Report out to all teachers about the successes and pitfalls of the process.

3. Evaluation:

   Since the Question is two-fold. The report needs to focus on:
   - The frequency of use of the Commons.
   - Empirical and anecdotal feedback regarding "improved student Critical and Creative thinking, Communication Skills, and Personal and Social Awareness" will be collected.

   Breakdown of Evaluation techniques:
   - The first year, the Department will use rubrics designed by the ministry of education for evaluating Critical and Creative Thinking.
   - Communication Skills and Personal and Social Awareness will be evaluated anecdotally by the Commons Specialist and teachers involved.

- Technology Education Actions
  1. The project and theory work has been developed to correspond to work placement skills required by employers. Employers are presenting the skills they are looking for in their employees in classes. Teachers will determine how they can assess whether student enrolment in elective courses is motivated by career interest.
  2. Students may take a questionnaire at the start of the course to see what perceptions are regarding the course content. Students can take a further questionnaire at the end of the course.
  3. Teachers will evaluate how students see their work habits in school affects their success in the workplace.
  4. The Department will bring in students currently enrolled in the programs to attest to the requirements demanded during the training. Teachers will bring in students and employers to speak about their requirements and experiences.

- Administration Action
  1. D.W. Poppy developed and implemented a Transitions Program for students entering Grade 8 who were identified as having severe anxiety related issues as identified by their Grade 7 teachers. The teacher developed a cohort of these students for their academic subjects as well as their resource blocks. These students participated in their PE as well as their elective blocks. In addition to intensive numeracy and literacy support these students were taught study skills, organizational skills and anxiety self-regulation techniques. Extra support was provided by the Grade 8 Counsellor and Youth Support Worker. The focus was on building the necessary skills for students so that they could succeed in a comprehensive Grade 9 program.

Evidence:

While most of Departments were in process of implementing their action plans, the following Departments submitted anecdotal evidence of their progress to date:

- International Students Program and ISP
  "The mentorship program has started out very well. Approximately 15 Canadian students have been paired with international students in various field trips and activities. Some of these friendships have extended beyond the school related activities and students have initiated social connections on weekends."

- English Department
  "The process appears to have helped weaker readers with processing materials. Stronger readers were more reluctant, although skills will assist them with more complex reading material."

- Languages Department
  "Despite early intervention, it was noted that many grade 11 and 12 students continue to experience difficulty and are not particularly competent listeners in the target language."

- Administration
  - Grade 8 had approximately 25% identified and as many as 40% including anxiety/mental health concerns.
  - Grade 8 Transition Cohort found greater success academically and was given the opportunity to work on their unique challenges (i.e. high levels of anxiety).
  - Staff has been able to work more effectively with struggling learners with a more balanced class distribution.
  - Overall student success increased in terms of academic performance as the year progressed.
  - Fewer discipline concerns were reported to the office.
  - Decreased frustration amongst Gr. 8 teachers was observed.

Reflections:

- English Department
  "This exercise seemed to help the weaker readers with processing the reading material. The stronger readers were somewhat reluctant, but this sort of activity will certainly help them with inferential understanding of more challenging readings."

  "As far is assessment is concerned the Department is looking at existing reading rubrics. However, teachers are not opposed to developing individual rubrics if they need to. Regardless of assessing on a formative or summative level, this type of assignment should help department members gauge the critical reading skills of all students in English 8 to 12. Ideally, the English Department should be able to adapt this type of activity to some of the existing assignments, thus eliminating the burden of extra work added to the English curriculum."

- Languages Department
  "Despite early intervention, it was noted that many grade 11 and 12 students continued to experience difficulty and are not particularly competent listeners in the target language. This may be due to the fact that FSL students are only exposed to the target language within the classroom and most fail to actively seek opportunities to listen to French outside of class, unlike their French Immersion counterparts."

The next steps include the following:

Creating opportunities to learn from and with colleagues in the District during sessions facilitated with Lynie Tenner.

Continuing to advocate for a language technology centre in the school. In consultation with the previous IT expert, the Department purchased a license for an excellent program called "Tell Me More" which would enable students to engage in self-directed learning and fully integrate technology that takes advantage of the best practices in second language learning. Students working at computers have opportunities to listen to samples, record themselves and compare their pronunciation to that of native speakers, take grammar and vocabulary tests and score themselves and track their progress via individual accounts.

What did we learn? What are our key findings? How did the year go?
What does the evidence tell us? How did it make a difference?
What do we need to do differently and what are we willing to let go of?
Where do we go from here?

- Social Studies
  The inquiry has already led to the following, more detailed questions:

  1. How are teachers dealing with current affairs given the fact that they have been removed from curriculum?
  2. How will the changes to subject areas be managed? In other words, how do teachers ensure that students do not miss or repeat large chunks of the curriculum, which are changing grade levels?
  3. Will new reference materials and/or textbooks be available in time for implementation of the new curricula? Will there be funds available to purchase new materials?
  4. Will research become the major resource? If so…
     How will teachers manage the authenticity of this research?
     How will teachers use technology to implement the new plan?

- Science Department Actions
  Sample of a Lab arising from the inquiry
  "In Science 8, teachers have used a lab that asks students to follow a carefully scripted procedure to determine the effect of temperature on the dissolving rate of crystals of potassium permanganate. With the relaxed timeline of the new curriculum, the teachers can explain to students what materials and equipment are available for them to use, discuss any safety concerns and restrictions, and then ask them to design a lab that does show that hotter liquids are simply those with faster moving particles. The students will have to find a way to quantify their observations and display their data appropriately."

- Administration
  The grade 8 transitions program has quickly emerged as an integral part of the feeder school support system. All of the feeder schools have indicated an interest in having the program continue for the many students that are struggling with school in Grade 7 and the consequent struggles they would face in a larger and more complex environment as they start high school. Grade 8 transitions students will be monitored, as they move on to a more fully integrated model for Grade 9.

Next Steps for 2014-2015

Staff Engagement

- Staff are still at the beginning of the process of understanding and implementing effective Inquiry questions.

- Each Department will refine their inquiry question for the 2014-2015 School Year.

- Each Department will look more closely at gathering qualitative and quantitative data to measure their progress to increase student engagement and to increase student learning.

- Teachers will form their own Professional, Collaborative Learning teams and will use collaboration time during the 2014/15 school year to focus on a specific area of interest or passion with a goal of improving their own individual practice and increasing student engagement.

- Sharing of our learning:
  Collaborative Learning teams will be expected to share their new understandings to the rest of the staff through:
  - Department Meetings
  - Staff Meetings
  - Design and Assessment Days