

**LEAP Action Learning Report 2014**

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| Topic area(What) | **How the school and its local community work as educational partners.** |
| Context(Where and When) | Visiting a number of elementary schools, high schools and attending 3 days of professional training in 2 different districts including: John Diefenderbaker Senior School (3 days,) Beaver Crest Elementary School (2 days), Osprey Central School (1 Day) Ontario Principals Board Meeting – Bluewater School Board (1day) and LEAP professional development day. |
| Research methods(How) | Observations, interviews with school staff, executives, teacher aides and parents; reading district policies and school documents, attendance at District School Board PD day; JDSS PD day and personal reflections including comparing how communication and community involvement occurs in NSW. |
| General Findings | * All schools in Canada show a sense of national pride with the National Anthem played each morning and sung by students and teachers. With the elementary schools, their school pledge is also recited.
* Announcements are made by the students through the PA system takes about 5 minutes each morning. The colourful artwork and displays, as well as, painted walls and hallways, again are evident.
* There are no school uniforms or a ‘No hat – no play policy.’
* Mennonite students are told not to play with the local children for fear of having their philosophy tainted. They come to school with no or little English. They live simply but do carry a mobile phone. They travel using a horse and carriage. When they turn 14yrs old, they leave school and learn a trade or learn to be a good wife. Mexican Mennonites are considered below the Canadian Mennonites.
* In the rural schools I attended, there was very little multiculturalism.
* All students learn French as well as English with some students in a more advanced French class.
* Principals and Vice Principals are not members of teachers union and are classed as administrators.
* Performance appraisals each 5 years and both Principals and Vice-principals generally move each 5 years with teachers expected to do further studies before applying for Principal or Vice-principal positions.
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| Findings(So what) | * In Canada, education is the responsibility of each province or territory but based on the Guidelines and Policies of the Ministry.
* Besides, “The Provincial Report Card,” like schools in NSW, parent-teacher or parent-student-teacher conferences; interviews, phone calls, informal reports or portfolios of student work are all ways of communicating and reporting to parents designed to support students with learning and parents with supporting their learning at home.
* At the PD for Bluewater District, the Communications Framework provided suggestions upon which the school could plan what needs to be considered when relaying information amongst the stakeholders of a school. The, “Why? Reasons for Communication; Who? Members of the Learning community; How? Methods of Communications and What? Things Communicated.” This ‘policy to practice,’ paper was very useful in my current climate of addressing how well we communicate to our parents/carers at our school.
* At John Diefenderbaker Senior School, (Yrs 8 – 12) the Principal, Mark O'rozion, was holding an assembly celebrating the achievements of Terry Fox, a Canadian athlete, humanitarian and cancer research activist who after having a leg amputated due to cancer, embarked on a cross-Canada run to raise money and awareness for cancer research. The way the school and community supported this national hero was inspiring and commendable.
* A number of programs and agencies that operate outside the school to help aid students in health, alternative learning and transitioning, as well as, work on preventative measures are used.
* All students at this school have a student profile that is different from a student record card. It lists not only weaknesses but strengths and interests. Some of this information can only be obtained by having a conversation with parents or the community.
* A project called the “BOX,” which looks after student with mental health issues, addictive issues and self-harm students is in operation. Teachers are also encouraged to post information about successes and failures of students on their Intranet which comes up as a flagged item to the student’s class teacher.
* Community involvement is very much student driven. From interests in their personal development, eg requesting weekly visits from a nurse on health and hygiene to “At Risk Counselling’ by Youth Engagement Officers; addiction services office, YMCA, “Keystone – family and community services (not DOC’s), & CAS – Children’s Aid Society (DOC’s). JDSS student are part of the BOX committee, as well as, staff and community members and all students can access this space in the BOX.
* At Beavercrest Elementary School in Markdale the many volunteers at the school, support a number of programs; from the needs of the Learning Disability Students program to reading programs to lunch programs.
* At Osprey Central School, student and community volunteers do playground duty to support the teacher. Here I was able to observe the interaction between the local Mennonite students, the Mexican Mennonite students and the rest of the school. The Mennonite communities support the school with buildings, food produce and regular ‘working bees.’ The PP is also involved in bus duty, every day, as well as, the pizza orders every Friday. A very visible Principal. It is also a great way for this very small school to raise money, easily and quickly while supporting the needs and wishes of the community.
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