

Alberta Regional Professional Development Consortia Support for Implementation of Social Studies: 2005-2011

Seasons of Professional Learning

Final Report



Alberta **Regional** Consortia



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Executive Summary

The following report is a synthesis of the professional learning opportunities and subsequent changes in teaching practice and student learning occurring as a result of the \$12 500 000 granted to the ARPDC to support the implementation of a drastically changed social studies curriculum. What follows is an examination of the evidence contained in the ARPDC reports from a whole-system perspective with a view to determining how the project influenced changes in teaching practices and ultimately improved student learning. The report takes a narrative approach and utilizes the metaphor of seed farming to illustrate the generative, ongoing nature of learning and planning for systemic change. The report highlights the data from each of the consortiums' cumulative reports within the four 'seasons' of implementation, tiling, seeding, harvesting and preserving. Recommendations, including the need to re-evaluate phased implementation, secure stable, matching resources to the extent of curricular and calibrate professional learning to student learning are described. It is hoped future implementation efforts will be informed by the 'lessons from the field' and a greater appreciation for the complex and highly dynamic nature of large-scale implementation efforts will be realised.

Context

On the cusp of Alberta's centennial year, Alberta Education introduced a new, ambitious social studies curriculum. Then Minister of Education Zwozdesky spoke enthusiastically about the new curriculum as essential to preparing students to become contributing citizens in an increasingly complex, connected and ever-changing world.

I am excited to help launch a revised Social Studies curriculum that looks at Canada's history through a kaleidoscope...we're improving on an already solid curriculum by including multiple perspectives that reflect the growth of our province and our nation. Ensuring our students experience a more comprehensive look at our past will help them better understand our country's history and make them better citizens of the future. (Alberta Education, 2005)

While the previous version of the social studies program of studies adopted inquiry-based approach, the new program focuses on citizenship and identity and includes Francophone and Aboriginal perspectives on culture and history. In addition, the new curriculum emphasizes critical thinking by requiring students to analyze and consider ideas, events, and issues from multiple perspectives. In the fall of 2005, children in kindergarten through grade 3 became the first to experience the inquiry-based program of studies with full implementation occurring in 2010.

Due to the drastic change in the program of studies, and perhaps also because of Alberta's fairly strong economic position at the time, significant resources were provided to

support implementation in the form of, for example, customized, 100% articulated textbooks, an online guide to support implementation and grants to the ARPDC to provide professional development for teachers in each region. The funding provided during the last 6 years, \$12 250 000, it is safe to assume the social studies implementation has been the most heavily resourced curriculum. It is important to keep this significant investment in mind when considering the quality of the professional learning supports summarized in the pages that follow. Quite simply, the funding enabled the ARPDC to work with partners and stakeholders to create and provide sustained, differentiated professional experiences for the education community.

The funding allowed the ARPDC to break new ground in many ways. For example, through support for the implementation of social studies the ARPDC was able to work with jurisdiction leaders as they developed comprehensive professional development plans based *on a Guide to Comprehensive Professional Development Planning*¹. For many system leaders, this was the first time they were able to develop a plan to support a new program in a research-based, strategic and holistic manner. This work alone will yield returns in the years ahead as system leaders are able plan more effectively by being aware of all the elements that contribute to ensuring the program of studies is implemented as intended.

¹ <http://goo.gl/nHk7k>

Introduction

The intent of this report is to provide a synthesis of the reports provided by each regional consortium based on the following required components:

- Report highlights from all consortia
- Leadership components
- Teacher PD-new and innovative practices
- Evidence of success
- Qualitative data - student/teacher data
- Quantitative data - statistics and other data
- Community Engagement
- Challenges for Consortia, school authorities, and Alberta Education
- Sustainability/Legacy pieces - Links to documents/images /video clips/legacy pieces/participant stories/websites
- Technology – successes and challenges
- How you know Consortia made a difference?
- Survey results

On the surface this seems like a fairly straightforward task, but a few things must be acknowledged at the outset as it proved to be much more challenging than I anticipated.

First, this summary report represents my interpretation of reports provided by each consortium. This is important because while the reports had many things in common there were significant differences between them in terms of content, style, format and level of granularity. In addition, over the years, some of the social studies coordinators remained in the position, while in other regions the role was passed on to others. This fact alone creates intriguing differences. The uniqueness of each region is reflected in each report, a clear

benefit, but this factor also created some challenges as I read across the reports and endeavoured to draw the findings together.

Second, the reports submitted cannot capture the fully the realities and inherent complexities of this work. As an outsider, I can only based my analysis on what is included in the reports which is undoubtedly incomplete. I have included questions throughout this report to indicate gaps in my understanding.

There were some things that were consistent across the consortia. First, each executive director brought a wealth of experience, a network of contacts and strong relationships with the jurisdictions and partners to the work. This collective wisdom and leadership steered the project through unanticipated challenges and changes over the years. Second, each consortium in the ARPDC allocated funding to support one social studies coordinator. These individuals were responsible, in consultation with their respective executive directors, for planning, occasionally facilitating, and reporting on professional development activities in response to local needs, utilizing local and provincial resources and in alignment with the other provincial initiatives (e.g. Social Studies Summer Institute). Also, advisory groups were engaged in each region, again in varying degrees, to inform planning, improve responsiveness and share resources. Each coordinator worked with other organizations, for example Alberta Assessment Consortium and The Critical Thinking Consortium (TC2), to provide support in specific areas. Each year, plans were revisited and revised based on

feedback from participants and district leaders. Also, each consortium used technology to provide participants with access to learning opportunities, resources and foster collegial connections. While the Learning Network and Northwest Regional Learning Consortium was first to explore technology enabled learning opportunities out of a need to mitigate the distance barrier in their areas, now all of the consortiums are using technology to provide greater access to their programming and resources.

Finally, it is important to note, funding followed the implementation cycle and was dependent on other provincial budgetary considerations. Thus, the consortium planned with one eye on the immediate needs and the other on sustaining support as funding decreased or was eliminated. This fact sheds light on the creation of 'legacy projects' which emerged as common across the ARPDC.

A model for implementation: Seasons of professional learning

In Alberta, the Kindergarten to Grade 12 curriculum is a legal document outlining "why the program is offered, what students are expected to learn and the basic principles about how students are to achieve the required knowledge, skills and attitudes" (Alberta Education, 2011). This fairly centralized approach to curriculum, often pointed to as key to the education system's success, explicitly identifies the 'what' of curriculum while leaving the 'how' of the teaching and learning to the school jurisdictions. Programs are scheduled for revision

and while the Ministry of Education endeavours to involve many stakeholders throughout the review, planning and development process, most teachers do not become involved until the mandatory implementation date (Alberta Education, 2010) at which time “all schools must teach the new curriculum” (Alberta Education, 2011). One way the Ministry of Education determines if students are meeting curriculum outcomes is through provincial achievement tests in the core subjects (grades 3, 6, 9 and 12). Thus curriculum implementation, from a policy perspective, tends towards a linear, assembly-line model with programs being revised approximately every 10 years. Aoki (Aoki, 2005) sees this mismatch occurring because the teacher is caught in the “zone of between” (p. 163) “indwelling in two curriculum worlds” (p. 165). One world is the curriculum as planned and the other is the curriculum as lived in the classroom.

The ARPDC lives in the middle between the linear, bureaucratic processes of Alberta Education and the more organic, highly contextual realities of jurisdictions. Each consortium, in collaboration with other organizations, attempts to provide teachers and jurisdictions leaders with the knowledge, skills and resources necessary to bring the program of studies to life in classrooms as it was originally intended. In what follows, the elements of the reports are presented against the backdrop of crop farming specifically, tilling, seeding, harvesting, and preserving. This metaphor reflects well the iterative, constructive growth evident in the reports and consistent with the literature on systemic change.

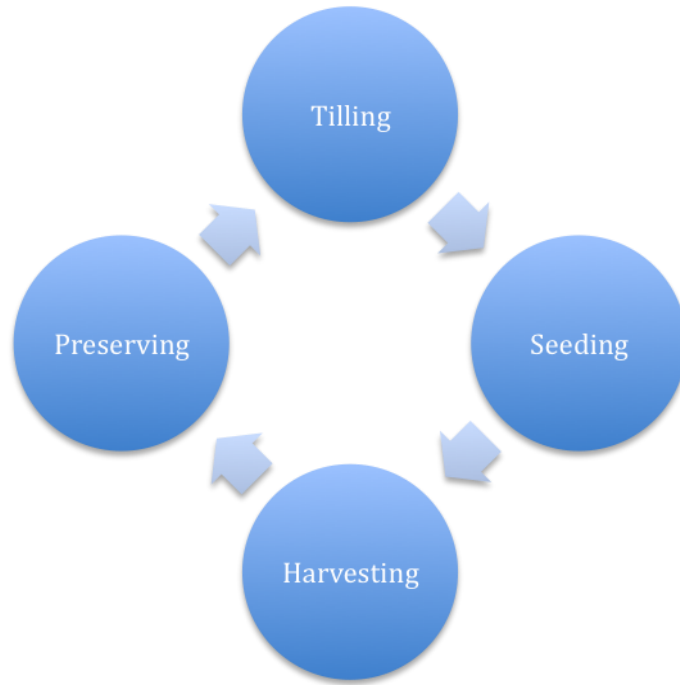


Figure 1: Seasons of professional learning

Stage 1 - Tilling

In the fall, farmers prepare the soil for planting by tilling because loosening the soil allows for deeper penetration of the roots, helps mix the residue from the harvest and nutrients evenly throughout the soil and destroys weeds. This breaking of the ground is necessary to ensure the seeds take root and are fed by the soil.

People change only if they believe that a new insight, a new idea, or a new form is important to them. People need to discover that there is sufficient shared interest among the community, shared meaning strong enough to bring people together and hold them together as they do the work.
(Wheatley, M.J. 2005, p. 108)

Consortiums prepared the soil in their regions by drawing educational leaders together, eliciting the sharing of effective practice and working to balance competing priorities in innovative ways. In these ways, awareness and interest was generated and jurisdictions began to allocate and coordinate support for implementation with other priorities and available resources.

Four pieces of evidence illustrate how each consortium effectively prepared the soil for implementation, 1) creation of advisory committees, 2) supporting regional coordinators, 3) utilization of provincial expertise, and 4) conducting local needs assessment.

Stage 2 - Seeding

People do not need intricate directions, time lines, plans...they need information, access to one another, resources, trust, and follow-through to take initiative and make changes. Ultimately, we have to rely not on the procedure manuals but on people's intelligence and their commitment to do doing the right thing. (Wheatley, M.J., 2005, p. 71)

Once the soil is prepared, the seeds are planted either through broadcasting or in rows². In terms of curriculum implementation, the two methods would parallel large group, open invitation and focused group learning. This stage is characterized by the introduction of new ideas, strategies, and resources.

Four pieces of evidence demonstrate how the consortia plant seeds in their regions, 1) offering a wide range of specific learning opportunities, 2) supporting curriculum facilitators/leaders,

3) enacting the curriculum with credible specialists and 4) providing customized support for school leaders.

Stage 3 – Harvesting

Eventually, after some fertilizing, water and sunshine, the seeds germinate and eventually flower. When the crop is mature, that is the fruit or grain is ready to be gathered, the field is harvested. The harvest is often marked by celebrations as farmers

All life thrives on feedback and dies without it. We have to know what is going on around us, how our actions impact others, how the environment is change, how we're changing. Without feedback, we shrivel into routines and develop hard shells that keep newness out. (Wheatley, M.J. 2005, p.

² This method of planting in situ differs from container seeding which could be viewed as similar to learning opportunities occurring outside the school or district.

are finally able to collect on their investments of time and resources. This stage is much less tangible and nuanced in curriculum implementation as professional development providers are often not able to 'see' the fruits of their efforts in classrooms.

The regional reports did however, contain evidence of mature crops with teachers clearly demonstrating they had internalized the intent of the program of studies and made sense of it relative to their practice. The reports revealed the ARPDC was active in supporting harvesting activities in four ways, 1) Supporting teacher-created projects and exemplars (e.g. FNMI infusion), 2) Effecting change in practice (survey results), 3) Impacting Student-learning (artifacts), 4) Fostering mentorships.

Stage 4 – Preserving

After the harvest, some of the fruit or grain is prepared for storage to provide sustenance over the winter months. Traditionally, canning or freezing is the most typical method used to preserve food but root cellars, underground structures, are also used to keep food at a low temperature throughout the winter.

In the preserving stage of curriculum implementation, each consortium endeavoured to 'store up' support for educators not able to participate in the professional learning opportunities provided over the years (e.g. beginning teachers) or those interested in enhancing their understanding. Three types of evidence of the preserving stage were gleaned

from the regional reports. The 'legacy pieces' are the single most significant piece of evidence relative to the preserving stage. The new relationships forged with local community groups could also be considered a key piece of sustaining implementation in the years ahead. Finally, the development of leadership capacity, specifically in terms of the knowledge and skills of the regional coordinators, facilitators/lead teachers, and administrators, will provide teachers with credible points of contact in each jurisdiction.

The four stages, tilling, seeding, harvesting and preserving, emerged quite naturally during the analysis of the reports and therefore the stages, or seasons of implementation, and provide the structure for the compilation that follows³.

Reflecting on the stages of implementation: the iterative, ongoing nature of professional learning

Before moving to highlight regional evidence in each stage of the curriculum implementation cycle, it is important to note the consortia endeavoured to meet local professional learning needs throughout the year by offering multiple entry points. This strategy allowed consortia to attempt to mesh the more rigid implementation schedule with the unique needs of teachers. Using the farming metaphor, while there was a clear focus on one stage of implementation at certain periods of time (e.g. tilling), multiple stages of

³ Please see the Appendix for more of the articulation between the required components and the four stages.

implementation were present simultaneously over the years. So while farming activity naturally follows the seasons, the consortium naturally follows what the research tells about effective professional learning.

A significant body of research has clearly shown professional learning, no matter what form, subject area or audience, must:

- be ongoing, sustained, intensive and supported by modelling and coaching
- allow educators to see and share their own and student work reflectively and collaboratively
- be embedded in the classroom and school
- foster a supportive and inspiring environment for testing new ideas and new teaching ideas

(Darling-Hammond, L. & McLaughlin, M.W., 1995; Fullan & Hargreaves, 2002; Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001; Hargreaves & Fullan, 1992; Killion, 2007; Parsons, McRae, Taylor, Larons, & Servage, 2006).

These core characteristics are reflected in the *Three Pillars of Effective Curriculum Implementation*, included in each regional report and foundational to the work of the ARPDC.

Extending the reach: technology-mediated professional learning

Emerging research, building on this well-established foundation, advocates for the utilization of technology to enhance and improve professional learning (Dede, Breit, Jass Ketelhut, & McCloskey, E. & Whitehouse, P., 2005; Lock, 2006; *Technology can facilitate working as community...but technology is only a supplement to the need to be together in the same physical space from time to time. (Wheatley, M.J. 2005, p. 174)*

Vrasidas & Glass, 2004). It is important to note, this body of work does not endorse technology-mediated experiences replace face-to-face learning experiences. Indeed much of the literature on effective professional development models endorses a blended approach as teachers benefit most from a combination of online and face-to-face learning opportunities. Finding a balance and creating a symbiotic relationship between various forms of professional learning is emerging as a key direction in the field.

In order to reflect the current research, to change teaching practice, and to increase student achievement, professional development must be ongoing, job embedded, relevant to the teacher's instructional needs, and collaborative in nature. The advent of quality online professional learning combined with in-person, peer-based professional learning communities has enabled this approach to professional development to have the greatest success for increasing teaching quality and student learning. (Killion & Williams, 2009, p. 1)

The regional reports indicated technology-mediated professional learning is being utilized in various forms across the province. Rather than highlighting this work separately, examples and lessons learned are woven throughout the report.

Stage 1: Evidence of Tilling

As mentioned earlier, if the soil is not adequately prepared, the seeds will not germinate or bear fruit. In addition to preventing weeds, tilling stirs the organic matter creating a nutrient-rich environment for the seed. Relating these notions to curriculum implementation, the tilling stage is necessary to establish relationships, break down barriers

or resistance and generate interest and engagement. This stage is vital to ensuring districts are open and keen to take up the learning opportunities supporting the new program. Four pieces of evidence illustrate how each consortium effectively prepared the soil for implementation, 1) creation of advisory committees, 2) supporting regional coordinators, 3) utilization of provincial expertise, and 4) conducting local needs assessment.

Advisory Committees

Throughout the duration of implementation, regional advisory committees, with representation from the districts, partners and stakeholder groups, met 3 or 4 times a year to discuss plans and activities relative to needs and resources in the area. In all, across the province the advisory committees gathered approximately 80 educational leaders together with the shared goal of allocating resources effectively and effectively through collaborative planning.

As noted in the CPFPP report:

The meetings with the advisory and policy committees have played a key role and were paramount in the implementation plan of the conditional grant for social studies. Committee members have identified their needs and saw to the logistics elements, allowing concerted actions, concrete and clearly linked to successful implementations 2007/2008 - 2008/2009 and 2009/2010 (CPFPP report).

This comment reflects the value of the advisory committees in each consortium as the social studies coordinators and executive directors facilitated the open discussion and

provided a venue for building trust, addressing issues and exploring issues in a collaborative manner. Through these times of sharing and planning together, implementation activities and regional resources were identified allowing for coordinated planning and efficiencies.

One of the most important aspects of the meetings was district sharing where an overview of districts' initiatives to support implementation occurred. This provided for potential networking among districts, advice for ERLC programs and opportunities to share lessons learned about implementation support. (ERLC, p. 4)

Referring back to the stages of implementation metaphor, the organic matter laying deep in the soil (e.g. district initiatives) was stirred and brought to the surface creating a nutrient-rich environment (e.g. network among districts) for future seeding. The advisory committees included representatives from each district, the ATA and other partners such as AAC and consistently garnered high attendance throughout the years. While the project plan took shape, was implemented, revisited and revised, the advisory committees became a consistent touchstone which is especially valuable given, in some regions, the social studies coordinator position was passed on to new individuals. "During the five years the plans were continuously re-visited and modified and became "living documents" that were adjusted and flexed as needed" (NRLC, p. 3).

The advisory committee meetings also enabled participants to return to their districts or organizations with a better understanding of the program of studies. As noted in the NRLC

report the advisory committee members "...developed an intimate knowledge of both the project and the zone and were project ambassadors and advocates with the other members of their districts" (p. 2). In effect, the advisory committee meetings themselves were excellent professional learning venues for district leaders allowing them to 'sow seeds' with teachers, other district leaders and partners. An advisory committee participant stated, "(the meetings) help me engage staff in curriculum conversations" (NRLC, p. 2). Some advisory committee members were actively involved in facilitating formal learning opportunities in the region. For example, in 2005-2006, David George a school principal and member of SAPDC's advisory committee led Supper Club meetings for school-based leaders in the region to "familiarize them with the changes to the program and implications for their classrooms and school" (SAPDC, p. 11).

It is interesting to note, in some regions advisory committee membership was more fluid reflecting the growth and changing needs of the project. For example, the SAPDC advisory committee was:

...comprised of a cross-section of stakeholders including one district office representative, one school-based administrator, a teacher representative from each of rural, urban, multigrade classroom, a pre-implementation grade or division level rep, a representative from the ATA Social Studies Regional Council and one FNMI representative from the Kainai Board of Education. Membership was rotated, with new members added to reflect the evolving changes and pre-implementation/implementation phases of the project (SAPDC, p. 7).

Placing the work of the advisory committee in the 'tilling stage' represents a best-fit based on the data, but a case could be made to include some of this work in the other three sections as well. For example, the CRC advisory committee spearheaded a culminating activity showcasing exemplary models of teaching and learning in the region.

While the Advisory Committee was fully aware that the "journey had just begun" with this multi-layered, new Social Studies' program implementation, it was the belief that all too often, we do not stop to celebrate the fine caliber of dedication and learning that is present within committed educators and their respective classrooms where profound learning transpires with local students (CRC, p. 25).

Clearly, this event, some of which was captured and posted online, falls naturally into stage 3, harvesting as those in the Calgary region gathered to celebrate the professional growth and the influence on student learning that had occurred as a result of the support for implementation⁴.

For the most part though, while providing consistent, local guidance throughout implementation, the contribution of the advisory committees reflects stage 1 – tilling work as they, collectively and individually, were instrumental in preparing teachers and administrators for new professional learning experiences. The social studies coordinators facilitated the meetings and served as the primary contact for the advisory committee.

⁴ <http://wiki.crcpd.ab.ca/groups/celebrationofcitizenshipmay262010/>

Social Studies Coordinators

Given the scope and breadth of the project, Alberta Education in consultation with the ARPDC elected to include a social studies curriculum specialist in each region. While the implementation planning process was shared, these individuals operationalized and reported on progress over the years. This role required individuals to be well versed in the program of studies, component facilitators, adept planners and networked leaders.

Elizabeth Cressman continued to promote in-depth collaboration among area school districts/associations and utilized organizational and communication skills in all components of the complex implementation plan. Her strong academic and experiential background in the areas of Social Studies, curricular and instructional leadership, effective professional (best) practices and adult learning, provided the background that complemented the goals and outcomes of the Zone 5 plan (CRC, p. 3).

Similarly, the SAPDC, which has had 3 different coordinators over the years, benefitted from the strong knowledge and skills of experienced professionals.

All brought a deep understanding of the importance of professional learning to classroom and school improvement, successful curriculum implementation experience and a skill set for comprehensive PD planning to support implementation. As well, all three had excellent communication and interpersonal skills and were widely accepted and appreciated within the region. (SAPDC, p. 20)

NRLC noted benefits gained from the continuity of the same individual in the role for the duration of the project. The CRC was the only other consortium which did not experience a change in coordinators.

The continuity of one person throughout the project provided the opportunity to develop robust and enduring relationships. Besides being the main conduit for social studies, it allowed connections to be made to the consortium's other programs and NRLC's overall profile was enhanced as a PD provider. (NRLC, p. 4)

Regardless of the length of time in the position and their unique strengths and abilities, the social studies coordinators were respected as educators. The reports indicated this element of professional integrity contributed to their ability to ensure learning experiences were relevant and of high value to their colleagues. Some of the coordinators also had recent or concurrent teaching experiences.

This connection to the classroom was very important in allowing each coordinator to understand teachers and what was necessary for them to implement the major pedagogical change in the new Alberta Social Studies Program. (CARC, p. 18)

In sum, the coordinators fresh perspectives, passion and personal commitment "ensure that someone has the responsibility and will champion the "cause" of implementation" (ERLC, p. 23). While the executive directors foster strong working relationships with district leaders, partners and stakeholders, the social studies coordinators

were able to broaden the reach of each consortium into new communities and sustain a meaningful reciprocal relationship with key individuals throughout implementation.

Utilization of provincial expertise

Another productive tilling process included inviting program specialists to work closely with the ARPDC and develop a strong understanding of the core components of the program of studies. Below, the SAPDC report outlines the two-fold nature of the support provided by the curriculum specialists.

The Alberta Education Social Studies Curriculum Program Managers, under the leadership of Shirley Douglas, met with ARPDC Executive Directors and later the Social Studies Project Coordinators to provide curriculum updates. On-going meetings assisted in identifying areas within the core program foundations that may require special implementation support in the field. As well, these curriculum managers agreed to assist ARPDC in consistent messaging throughout the province by contributing resources such as PowerPoint slides to use in sessions. As well, Shirley Douglas and Warren Woytuk offered their curriculum expertise as presenters in each region. These meetings with the curriculum development team assisted consortia staff in arriving at a deep understanding of the curriculum and assisted ARPDC in planning learning opportunities to support implementation. Communication and consistent messaging in the first couple of years was important to the success of implementation. (SAPDC, p. 19)

Across all the reports, the relationship between the coordinators, executive directors and the Alberta Education was seen as being highly productive and mutually supportive. While the ARPDC has always had a strong working relationship with Alberta Education

through the implementation of multiple initiatives and programs of study, it appears the social studies implementation benefitted from a particular and unique type of cooperation. "(The) collaboration with Shirley Douglas and her associates at Alberta Education was outstanding" (CRC, p. 4).

This type of hand-in-glove professional relationship is the necessary glue between the linear, idealistic system framing curriculum development and the diverse, highly contextual realities of curriculum implementation.

Conducting local needs assessment

Finally, returning to the crop farming metaphor, the farmer must know the soil in order to determine what it needs to nourish the seeds. The ARPDC has many formal and informal mechanisms for determining the professional learning needs of the educators in their regions. By conducting needs assessments, meeting with jurisdiction leaders and through ongoing informal interactions, the ARPDC executive directors and coordinators gather extensive, timely feedback which informs planning.

Five years of pre and post implementation surveys were administered to teachers, administrators and district key contacts, allowing NRLC to tailor PD to meet specific needs and requests. In many cases, districts used the information from the needs assessments to write their own implementation plans. (NRLC, p. 3)

Similarly, the CRC advisory committee provided continuous communication throughout the project with reduced involvement as implementation support came to a close.

The Social Studies' Implementation Project Advisory Committee consistently included members from...area stakeholders, and met 3 - 4 times per school year, serving as a major frame of reference and decision-making body for the implementation project. During the final half-year of program implementation (September, 2010 - February, 2011), a core group called the "CRC Social Studies' Steering Committee" continued to serve in this capacity (CRC Culminating Report, p. 2)

In addition to ongoing dialogue, the ARPDC used needs assessment survey data to gauge learning interests in each zone.

SAPDC also administered Regional Implementation and Needs Assessment Surveys to teachers in 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, and 2010. Trends showed that with continued professional learning support provided between pre-implementation and implementation years, teachers reported increased understanding of the curriculum and knowledge of teaching strategies for program delivery. As well, while teachers increased their understanding of effective assessment strategies for Social Studies, they continued to request additional support, primarily in practical design of formative assessment tools to use in their classroom, and strategies for assessment of process skills. SAPDC used the data from these tools to plan continued support to all teachers over the five years of the project. (SAPDC Cumulative report, p. 21)

The CPFPP also surveyed participants at a session focused on introducing the program.

...the survey with teachers and administrative staff in May 2008 helped to better determine the needs of these stakeholders and to illuminate the second year of implementation in social studies. The survey included not only the general issues but also some specific questions about the learning needs. Another short survey was also launched during the presentation of the workshop "Exploring the new social studies curriculum!" (CPFPP report)

In many of the reports, the coordinators noted the input from the advisory committees and surveys were instrumental in allowing the project to be more responsive especially when a particular direction or approach resulted in lackluster participation. For example, while based on a strong research base, NRLC did not receive significant support for Collaborative Inquiry projects (NRLC, p. 7). After reviewing the survey feedback, which underscored the value of learning through collaboration, and consulting the advisory committee, they shifted to cohort projects and received strong positive results from participants.

Being the district cohort leader for the Grande Prairie region has been one of the most enjoyable and rewarding experiences I've had as a teacher. The fact that we have had this opportunity as we had new curriculum to deal with was a lifesaver – as one of my teachers put it "I would have crumbled without this support!" We would never have had the ability to create such an excellent group of collaborators, which is in line with what we expect for our students to develop for future job skills. We would not be able to develop as many quality resources without this cohort group. It is my hope that our collaboration is a legacy of this project, with continued PD support it would be a certainty! (Lynn Nordhagen, Div 4 Cohort Leader, p. 10)

Tilling: Key findings

The consortia engaged in 'tilling' activities throughout the implementation project as they sought to ensure the education community was readied for the impending change. Through surveys and ongoing discussions, the executive directors and coordinators raised awareness about the program and generated interest while at the same time gathering information on learning needs. The following four strategies were utilized by each consortium to improve the likelihood of a successful implementation, 1) creation of advisory committees, 2) supporting regional coordinators, 3) utilization of provincial expertise, and 4) conducting local needs assessment. Each provided the necessary conditions for the seeds, in terms of professional learning opportunities, to take hold.

Stage 2 – Seeding

To many this stage, which can include designing, organizing and offering learning opportunities, represents the sum total of the work of consortia. Indeed, consortia are most visible through the sessions, conferences, district events and focused study groups they make possible throughout the year. It is important to keep in mind, the success of these opportunities are largely dependent attention paid to stage 1 – tilling. Not only is the participation rate higher but the content is more likely to meet learning needs of participants because the consortia carefully considered feedback. The consortia sows seeds by, 1) offering a wide range of specific learning opportunities, 2) supporting curriculum facilitators, 3)

enacting the curriculum with credible specialists, and 4) providing customized support for school and PD leaders. In each of these areas, technology served to scatter seeds more evenly across the province as educators were given the option of accessing learning through a variety of synchronous and asynchronous formats.

Offering a wide range of specific learning opportunities

The reports clearly demonstrate each consortium offered learning opportunities aligned with the program of studies that best fit the needs, resources and interests of their respective regions⁵. The reports indicate the programming offered varied in terms of breadth and depth, from an introduction to the 'front matter' of the program of studies, to a more bite-sized '99 minutes of social studies' webinar series. Some sessions focused on resources, such as the online guide or textbook resources, while others grappled with specific pedagogical aspects, such as assessment or critical thinking strategies. Thus, teachers in each region were able to access a variety of learning opportunities (i.e. content, format and facilitators) both during and outside of instructional time.

The plans included multiple entry points and the menu of learning opportunities was scaffolded to ensure that teachers would be able to access professional development that met their learning needs whether they were initiating, developing or sustaining their growth. (NRLC, p. 1)

⁵ For more examples see: NRLC, p. 6-7, LN, p. 15, ERLC, p. 23-24, CARC, p. 5-7, CRC, p. 7-9, SAPDC, p. 4-6, CPFPP, p. 14-17

Additionally, some of the survey results reveal educators came to realize the extent of the change and subsequently, their need for further professional learning⁶. It is interesting to note, and indicative of the quality of the programming, almost ½ of teachers surveyed reported participating in more than 5 learning opportunities throughout the implementation (ARPCD survey). This is significant given the number of competing initiatives and PD funding available.

While much of the programming involved working directly with subject area specialist and/or provincially approved resources, the reports contained evidence of unique approaches. For example, the CPFPP provided support by utilizing the *Enfant de la planète* (Children of the Planet), developed by the province of Manitoba, focusing on integration of French Language Arts and Social Studies.

The various kits are comprised of multimedia materials such as children's books, games, songs, video skits developed at various grade levels and language ability levels. Teachers' guides in are also provided. Marc Dumont then Deputy Superintendent of the East Central Francophone Education Region No. 3, had asked for our support in providing his district teachers with this professional development as it answered some of their needs. (Personal communication, CPFPP)

While this type of direct response demonstrated a highly customized learning opportunities for participants accessing the CPFPP, there was strong consistency in terms of opportunities for participants from all parts of the province to learn about the core

⁶ For example, NRLC consistently over 75% expressed a need for 'some' or 'a lot' of additional PD

components of the program (e.g front matter, critical thinking, assessment). Across the ARPDC, these foundational elements anchored the programming and were available at various times throughout implementation (e.g. SAPDC, p. 11)

In the early implementation years, many of the “big ideas” of the new Social Studies’ program were the main area of focus, ushering area teachers to more in-depth levels of understanding the “front matter” which is the “heart” of the new program, and is in common to all grade levels. As more and more grade levels joined the implementation process, the need for some similar types of sessions became apparent, which created a “multi-layered” effect over time. Further grade-specific requests were made of the CRC, with work continuing in the Program of Studies’ “front matter” (CRC, p. 7).

At the front end of implementation, ERLC developed several resources directly supporting the ‘big ideas’ contained in the ‘front matter’. *An introduction to the Alberta Social Studies program of studies: A vision for teaching and learning*⁷ (a multimedia resource) received positive feedback as did the parent newsletter, poster and assessment resource⁸. The summer programming⁹, through some regional consortiums and Alberta Education, figured prominently as a popular and highly effective way for participants to become well versed in the core components of the program.

⁷ <http://erlc.ca/resources/resources/mariesettle/>

⁸ All available here: <http://www.erlc.ca/resources/filter.php?theme=14&title=Social+Studies>

⁹ It is interesting to note, the feedback on the value of the summer institutes was overwhelmingly positive which is somewhat in contrast to the prevailing notion privileging professional learning during instructional hours. However, the summer institutes participants may be a highly motivated lot and not representative of all teachers.

The Alberta Education Summer Institutes were springboards for curriculum leaders in Zone Four. In 2005, CARC offered \$2000 in funding per district allowing up to eight participants in some districts to be partially funded. Some of these participants agreed to become Curriculum Facilitators following the solid background provided by the summer institute. In 2007, Alberta Education also provided sessions by zones during the summer institute which increased networking within the zones and provided direction. Feedback from zone curriculum leaders in subsequent years revealed a sense of deeper grounding in the intent of the new Program of Studies as a result of the summer institutes. (CARC, p 10)

The social studies implementation project also became a vehicle for building bridges with the FNMI communities and fostering a deeper understanding of aboriginal perspectives. In many cases, educational leaders from local aboriginal school authorities served as representatives on advisory committees and social studies coordinators sought support from other PD providers.

Over the past five years, SAPDC has offered several FNMI sessions to develop a deeper understanding and appreciation of the Aboriginal perspective. Programs have included partnerships with the ATA with a series of workshops called Education is our Buffalo and the Aboriginal Services Branch of Alberta Education with a workshop series on Aboriginal culture and perspective. (SAPDC, p. 14)

Providing support in this area proved to be a formidable task requiring patience and perseverance. CARC offered 'field days', on-site, immersive learning experiences, each year of implementation and noted increasing interest and impact over the years.

In Sept 2010, as a result of the success of previous FNMI field days, a district-requested session brought participants to significant Aboriginal sites in the Camrose area exploring the connections between culture and the significance of the land to the First Nations people. Each of these field experiences was very well attended and provided a deeper understanding of not only the FNMI community, but educators' abilities to smoothly integrate FNMI perspectives into their classroom understanding. (CARC, p. 14)

Another area showing growth and improved sophistication over the years is use of "existing & emerging technologies such as videoconferencing, webinars, blogs, and podcasts both live and archived" (ERLC, p. 7). For example:

...during one supper videoconferencing session featuring a panel of teachers who had piloted the Social 30-2 curriculum, two of the panel members were in Edmonton and one was in Calgary. Teacher groups from Lethbridge, Ft. McMurray, Grande Cache and Boyle participated in the discussion with the Edmonton teachers. (ERLC, p. 12)

In addition, in the final years of the project regional websites (moodles, wikis) became increasingly important both as a source of information and as a productive connection between learning opportunities (face-to-face and online) and classroom practice. Lessons have been learned along the way as new ways of engaging educators in an online environment were adopted.

Much of the impetus for this work grew out of a need to reach educators in rural and remote areas. The CPFPP, the consortium with the most significant challenges in this regard, made strong progress in a relatively short time in online learning.

Social studies implementation led to innovation in professional development. The CPFPP offered virtual training for the first time during the 2008-2009 sessions through the Elluminate platform since many teachers were well accustomed to webinars. Leaders were also trained to be moderators in order to provide support in their own communities. (CPFPP report)

The CPFPP did meet with many technical barriers, but persevered, made in-roads and were acknowledged in a leading journal, *Education Canada*.

“Since 1993, francophone communities in Alberta have been managing their own schools through district school boards. These boards tried to cover some of their teachers’ continuing education needs but were not necessarily providing it in French. To address this issue, the Consortium provincial francophone pour le perfectionnement professionnel (CPFPP) was recently created, starting operations in 2007. Its mandate is not only to provide training to personnel of the five francophone district school boards of Alberta but also to help teachers access continuing education services to enhance students’ learning. Given the huge distances between regions for each school board and the lack of francophone substitute teachers, the CPFPP has had to search for new ways to deliver high quality, relevant training – regardless of where the teacher is located and despite their isolation – and to create networks and sharing communities. These issues have been successfully addressed by implementing a series of new technologies. These are promising practices for other isolated francophone learners and teachers.”

By exploring more fully the potential of technology, ARPDC has mitigated challenges presented by geography, time and space and found innovative and effective ways of offering

high quality learning experiences to educators¹⁰. However, it is anticipated a careful accounting of costs will need to be considered to ensure adequate allocation of resources to support growth in this area. The comment below closely resonates with many of the comments gathered regarding the quality of these experiences.

Session or Project Feedback continues to indicate that teachers prefer face-to-face sessions for collaborative work. Webinars are reported as an acceptable and viable alternative for information sessions with video conferencing being a viable medium for sessions where a session includes both presentation and interaction amongst participants. Within SAPDC, video conferencing remains the preferred means for distributed learning opportunities. (SAPDC, p. 21)

The ARPDC reports indicate an ongoing effort to balance the more general needs of those new to the program with the individualized interests of those wanting to develop skills and knowledge around specific components. The reports generally reflect a gradual evolution towards supporting participants, often in leadership roles, in working within a specific area such as assessment.

Supporting curriculum facilitators

In an effort to support professional learning within jurisdictions, each consortium offered opportunities with a two-fold focus, program expertise and facilitation skills. In the

¹⁰ For more detailed information see LN, p. 10, NRLC, p. 18 – 20, ERLC, p. 12, 27, CRC, p. 8, 21, CARC, p. 16 – 17, SAPDC, p. 21 – 22.

reports, these efforts were referred to differently, (e.g. curriculum leaders or trainers), but each shared a common goal, to enhance professional development capacity in jurisdictions.

District curriculum facilitators are responsible for sharing what they have learned in their districts. This is one way the region believes that implementation of social studies will be sustainable. (ERLC, p. 6)

Individuals participating in this more intensive learning opportunity were required to commit to participating several times throughout the year. In most regions, groups gathered 3-4 times each year. The SAPDC experimented with a 10-day series but reduced the days required in subsequent years in response to feedback from participants and jurisdiction leaders.

In most cases, over the years individuals identified as curriculum facilitators became involved in cohort work as the focus shifted to constructing resources (e.g. model lessons, assessment instruments). Most of the reports included positive feedback on the curriculum facilitator model from jurisdiction leaders and participants.

The CF's (curriculum facilitators) are confident and competent and are able to provide a wide variety of services. This means that schools/ teachers can choose to work with the CF's in the way that works best for them (model, team teach, collaborative planning, online guide inservices on site, collaborative inquiry projects, etc). The CF's are able to provide on-site, ongoing support for teachers, finally getting us away from the old one size fits all model of PD. (NRLC, jurisdiction leader comment, p. 9)

Overall, the reports indicate while the curriculum facilitator support richly benefitted those involved and did feed the production of resources in each region, the degree to which these highly knowledgeable and skilled leaders were utilized in their jurisdictions appears to be less certain.

As well, only one jurisdiction provided additional release time to the trained curriculum facilitator/lead to mentor, coach or facilitate learning within their jurisdiction. None of the mentors were included in designing the implementation support plans within their jurisdiction. (SAPDC, p. 13)

It is possible, especially as support for social studies becomes less readily available, jurisdictions will begin to tap into the curriculum facilitators. In addition, jurisdictions may not yet be accustomed to having local experts and therefore have not considered designing an embedded PD model. Regardless, given the significant resources¹¹ dedicated to developing and enhancing PD leadership by the ARPDC, it would be worthwhile to consider tracking the value of this work to the ongoing implementation of social studies. It may also be valuable to explore ways to ensure future implementation efforts require a shared commitment between jurisdictions and the ARPDC, relative to the role of curriculum facilitators.

¹¹ Difficult to determine but budgets indicate between 15 – 30% allocated to leadership capacity building (facilitators) and collaborative projects (cohorts).

Enacting the curriculum with credible specialists

Due to the extent of the change, (i.e. content and pedagogy) to the social studies program of studies, curricular specialists were an integral piece of the support for implementation.

Thanks to Tim Coates, Dwayne Girard and Patrick Roy for their unique approaches to working with teachers. Sessions such as “My Kingdom for a Source” were engaging and informative and gave teachers much needed time to work with assessment practices before trying them out in their classrooms. (NRLC, p. 5)

In addition, other cross-curricular experts, for example from the Alberta Assessment Consortium (AAC), the Critical Thinking Consortium (TC2) and Dr. Anne Davies, were accessed to address more general pedagogical knowledge and skills. The following comment from a participant demonstrates the impact of these skilled and knowledgeable presenters: “Working with colleagues supported by experts like Wally, Deana and Dale (TC2) had the most impact on me” (LN, p. 13).

The ongoing dialogue between the regional coordinators and Alberta Education social studies team was noted as another fruitful collaborative relationship.

The Alberta Education team and (then) six provincial coordinators were invaluable sources of support for this project. The wealth of shared experiences and expertise provided increased clarity, innovation and leadership and was an essential component to the success of the project. (CARC, p. 10)

This implementation project presents a strong rationale for identifying and building strong collegial relationship between regional and provincial subject area specialists.

While all of the consortiums attempted to foster a professional exchange with their respective pre-service programs, two of the consortiums, ERLC, CRC and SAPDC, established contact with the faculties of education and experienced some success. In terms of providing access to curricular experts, this connection shows signs of promise with possible reciprocal benefits to pre-service, in-service and jurisdiction leaders. This is new ground and establishing relationships that are viewed as mutually beneficial can be difficult. SAPDC originally initiated an inquiry-based project but was not met with any interest from the faculty at the University of Lethbridge (SAPDC, p. 12).

SAPDC allowed PSIII Intern teachers to participate in any of the learning opportunities at half the registration fee. Many of them came alone or with their mentor teacher to selected sessions. Upon invitation, the High School Implementation Support Teacher (contracted by SAPDC) made presentations to classes at the university. SAPDC contracted university personnel to offer session where appropriate and extended invitations to university staff to participate in the learning opportunities, especially when renowned experts were presenting. (SAPDC, p. 9)

The CRC also fostered connection with the University of Calgary through a lecture series.

Some exceptional collaboration also took place with several faculty members from the University of Calgary, as a few evening lecture series for senior high Social Studies' teachers were offered through a number of faculties, over the course of 3 years. (CRC, p. 5)

This learning opportunity and the ongoing communication with the faculty culminated in the University Calgary hosting a celebration of learning for the region in May, 2010 (CRC, p. 25).

In sum, the utilization of credible curriculum specialists bolstered the regional capacity to engage participants and created a measure of quality assurance, in terms of the intent of the program of studies and the nature and content of the support provided for implementation. This feature likely played a role in enlisting the support of system leaders.

Providing customized support for school leaders

The ARPDC, in consultation with their respective advisory committees, realized school-based leaders would require customized support to be effective instructional leaders. In 2007, SAPDC took the lead and developed a resource to meet this specific need.

The Toolkit involved a special Advisory Committee which included all members of the Social Studies Advisory and Steering Committee; two more school Administrators and two Social Studies specialists. In SAPDC, all but one district participated in a district delivered half-day Administrator Session on the Toolkit and to share observations of implementation of the program in their school, to ask questions about the new curriculum and to share strategies as to how the Toolkit might be used within the school setting to support implementation. (SAPDC, p. 11)

The resource was used extensively throughout the province¹² and proved to have a strong influence on both the interest and uptake of school-based leaders in supporting implementation. "The Admin Toolkit is listed as the number one session that had the greatest impact on administrators" (NRLC, p. 12). The resource, tailored to match the needs and priorities of school-based leaders, was well received by participants and could be used as a model for future implementation efforts.

As an administrator new to elementary, I have a better perspective of the content, processes and resources for the new program. I can speak more knowledgeably about the program and this current change initiative." (CRC, p. 12)

Further, the development process realizes efficiencies while maintaining high quality standards.

Seeding: Key findings

This second stage is characterized by the introduction of new concepts, ideas and strategies. The seeds germinate, that is participants begin to become curious and engaged in the change process, because the soil has been prepared during the tilling stage. The ARPDC experienced success in this stage by, 1) offering a wide range of specific learning opportunities, 2) supporting curriculum facilitators/leaders, 3) enacting the curriculum with credible specialists and 4) providing customized support for school leaders. Some seeds, for

¹² With the exception of the CPFPP

example curriculum inquiry projects (NRLC, p. 7) and a collaborative inquiry project (SAPDC, p. 9), did not take root and were replaced with other initiatives. Learning what will grow in a particular region is part of the process and leads to a rich harvest.

Stage 3 – Harvesting

In the third stage we begin to see the fruits of our labour. In the case of the implementation process, we watch for and gather evidence on changes in perspectives, approaches and practices. Four types of evidence were gleaned from the reports in keeping with this stage, 1) teacher-created projects and exemplars (e.g. through cohorts), 2) change in practice (survey results), 3) student learning (artifacts) and 4) mentorships. In these four ways we see the intent of the program of studies coming to life in schools and communities around Alberta.

Teacher-created projects and exemplars

To begin, as participants began to internalize the intent of the program of studies, the ARPDC provided a space for them to apply their understanding through the creation of a variety of projects. In this stage, educators are making sense of the program of studies and integrating it into their practice. "Knowledge about teaching and learning can be acquired, but learning how to apply that knowledge to the problems of practice requires work for learning's sake". (Randi & Zeichner, 2004) p. 206. So while participants may have been more engaged in acquiring knowledge about the program of studies in stage 1 and 2, it is in

this third phase that they begin to work with this new knowledge to generate products for their practice. Much of this work was the outgrowth of communities of practice, or cohorts, which brought together educators with similar interests and/or teaching assignments. The NRLC reported “teachers were very enthusiastic about the opportunity to work together to understand concepts, delve into the program of studies, develop units, lessons, test questions and more” p. 10. In this process of applying their understanding teachers become active learners and in doing so, developed a deeper understanding of the program of studies. These types of professional learning opportunities require teachers to become learners and knowledge workers in an authentic way.

Most powerful for me in my journey through the Benchmarks of Historical thinking was being witness to several effective lesson ideas from Carla Peck. She had us participate as if we were the students in a classroom and this allowed us to experience the lesson first hand. I felt this strategy to be highly effective and it left a lasting impression. One of these lessons involved creating a t-chart to help determine the difference between past and history. I found this to be so powerful a lesson, that on Monday, I rearranged my schedule and promptly did this important foundational work with my students. (CRC participant comment, p. 15).

The reciprocal learning opportunities occurring in these more focused, small group settings included a strong modelling component and a safe place for trying new strategies and taking risks. SAPDC experimented with an innovative approach and realized a significant positive impact.

In 2009-2010, Moodle, a learning management software, was used by the SAPDC seconded High School Social Studies Implementation Support Teacher as both a classroom management tool for teaching his Social 30-1 class and as a professional learning tool for teachers. In the second semester of 2009, this Implementation Support Teacher offered 23 district-led sessions as well as regional learning opportunities to create a culture of learning. He coached and mentored teachers that semester by building a collaborative, supportive network within the region that started to share their classroom successes and challenges. In 2009-2010, this master teacher agreed to teach a Social 30-1 class while his colleagues were teaching the new program for the first time. Through the use of his Moodle, daily lessons, student assignments, resources, tests, reflections in the form of a blog, etc. were posted alongside some video clips of the classroom in action. What powerful learning occurred through the deployment of this software! Professional learning could occur any time, any place and at any pace and indeed it did. As of May 26, 2010, there were 150 registered users with 21,982 viewings on the Moodle making for an average of 147 return visits per registered user and an average of 110 hits per day. (SAPDC, p. 21)

Following this modelling strategy, CARC produced demonstration lessons.

The demonstration lessons project, begun in 2005-2006 and completed in 2006-2007 brought together 12 teachers from four school districts. The demonstration lessons were created and filmed in grade K-3 classrooms in both French and English language. A January 2007 preview and discussion session was held and 100 K-3 teachers registered. Even though a major winter storm forced the closure of two school districts that day, more than 60 teachers still attended. Each attendee was given a DVD copy of the demonstration lessons project and encouraged to a host similar viewing and discussion forum in his/her school. (CARC, p. 14)

CARC also developed a wiki to host the work generated from the cohorts.

In 2009-2010, the cohort model was again very successful with a shift in topics to using SMART Notebook to promote critical thinking, division IV planning, infusing FNMI, performance assessment, and analyzing text. Many of the projects were vetted for alignment with current copyright laws, the program of studies, and current assessment practices and posted on the CARC Social Studies Project website. (CARC, p. 12)

It is important to note, while the products themselves may be taken up and used by others, the creators and adaptors realize the most benefit by being involved in the creation process. As one participant reported, "I really enjoyed the webcast; however, my learning took place as a result of having to prepare to do the webcast" (LN, p. 13). The most obvious evidence of the impact of this work, for creators or users, can be found in the change in practices.

ERLC captured the lived experience of the curriculum and some model lessons through video clips of teacher stories¹³. In this brief vignettes we are provided with first hand accounts of teachers enacting the curriculum and reflecting on how it is changing their practice.

Change in practice

All of the reports included survey results indicating a high percentage of teachers reporting they would be making changes to their practice as a result of participating in an ARPDC learning opportunity (>85%). Throughout the comments gathered teachers

¹³ <http://www.erlc.ca/resources/filter.php?theme=14&title=Social+Studies>

demonstrate a keen understanding of how teaching and learning will change in their classrooms. The SAPDC found the following:

The top five most common written comments about what had changed in teachers practice were using inquiry-based instruction, changes in assessment practices, more meaningful project based activities within the classroom, less lecture or focus on content and more awareness of multiple perspectives. (SAPDC, p. 26)

While these results are informative and indeed impressive, the comments from participants presented in the reports provide a richer depiction of the ways in which teaching practice is changing as a result of ARPDC learning opportunities. For example, in response to “How has your practice changed as a result of your participation”:

Making the lessons more interactive, discussion based. We recently started discussing rights and responsibilities, and the students were expressing much interest in doing "chores" ie: erasing the board, passing out booklets, etc. I implemented a chore wheel and took time to discuss responsibilities and they are loving it! Meanwhile I've made learning about social studies fun and interactive. (CARC, p. 36, italics added)

The students have been able to become much more involved in their learning. They have much more say and more of a chance to create their own opinions and how to justify their ideas. It has created a classroom of critical thinkers. (NRLC, p. 15)

The difference I have found that we have made is helping create and shape new learners that do not so much want the easy answer but want the tools needed in order to succeed at a task. In my classes the emphasis has shifted from one on marks to one of learning. This shift is not entirely done yet but when given how much we needed to change it is amazing. The most direct evidence we have of the changes that ERLC has helped our division make, you just need to walk through our hallways and see the activity going on in our social studies classrooms. Rarely do I see 'talk-and-chalk' lecture style lessons. I see discussion, debate, metaphors, posters, research, presentations and active, engaged, constructive learners. Through the PD sessions delivered through ERLC our staff members, myself included, have been able to help our students think critically and creatively. We have been blessed with numerous resources from these sessions to assist our learners in those endeavours. Simply put, without the ERLC, we would all be still trying to reinvent the wheel on a daily basis. Now we have a common understanding of the structure of the wheel and it is our task to get it rolling. (ERLC, p. 30)

I will be more free to abandon the textbook & the page turning to engage students into learning & take some accountability for their learning. (CRC, p. 13)

The above comments reflect the direct influence of the professional learning offered by ARPDC on teaching practice. One can assume, at least for those open to change and fully engaged in learning, classrooms looked and sounded much different when participants returned. For the vast majority, the seeds germinated and resulted in fairly dramatic shifts in pedagogy which ultimately yielded enhanced student learning.

Student learning artifacts

The third sample of evidence is not usually gathered by ARPDC for many reasons but primarily because student learning resides outside their immediate jurisdiction and secondly because it is difficult to gather. However, in order to prove impact, nothing is more compelling than artifacts of student learning.

CRC hosted a Celebration of Citizenship: Social Studies in Action in May of 2009 and attracted over 300 participants. The event highlighted teacher practice and student projects resulting in some lived examples of the curriculum¹⁴. Student panellists entertained complex questions and "...many parents, community members, area and provincial educators were absolutely impressed and astounded at the caliber of responses to multifaceted questions" (CRC, p. 25). While this event successful showcased implementation efforts and the impact on student learning, it also served as a forum for further professional learning.

ERLC was granted the opportunity to visit classrooms and collect evidence. As an aside, this would not be possible if a solid, trusting, collaborative relationship had not been fostered during stages 1 and 2.

What do you like best about grade four social studies?

We like that we work on computers, and that we do group projects. I liked learning about the Interior Plains because that's where we live. Would you like to see the brochure that we did?

Shae and Lauren, Grade 4
St. Augustine School, Ponoka

¹⁴ Some of the activities from the celebration were captured on DVD and CRC's wiki.

What skills do you come away with?

You learn to see things from different points of view. You get a different perspective when you are forming your own opinion.

Another skill we've worked on is analyzing cartoons. Mr. G gets them right out of the newspaper and we discuss them.

I think it has really prepared us for adult life. We have become informed and we'll be informed adults.

Before, I liked a particular party because of the party's colours (others laugh), Now I know what each party stands for...

Many of my friends don't care about voting. I'm now old enough to vote, and it is important for me to understand my responsibility.

Italia, Lorina and Ben, Grade 12

Christ The King Jr/Sr High, Leduc

ERLC region

There was also evidence of the impact on student learning in community sources such as local newspapers. While it would be inaccurate to suggest the support for social studies implementation directly caused students to become engaged in these social action projects, it is probable there was an indirect influence.

Students Saving Our Society wrote a powerful letter to Senator General Romeo Dallaire, excerpt as follows: Students Saving Our Society (S2.O.S) is a citizen action group formed at Peace Wapiti Academy. It was inspired by our teacher Louis Chabot. He teaches, no matter who you are, you can make a difference...Our goal was to see if a small group of students from Northern Alberta could actually have an impact on a humanitarian situation, whether it is local, regional, national or even international...We decided the Crisis in Darfur was the most urgent...we thoroughly investigated the issue and decided to spread awareness throughout the area. Our first large project was planned by a group of ten students...we organized the largest rally for Darfur in Canada. (NRLC, p. 17).

And one principal notes, after listing 6 social action projects at work in his school:

The degree of social action projects and environmental action projects (still social studies based) have sky-rocketed in our school. Having this as part of the curriculum heightens the opportunities for students to become aware of issues and have more opportunities in which they may take action. (NRLC, p. 17)

One participant made mention of provincial achievement tests, another way to gather evidence of student learning. Below a school leader shares how teachers benefitted from participating in CRC learning opportunities:

Most importantly, we implemented the optional new grades 6 and 9 Social Studies curriculum this year. Our grades 6 and 9 teachers have been hugely benefitted from the workshops and presentations they attended. They learned how to teach the curriculum effectively. They learned how to mark the written component fairly. They learned how to assess the students accurately according to the new curriculum standards. As a result, ALL of our grades 6 and 9 students have passed the Provincial Achievement Test, and 20% of them achieved the standard of excellence. (School leader, Calgary Islamic School, CRC, p. 18)

The following results also demonstrate a strong correlation between achievement test results and implementation supports.

In our jurisdiction, we had a teacher who was teaching outside of her university major who followed Craig's (High School Implementation Support Teacher) Moodle every day. She used the materials and over the course of the year developed confidence in her pedagogy. When the diploma exams results were released her students achieved at a higher level than most others in our jurisdiction. This included a number of First Nations students and other students who struggled in other subject areas. The support that was given through SAPDC for a teacher new to the curriculum resulted in phenomenal results." Jurisdiction Superintendent (SAPDC, p. 25)

Another school leader witnessed a somewhat different connection with the provincial achievement tests and evidence of successful implementation of the program of studies.

A group of grade 9 SS teachers was quite disappointed lately upon hearing that the PAT's would NOT be including a written component. Their disappointment stemmed from the fact that they had been working with their students in a different way since the implementation of the new Program of Studies. They felt that since they were using an inquiry-based pedagogy in their instruction, they should also use an inquiry based approach to summative assessment. Therefore, they took it upon themselves to collaboratively create a final assessment that will align with the pedagogy of the new Program. When they discussed this with students, the students were in full agreement. They talked about the fact that they had been learning this way for three years and agreed that a multiple response assessment would not be an adequate opportunity to demonstrate their learning. So, the students completely supported the teachers in the development of this type of final assessment. That speaks to me as evidence of implementation. The teachers collaborated to design assessments that reflected the pedagogy. The students, having experienced the inquiry approach for three years, supported the teachers' decision. (District leader, ERLC, p. 31)

This anecdote is worth quoting in full because it is not only strong evidence for implementation, in terms of student learning, but also demonstrates the degree to which the overarching intent of the program has been internalized in this school.

Mentorship

The final piece of harvesting evidence is mentorship where educators at differing stages of understanding and expertise are brought together to share insights. This is considered evidence of 'fruit' because these types of working relationships necessitate the sharing of promising practice. Curriculum facilitators or cohort leaders were instrumental in mentoring their colleagues in each region, two more intentional examples are worth highlighting.

As mentioned earlier, some consortiums were able to cooperate with the teacher preparation programs in their area, which to my knowledge is new ground for the ARPDC. Despite logistical challenges, CARC was able to create some unique connections.

CARC also partnered with the Red Deer College Bachelor of Education Middle Years Program. Collaboration began in 2005 when the two worked together to place pre-service teachers with mentors involved in the CARC collaborative cohorts. In 2006-2007, not only did Dr. Amy von Heyking present at the Curriculum Facilitator Conference, she also involved her students in a sharing session hosted by CARC. The education students shared projects they created for implementing the new Social Studies Program of Studies and were able to network with the 30 teacher attendees. In 2008-2009, CARC sponsored a Social Studies speaker session for RDC students and welcomed several student participants to cohorts. (CARC, p. 9)

This type of work is not only valuable to the current implementation of the program, it could also forge collegial relationships between beginning teachers and the larger education community, which we know, improves teacher retention (Day, Elliot, & & Kington, 2005; Rhodes, Nevill, & & Allan, 2004).

Finally, the social studies coordinators themselves provided strong mentorship in their regions as they were seen as credible subject-area specialist. For example, “Elizabeth Cressman provided direct system support in the role of “consultant”, leading/delivering/providing mentoring, session leadership, primarily to rural school districts that did not have their own consultants” (CRC, p. 11). The implementation efforts were enhanced by the authentic, recent teaching experience of the coordinators.

This connection to the classroom was very important in allowing each coordinator to understand teachers and what was necessary for them to implement the major pedagogical change in the new Alberta Social Studies Program. (CARC, p. 18)

The coordinators were also regional “champion for implementation” (ERLC, p. 10) and key to generating excitement and interest while breaking down resistance regarding this ambitious change effort.

Again, to my knowledge, ARPDC has rarely had the funding required to sustain an individual in this position over numerous years. The reports seem to indicate the most

extensive benefits of this mentorship role occurred in regions where the social studies coordinator was a consistent presence. Realistically, though this is not always possible, and in some cases not desirable, for a multitude of reasons. The CPFPP noted a further reason include mentorship opportunities.

Many teachers from provinces outside Alberta or from foreign countries do not know the curriculum in Alberta. They need a lot of support to absorb the philosophies, concepts and expectations. (CPFPP report)

This may point to a possible 'blind spot' in implementation efforts if planners assume participants are native Albertans familiar with the context.

Another form of fruitful mentorship opportunity occurred between ARPDC executive directors and the coordinators allowing a sharing of knowledge and skills regarding more of the more systemic, leadership aspects of supporting change initiatives (Fullan, 2004).

Critical to project effectiveness was relationship of the SAPDC Project Coordinators with the SAPDC Executive Director. While reporting to the Executive Director, the Project Coordinator was viewed as a team member with shared leadership responsibilities for the success of the project. The Executive Director provided mentorship and coaching support throughout the five years and direction when necessary, while allowing the coordinators the freedom to guide the project as necessary. (SAPDC, p. 22)

This form of mentorship supports sustainability in an area where provincial expertise is rare and needed.

Harvesting: Key findings

In the third phase of implementation we look for concrete examples of changes in practice and student learning. The reports contained strong examples from 1) teacher-created projects and exemplars (e.g through cohorts), 2) change in practice (survey results), 3) student learning (artifacts) and 4) mentorships. In these ways, students and teachers demonstrate their understanding of the program and the true influence of support for implementation is known.

Stage 4 – Preserving

As the fall approaches, farmers begin preparation for the long winter by preserving a portion of their harvest to sustain their communities when resources are limited. During the final phase of implementation efforts, the ARPDC responded to the needs reflected in the comment below and began to consider how they could be support the implementation of social studies as funding and focus shifted.

Need to continue PD funding and opportunities for Social Studies - just because curriculum implementation is done doesn't mean that we are all EXPERTS now - just like kids are life-long learners, so are we. The more Pd opportunities we take part in, the better our teaching practices will be. (Participant comment, SAPDC, p. 41)

Across the province, this support focused on three potentially¹⁵ effective supports, 1) legacy pieces, 2) community relationships and 3) leadership capacity.

Legacy pieces

The reports indicate the creation of Legacy Pieces consumed a significant amount of resources, some consortium more than others, most heavily for most regions in the final phase of implementation. As I write, some of these pieces are in the final phases of production and all are currently 'housed' in the region (i.e. on local websites). However, feedback from some executive directors indicated the impetus for this work began much earlier in some regions.

As SAPDC worked in pre-implementation and implementation years with high school teachers, there was considerable interest in assessment, especially in light of program changes and the prospect of revisions to the Diploma Examinations. As a result, the Advisory Committee recommended that a professional resource be created as a legacy piece to continue to provide support to high school teachers on high school assessment. (Personal communication, G. Heck)

Several areas became the focus of individual legacy projects (NRLC, p. 21, ERLC, p. 27, CARC, p. 16, CRC, p. 20, SAPDC, p. 13). For example, the Learning Network created an online

¹⁵ The term 'potentially' is used here to denote the lack of evidence of impact in the reports. Data collection will need to be a part of future reporting efforts as these sustaining pieces are just now beginning to be utilized. Feedback from executive directors indicated data will be collected from surveying teachers on use of the resource in their classrooms and regional Curriculum Coordinators

interactive resource entitled "What Principals Need to Know" to support the Administrator's Toolkit developed by SAPDC. This resource was designed in recognition of the time restraints relative to school administrators' ability to provide ongoing implementation leadership for their staff. This resource draws upon the multimedia resources from LearnAlberta.ca and instructional coaching strategies from the Administrator's Tool kit (SAPDC.) The NRLC created a Legacy DVD (now online) to meet the following goals:

- to introduce new teachers to the project,
- to allow current teachers to showcase specific portions of their work that they feel impacted the program,
- to highlight some of the innovative ways that teachers in zone one carried out various aspects of the social studies program.
- to provide a source of new ideas for teachers across the zone
- to provide a source of information that can bring to life the social studies program at parent teacher interviews, board meetings, admin meetings
- to celebrate the project in more than a paper and pen fashion

(Personal communication, Leslie Synder)

The CRC and the ERLC initiated an "Aboriginal Perspectives Action Research Project" and produced an extensive Literature Review now available online (CRC, p. 28). The ERLC developed an array of PD resources to support for example, assessment, addressed specific approaches to implementation such as through literature kits and communication pieces such as parent newsletters¹⁶.

¹⁶ More available <http://www.erc.ca/resources/filter.php?theme=14&title=Social+Studies>

...number of different “sustainability” resources in a variety of formats including poster, newsletters, taped model lessons and archived webinars. All consortia printed copies of the poster for distribution in their region. A French poster was also completed. These resources are meant to complement the sustainability resources found on LearnAlberta. (ERLC, p. 27)

Also, some social studies coordinators created and distributed newsletters, *Explorations in Social Studies*, a professional journey (pdf), to inspire and challenge educators around specific components of the program.

This is a small sample of the legacy resources listed in the reports all of which will be available centrally in the months ahead. Based on feedback from the coordinators and executive directors it appears much of this work was initiated at the regional level with very little coordination or communication between consortiums. There are several possible reasons for this including the need for the projects to support local needs. It may be advisable however, for future implementation efforts to avoid replication and maximize resources.

Community relationships

Next, the community relationships secured and nurtured throughout the duration of the implementation project may well live on as the ARPDC explores ways of providing ongoing support. In many regions, these community resources had not been utilized in the past and often branched out to include new contacts. Thus, the social studies implementation

created an impetus to connect teachers, students and schools to the community locally, provincially and in some cases internationally.

Beginning in 2005-2006 collaboration with the Red Deer and District Museum (now the Red Deer Museum and Art Gallery) resulted in object based inquiry project development by Zone Four teachers. For several of the subsequent years, the museum, in conjunction with CARC also held open-house evenings to showcase the programs and artifacts available to teachers and the projects created by Zone Four teachers based on them. This collaboration sparked relationships with other outside agencies. Accessing the expertise of community organizations such as the Central Alberta Refugee Effort (CARE) and the Central Alberta Diversity Association (CADA) allowed teachers to experience professional learning opportunities which increased their awareness and understanding. (CARC, p. 9)

CRC collaborated with the Glenbow museum to support object-based learning (p. 9). Similarly, ERLC forged a partnership which precipitated another connection.

ERLC also collaborated with community organizations like the Royal Alberta Museum in Edmonton. The RAM provided space for ERLC learning opportunities as well as guided tours of the Syncrude Aboriginal Gallery. (ERLC, p. 15)

NRLC initiated a unique contact with Aaron Sorensen, a Canadian film writer/producer, which led to teachers to screening the film, "Hank Williams First Nation" and meeting with him to explore FNMI perspectives (NRLC, p. 18).

This type of outreach work enriches the programming and uncovers rich resources but it often time-consuming. As noted in the Learning Networks report:

Partnerships with museums and interpretive sites, primary sources such as elders and local historians, modeling that we are committed to active inquiry are all challenging as they are more time consuming – but they are integral to the new vision and we continue to work toward this. (LN, p. 7)

It is hoped the considerable work that went into fostering these community connections will result in future learning opportunities and collaborations to sustain local implementation efforts.

Leadership capacity

Finally, ARPDC invested fairly extensively in building leadership capacity in jurisdictions, not only to support social studies but also to shore up future implementation efforts. This work took several forms including for example, cohorts, development of curriculum facilitators/trainers, or a series on speciality areas (e.g. assessment). For many, the focus on leadership was integral to planning processes from the beginning.

The comprehensive plans were also aimed at developing leadership capacity among Francophone teachers, including the creation of program leaders. (CPFPP report)

In CARC, for example, “new facilitators were added as specialists in their grade levels while others developed workshops in their own areas of expertise (thirty-two facilitators in total)” which resulted in an “ever-greening” of facilitators ensured a shared, lateral leadership capacity” (p. 13). While the activity related to this work took many forms and structures, there was a consistent, overarching goal to:

...provide opportunities for participants to assume a leadership role within the CPFPP by improving and deepening its knowledge of the new social studies curriculum. (CPFPP report)

This work resulted in many teachers being introduced and taking up leadership in their schools and districts for the first time. One participant noted, this is often an intimidating step requiring extensive support.

As I came to accept (and actually look forward to) a leadership role and making presentations to my colleagues, I became more confident in my own leadership capabilities. It was comforting to know that we would be leading in teams of presenters. It pushed me “outside the box”. (LN, p. 12)

The CRC report highlighted how the infusion of ICT outcomes in the social studies curriculum necessitated an explicit focus on introducing all educators to effective ways to use technology in meaningful ways. Through this work, leadership capacity was developed in an area which has been traditionally difficult to reach.

The Social Studies Implementation project has enabled teachers who previously lacked the time, inclination, and pedagogical understanding to develop technology integration skills independently and to be guided through the beginning steps of learning how to infuse technology into Social Studies by using technology as a mindtool to enhance learning. Equipped with new perspectives concerning the unique needs of digital learners, these teachers have shared their new understandings and technology skills with their school based colleagues in their district and in many cases, have gone on to become technology integration leaders in their own right. (CRC, p. 24)

Another district leader, Michael Marien of St. Thomas Aquinas School District¹⁷ (ERLC region), shared how the leadership capacity building series had a positive influence on multiple aspects of curriculum implementation in their district. Thus, the support for implementation of social studies became a vehicle to developing a broad range of skills and knowledge. While not an explicit goal at the outset, many of the activities associated with the leadership capacity building piece encouraged the deprivitization of teaching.

I believe being involved in this project has made me a better and allows me to take on more of a leadership role both in my school and my division. (LN, p. 9)

ARPDC's efforts in building leadership capacity were not consistently matched by jurisdiction in terms of providing time for leaders to apply their learning at the school-level. SAPDC initially launched a fairly structured and extensive program requiring full participation from each jurisdiction but did not experience consistent uptake.

In response,

SAPDC abandoned the model and focused on an invitational distributed leadership capacity building model through cohorts or through training individuals on specific PD resources that had been developed to support implementation. (SAPDC, p. 28)

¹⁷ Audio clip: <http://erlc.ca/audio/MichaelMarienonPDLeadershipCapacity.mp3>

While some jurisdictions carefully planned for participants to be active in supporting implementation in schools, others did not. However, the reports did contain some positive comments from jurisdiction leaders who were seeing the leadership capacity model as a beneficial to the system.

This implementation has definitely... been very effective in promoting internal leadership capacity... as we have seen a number of individuals step forward to demonstrate leadership in pedagogy and professional development. (NRLC, p. 10)

Many of the comments relative to the building leadership capacity work suggest the shoulder-to-shoulder support generated through these efforts is perhaps the most salient and powerful benefit to student learning.

Teachers continue to provide sessions to other teachers in increasing numbers. Teacher leaders are cascading their learning in zone one in many ways: formal and informal sessions, from 1 on 1 in classrooms, all the way to providing day-long in- services to large groups of teachers and administrators during school/district PD days and at convention. (NRLC, p. 10)

Preserving: Key findings

In this stage of implementation the project took a long view in an attempt to anticipate the professional learning needs post-funding. It is expected teachers new to the province or newly assigned to the subject will benefit from the three avenues of support created during the preserving phase: 1) legacy pieces, 2) community relationships and 3) leadership capacity.

Conclusion

The reports generated by the executive directors and social studies coordinators on the implementation support provided for social studies over the last 6 years contain a wealth of data about the orchestration of large-scale change. As noted in the introduction, given the complexities of Alberta's diverse school system, the intricacies of professional learning and the extent of the shift in the program of studies this implementation project stands out as the most ambitious and heavily resourced endeavour. It is fortunate all those involved in making decisions regarding funding to support this massive change had the foresight to ensure the support for implementation was adequate. The \$12 250 000 invested in the planning and provision of quite possibly the most comprehensive, sustained support this province has experienced. We have learned, then, programs do not implement themselves. Change in classrooms and thus improvements in student learning require resources commiserate with the extent of the intended shift in practice.

We have also learned, and documented in *A Guide to Support for Implementation: Essential Conditions*, while teachers are ultimately responsible for bringing the program to life in classrooms, it takes a village of resources, leaders and specialists to shore up support and induce change. With the social studies, Alberta Education supported implementation by providing sufficient resources over time and leadership to consortium. In turn, regional consortium modelled leadership in implementation planning through the executive director

and the social studies coordinators who championed implementation support for the region.

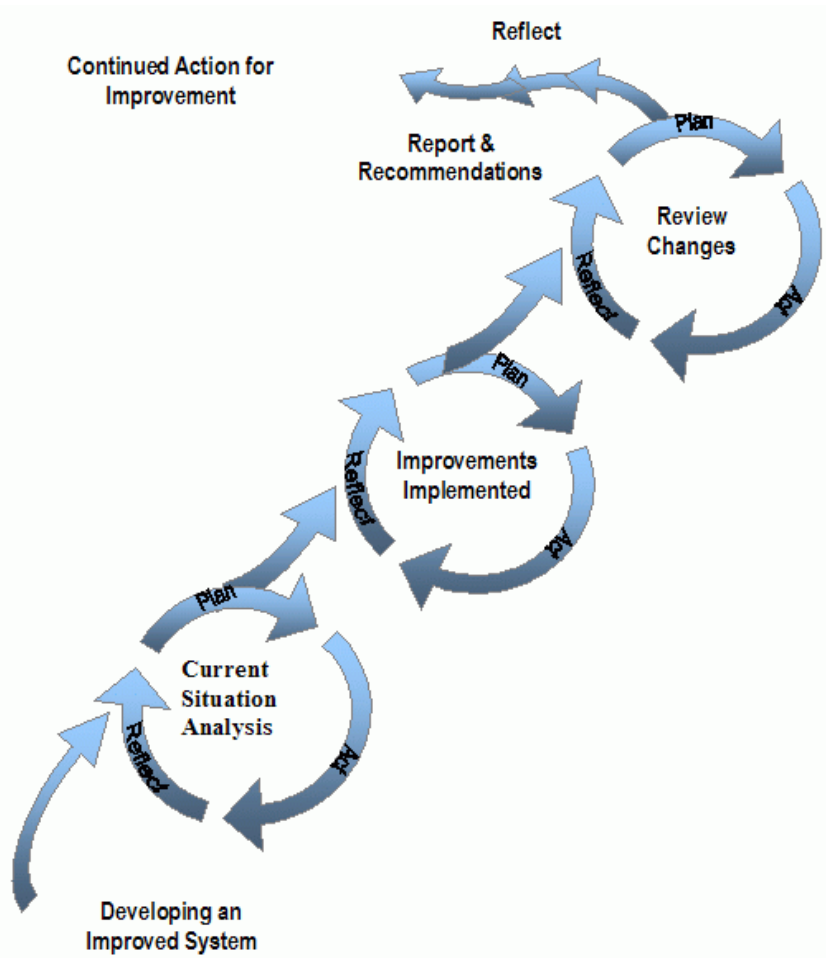
The consortium model exemplifies shared responsibility as they developed a culture of learning about the process of implementation through advisory committee and extended networks. The work was grounded in the shared vision and program philosophy outlined in the curriculum and focused on effective professional learning and fostering strong regional community connections.

This report is intended not to be a complete and comprehensive accounting of the activity and results occurring since the launch of the project since the ARPDC has invested significant time in gathering and synthesizing this information in the regional reports. Rather, this report sought to examine the evidence contained in the reports from a whole-system perspective in order to assist in determining how the project influenced changes in teaching practices and ultimately improved student learning. In addition, it is hoped the substantial investment in this work will allow us to glean valuable insight to inform future implementation efforts.

The Seasons of Implementation model emerged during the analysis of the reports and proved to be a fruitful way to highlight the key elements of the work. As with all models, the four-stage model of implementation has two potential drawbacks. First, it tends to obscure the inherent messiness of systemic change and second it does not adequately capture the cyclical, iterative nature of change. That is, in each region the ARPDC engaged

individuals in a continuous process of reassessment, adjustments, repurposing and revisiting not at the end of each year or grant but rather as a natural part of their daily work. So while the stages of implementation may reflect in broad strokes how the implementation was operationalized in regions, the ARPDC's approach is much more fine-grained and responsive. The action research model below better captures the lived-reality of those involved most directly with ARPDC in supporting all aspects of curriculum implementation (Piggot-Irvine, 2006).

Figure 2: Action Research Model



Lessons from the field: Recommendations for future implementation

If we want people's intelligence and support, we must welcome them as co-creators. People only support what they create.

The ARPDC social studies reports contain valuable insight regarding future large-scale implementation efforts. Based on the analysis, the following lessons are worth noting and re-visiting going forward.

Whole system recommendations:

1. Re-visit phased-in implementation

- a. The reports intimated the phased-in implementation schedule was beneficial as it allowed resources to be shared equally over time and distributed focus and pressure (e.g. PATs) regarding change more equally. From a system perspective, this certainly is logical. However, from a school perspective, this may be less of a benefit. The most significant take up in terms of participation in professional learning and change in practice occurs when teachers are able to engage with colleagues with similar teaching assignments. Thus, K-3 garnered a groundswell of interest whereas the subsequent grades, staggered in implementation, produced a more diluted impact. Implementation scheduling needs to account for the tremendous support created by groups of teachers working in the same physical space.

2. Be discriminating regarding ways of engaging and meeting purposes

- a. It would be advantageous at all points of implementation to carefully consider the difference between a cooperative and a collaborative¹⁸ relationships and determine which best suits the needs of this work. Based on my limited experience, I would suggest cooperation seems desirable and necessary

¹⁸ As we've all experienced, cooperation is an aligning of resources, a handshake between parties whereas collaboration is a coming together of resources resulting in a new product, it is messy, requires compromise, trust and a strong shared belief in the overarching purposes.

provincially and collaboration seems best suited to regional endeavours. In terms of realising efficiencies and creating learning opportunities for a specific context, a collaborative effort may not be appropriate. While it appears the social studies coordinators met fairly regularly and some reported benefiting from the support of the group, it is difficult to point to clear, productive outcomes from these meetings. Some noted cooperation occurred between individuals and coordination occurred with the booking of facilitators, etc. when plans aligned. Thus, meeting should occur as needed and in response to a shared concern/interest in order to ensure time is spent productively (see *Re-Work*, Fried & Hansson, 2010).

- b. In terms of effective collaboration, partnering and leveraging strategies, in addition to the recommendations above regarding meetings, the curriculum coordinator out of Workforce Planning is in the most advantageous position having a bird's eye view of the implementation planning, provincial resources available and work of other PD providers. To establish stronger linkages, it may be productive for the curriculum coordinator to meet with leads in the other organizations (e.g. ATA, AAC, 2Learn, etc.) and assist with 'connecting the dots' around the province.
3. Uphold shared accountability – Shift in thinking from input/coverage to impact/influence
 - a. All levels of the system must become more intentionally focused on finding ways to demonstrate the program, digital resource, speaker, planning tool, etc. was useful in supporting teachers as they take up the new program to enhance student learning. The 'inoculation' way of thinking about PD sets out to ensure every teacher is 'exposed' to a learning opportunity. However, through research we have learned coverage does not equate to change in practice. We cannot continue to throw seeds on parched land or forget to irrigate after the seeding. Plans to support implementation must keep the harvest in mind. Thus, prior to implementation strategies for identifying the influence of activities should be articulated relative to, for example, teachers, students, system leaders, and parents.

4. Adequately resource technology-mediated professional learning
 - a. Over the last 5 years the ARPDC has introduced various forms of technology-mediated professional learning opportunities to jurisdictions¹⁹. As the formats evolve, the quality is improving and more participants are reporting finding these options highly valuable. They do, however, come with a cost. It is anticipated demands for these types of synchronous and asynchronous learning opportunities will continue to increase and resources will be required to match the related costs. Also, as with other professional learning options, some consideration will need to be given regarding demonstrating influence.

5. Ensure authorized resources are available in French and English at time of implementation.
 - a. This month, May 2011, French resources are available and unfortunately implementation funding is no longer available. In order for teachers to use these resources in a meaningful way in their practice — French resources must be available in a more timely manner. This would limit time spent finding or creating (translating) resources in the interim

6. Design and implement a provincial, multi-pronged communication plan
 - a. Each region uses different communication channels to reach potential participants. Given the increasing amount of distributed learning opportunities and the unique offerings in each region, it would be advantageous to develop a provincial communication plan.

¹⁹ More examples of related work here:
http://www.erlc.ca/who/pdf/ARPDC_DPL_Highlights.pdf

ARPDC:

1. Retain a regional advisory committee and program coordinator at the outset and strive, for the sake of continuity and relationship building, to secure an extended commitment.
2. While engaging in work in the early months/years (stages 1 and 2) remain aware of the potential to grow sustainability in a coordinated, holistic manner (stage 4).
3. Realizing those involved in the creation of products garner the most benefits, whenever possible encourage this type of production method.
4. Look for opportunities to gather student-learning artifacts as evidence of implementation.
5. Ensure planning documents are living, flexible guides to support organic growth, failed strategies and unintended positive outcomes.
6. Focus on the people and the processes, rather than the structures and the content.
 - a. Seek out regional leaders first that are credible, respected educators with a strong affinity for the local conditions, a responsive disposition and a well developed understanding of the change process.
7. All resources developed with ARPDC resources should be digitally accessible from one central space.
 - a. Re-visit what content needs to be housed in regional sites and what should be placed in a central location.
 - b. Use respective websites to build and house reports. In this way, the reports could be widely accessible and provide a timely reflection of the work in progress throughout the project.

8. Work with Alberta Education and adopt a consistent format or create one that includes the best components of each.
 - a. Generally speaking, the reports included in this synthesis were well-written and sufficiently detailed allowing those external to the work to have a clear sense of how each consortium provided support for the implementation of social studies. While the reports reflected the unique characteristics of the regions and indeed the coordinators themselves, it would be beneficial to consider moving to a consistent format. In reading the reports side-by-side it is critical the reader is able to locate and analyze some key elements are presented in a similar manner. In some cases, the inconsistencies became distracting and at times led to questions of quality, accuracy and completeness.
 - b. Reports come to life through the use of images and audio clips. Again, a web-based report would facilitate easier access to multimedia pieces.
 - c. All reports should include or point to artifacts of student learning and/or teaching practice relative to the professional learning provided.
 - d. It is important to document failed attempts or unforeseen opportunities along the way as part of the 'lessons learned'. This is how we 'learn our way forward' and reporting adds credibility and authenticity to our journey.
 - e. While cross-pollination often occurred, as mentioned in some feedback to this report, it was difficult to pinpoint evidence of this in the reports. Thus, it would be helpful if report writers traced this sharing by noting the source of a particular resource or connection. If this type of documentation was included in the reports, it would be easier to acknowledge which consortium did the front end work.

School jurisdictions:

1. While the ARPDC can encourage and assist jurisdictions in planning for implementation, it is incumbent upon the jurisdiction leaders to ensure the plan in place, resourced, implemented and reviewed.
 - a. The reports indicated when jurisdictions and the local consortium cooperated (e.g. shared resources, 'jurisdiction days') and planned together teachers enjoyed the full benefit of the opportunities available from both. Thus, rather than viewing the consortium as a 'provider', forward-thinking jurisdiction leaders viewed them as partners and created fully integrated implementation plans.
2. When one considers the question of 'impact' and specifically change in teaching practice and enhanced student learning, it is most appropriate to ask jurisdictions to share their observations, student artifacts and other pieces of evidence most likely to indicate if and how professional learning opportunities 'made a difference'.
 - a. As noted earlier, the ARPDC lives in the middle – between Alberta Education and jurisdictions – and thus can only be held to account for those things over which it has knowledge, control or influence.
3. This implementation, both because of the degree of change and the duration of support provided, has demonstrated, once again, change in practice occurs over time and professional development is more likely to be impactful if participants are provided with opportunities for follow up.
 - a. For example, if jurisdictions sent a team of teachers to the social studies summer institute and then utilized their knowledge and skills to provide school-based support there would be a stronger impact on the system.
4. The notion of 'coverage' or ensuring all teachers are exposed to professional development while in theory may make sense, needs to be reconsidered in light of the literature. Teachers are more likely to benefit from professional learning – the seeds will take root – if they are ready and open to change.

- a. When teachers are given choices, invited to participate, involved in the creation of products and involved in leadership roles they will take up the program and be actively engaged changing their practice.

Teachers:

1. Orient around student learning

- a. Over the years, the ARPDC has gathered copious amounts of self-reported accounts of intentions regarding changing practice. This data is indeed valuable in itself as it demonstrates teachers have acknowledged the change required and begun to think about the implications for their practice. It would be even more powerful however, if a stronger feedback loop existed to capture what the change looked like in the classroom over time. Technology could facilitate this communication and sharing but a high degree of professionalism and trust would need to be present (e.g. video blogs, SAPDC wiki). Further, it would be imperative the feedback was used to support other teachers and improve professional learning opportunities with an intentional focus on enhancing student learning. ARPDC and other PD partners and stakeholders share a responsibility in fostering a culture of sharing – deprivatizing practice – where student learning is the focus. *What might we see and hear in classrooms as a result of teachers participating in this learning opportunity?*

2. Adopt a participatory stance: teachers as learners

- a. In order to support a shift in thinking from consumer to producer, it would be beneficial to encourage participants to engage prior to attending a professional learning opportunities. This is an important and necessary shift as it congruent with the literature on constructivist learning theory currently foundational to our curriculum. There are many examples of participatory professional learning experiences occurring in our province already serving as excellent examples. For example, participants are asked to view a 3-5 minutes video blog prior to attending, asked to bring something related (e.g. resource,

assessment tool, etc) to work with at the session or asked to reflect upon some questions related to their practice. During or after the sessions, teachers are asked to demonstrate their understanding by sharing in the creation of related resource, contributing to an online community, etc.

Alberta Education:

1. Endeavour to present a 'united front' with specialists from curriculum, resources and assessment working together to provide support for teachers.
 - a. Much of this success of the social studies implementation is due to the high calibre of individuals in these roles and the extent to which they were able to work closely with the ARPDC, jurisdictions and schools. In future implementation efforts, it will be important to allow these curriculum specialists to be involved in a consistent, equal manner at all phases of implementation for teachers with differing needs (e.g. pre-service, new to province) and to foster an ongoing dialogue about the challenges, successes, modifications and potential new opportunities.
2. Secure stable amounts of funding for each implementation effort commiserate with the degree of change intended.
 - a. Alberta Education allocated substantial funds to support each phase of the implementation. However, as each phase near completion the ARPDC and likewise jurisdictions were never certain if further funding would be forthcoming and at what level. This uncertainty colored some of the planning and may have caused momentum to be interrupted.
3. Maintain a reciprocal relationship with the executive directors to ensure a strong connection between the intension of the program and the lived reality of implementation.
 - a. The connections between leaders at various points in the province are vital to mitigating some of the challenges presented by the size and diversity of our province.

Appendix

Data Articulation to Four Stages

Tilling	Leadership components Teacher PD – new, innovative practices
Sowing seeds	Statistics – offerings, participation Report highlights – regional
Harvesting	Evidence of success' How do you know the Consortia made a difference? Qualitative data - survey results
Preserving	Sustainability/Legacy Pieces Community Engagement

ARPD Social Studies Implementation Reports

Northwest Regional Learning Consortium: <http://www.nrlc.net/content/nrlc-reports>

Learning Network:

Social Studies Final Report Part A

<http://www.learning-network.org/uploads/userfiles/a79b12810204.pdf>

Social Studies Final Report Part B

<http://www.learning-network.org/uploads/userfiles/db12129c4129.pdf>

Edmonton Regional Learning Consortium: http://www.erc.ca/who/our_history.php

Central Alberta Regional Consortium: <http://goo.gl/4kkLB>

Calgary Regional Consortium: <http://www.crcpd.ab.ca/index.php/site/reports>

Southern Alberta Professional Development Consortium:

http://www.sapdc.ca/Pages/AnnualPlans_Reports.aspx

Consortium Provincial Francophone:

<http://www.cpfpp.ab.ca/uploads/userfiles/c9381a85d069.pdf>

Learning Opportunities to Support Implementation of Social Studies Quantitative Overview ARPDC Summary

Review of both qualitative and quantitative data will provide a more comprehensive picture of the support provided for social studies Implementation. This quantitative data provides an indication that significant numbers of participants have been involved in social studies learning opportunities as a result of the grants to support implementation and the number of learning opportunities provided.

Types of learning opportunities and numbers vary from one region to another due to size of region, grant funding available and requests from the region for specific types of professional development services.

Number of Consortia Sessions

	Consortium Sessions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Face to face, series, conferences, • Webinars • VC 	Number of participants	District Days Learning opportunities facilitated by consortium teams and/or contractors- in districts and primarily for an individual district	Number of participants	PD Leadership Capacity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers supported as a result of learning opportunities delivered by district curriculum facilitators , (e.g., lead teachers) 	Number of participants (e.g., numbers who were impacted by the curriculum facilitator work)	Other Learning Opportunities (e.g., archived webinars access, poster and newsletter access, emails, phone calls, moodle access, cohort conversations informal learning, advisory committee meetings, district contacts communications)
CARC	2005-06: 28 2006-07: 75 2007-08: 180 2008-09: 145 2009-10: 44	2005-06: 679 2006-07: 1616 2007-08: 3073 2008-09: 2451 2009-10: 720	2005-06: 30 2006-07: 68 2007-08: 60 2008-09: 31 2009-10: 14	2005-06: 592 2006-07: 1450 2007-08: 764 2008-09: 375 2009-10: 226	2005-06: No Data 2006-07: 78 2007-08: 74 2008-09: 27 2009-10: 15	2005-06: No Data 2006-07: 286 2007-08: 1268 2008-09: 338 2009-10: 188	
CPFPP	2005-06: No Data 2006-07: No	2005-06: No Data 2006-07: No	2005-06: No Data 2006-07: No	2005-06: No Data 2006-07: No	2005-06: No Data 2006-07: No	2005-06: No Data 2006-07: No	

	Data 2007-08:37 2008-09:58 2009-10: No Data	Data 2007-08:462 2008-09:392 2009-10: No Data	Data 2007-08 : No Data 2008-09: No Data 2009-10: No Data	Data 2007-08: No Data 2008-09: No Data 2009-10: No Data	Data 2007-08:4 2008-09:4 2009-10:6 <i># of sessions offered for leaders</i>	Data 2007-08:23 2008-09:48 2009-10:45 <i># of leaders who attended these sessions</i>	
CRC	2005-06: 16 2006-07: 34 2007-08: 54 2008-09: 54 2009-10: 30	2005-06: 954 2006-07: 2475 2007-08: 1509 2008-09: 1027 2009-10: 847	2005-06: 38 2006-07: 9 2007-08: 58 2008-09: 6 2009-10: 0	2005-06: 739 2006-07: 124 2007-08: 412 2008-09:2057 2009-10: 0	2005-06: 3 2006-07: 96 2007-08: 5 2008-09: 25 2009-10: 25	2005-06: 60 2006-07: 1152 2007-08: 1813 2008-09: 353 2009-10: 298	
ERLC	2005-06: 73 2006-07: 90 2007-08: 66 2008-09: 67 2009-10: 38	2005-06: 1561 2006-07: 2412 2007-08: 918 2008-09: 1105 2009-10: 474	2005-06: 450 2006-07: 511 2007-08: 268 2008-09: 192 2009-10: 55.5	2005-06: 3045 2006-07: 5556 2007-08: 3599 2008-09: 2862 2009-10: 979	<i>Districts send different pd leaders each year - no stats</i>	2005-06: 577 2006-07: 7253 2007-08: 2700 2008-09: 2394 2009-10: <i># that district curriculum facilitators impact when they return to district to share/teach others</i>	
LN	2005-06: 21 2006-07: 41 2007-08: 55 2008-09: 48 2009-10: No Data	2005-06: 452 2006-07: 623 2007-08: 1632 2008-09: 1491 2009-10: No Data	2005-06: 8 2006-07: 7 2007-08: 8 2008-09: 143 2009-10: No Data	2005-06: 138 2006-07: 117 2007-08: 127 2008-09: 281 2009-10: No Data	2005-06: No Data 2006-07: 36 2007-08: 10 2008-09: 108 2009-10: No Data	No Data	

NRLC	2005-06: 37 2006-07: 49 2007-08: 43 2008-09: 53 2009-10: 32	2005-06: 845 2006-07: 852 2007-08: 688 2008-09: 818 2009-10: 470	2005-06: 18 2006-07: 45 2007-08: 51 2008-09: 21 2009-10: 10	2005-06: 441 2006-07: 984 2007-08: 1655 2008-09: 319 2009-10: 159	2005-06: No Data 2006-07: 74 2007-08: 45 2008-09: 47 2009-10: 11	2005-06: No Data 2006-07: 270 2007-08: 161 2008-09: 431 2009-10: 178	
SAPDC	2005-06: 34 2006-07: 97 2007-08: 52 2008-09: 49 2009-10: 25	2005-06: 973 2006-07: 1507 2007-08: 1097 2008-09: 604 2009-10: 371	2005-06: 8 2006-07: 9 2007-08: 30 2008-09: 32 2009-10: 21	2005-06: 120 2006-07: 155 2007-08: 473 2008-09: 338 2009-10: 265	2005-07: 25 district teacher facilitators trained regionally 2007-08:126 2008-09: 49 2009-10: With HS Implementation Support Teacher , focus was on building capacity of all HS teachers through district and regional sessions and on-going support provided through Moodle	Stats were not required to be reported back to SAPDC	26 Collaborative Inquiry Projects designed to support SS implementation were approved and funded <i>*Soc30-1 Moodle – 24,000 hits by approx 150 teachers who have access to our Moodle in the zone. 100 of the users accessed the site at least weekly. *Stats not collected for other learning opportunities, e.g. archived webinars, district contact communications, etc</i>

Total

	Consortium Sessions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Face to face, series, conferences, • Webinars • VC 	Number of participants	District Days <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning opportunities facilitated by consortium teams and/or contractors 	Number of participants	PD Leadership Capacity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers supported as a result of learning opportunities delivered by district curriculum facilitators • numbers lack provincial consistency due to regional context/district requests for service. 	Number of participants	Other Learning Opportunities <p>(e.g., archived webinars access, poster and newsletter access, emails, phone calls, moodle access, cohort conversations,</p>
2005-06	175	4491	544	4955	3	637	
2006-07	390	9883	640	8231	284	8961	
2007-08	487	9379	475	7030	138	5965	
2008-09	474	7888	406	6232	211	3564	
2009-10	137	2412	90.5	1470	46	531	
Total support for social studies implementation provided by ARPDC	1663	34053	2155.5	27918	682	19658	

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