

## Essential Features of Effective Networks in Education

Santiago Rincón-Gallardo and Michael Fullan 2015\*

The intent of a CASS Learning Guide is to apply research, deepen understanding and enhance professional practice within the Alberta context. With a focus on optimum learning for all students, a Learning Guide provides an opportunity to grow system leader knowledge, resulting in quality school leadership and quality teaching throughout Alberta.

### Summary Points\*

- “When it comes to improving student outcomes across entire educational systems, it is not the existence or creation of networks\* per se that matters but how they function and what they actually do.” (Pg. 6)
- “...**networks** are a set of people or organizations ... whereas **collaboration** is the act of working together with a common purpose.” (Pg. 6)
- Purpose of this research is to advance clarity and precision around *effective action in networks, understood as collaboration* that: deepens the learning and engagement of students; enhances the professional capital of teachers and leaders...; and becomes a force of improvement in the whole system.
- Essential features of effective networks:
  1. focus on student learning & effective pedagogy;
  2. trust and internal accountability;
  3. cycles of collaborative inquiry;
  4. leadership and facilitation;
  5. learning inwards;
  6. learning from others outwards;
  7. new partnerships with students, families and communities and
  8. adequate resources to do the work.
- 3 shifts in relationship between central office and networks: i) from supply driven to demand driven professional learning and support; ii) from compliance oriented to learning oriented; iii) from “bureaucracy to movement”.

### Connections with the Alberta context

#### Collaborative Response Model – Jigsaw Learning

<https://www.jigsawlearning.ca/>

- A school framework that values collaborative, action focused responses, data-informed discussions, and timely intervention to ensure all students can experience success.
- Essential Elements – Collaborative Team meetings. A self-assessment tool to assist in determining current realities and provide direction when establishing purposeful and effective Collaborative Team meetings.  
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1pN8MWpCpMrLGuxTeUpdzwI3bJkAzIHVRDqD28794We4/edit>
- “It is virtually impossible for a teacher to know how to successfully provide instruction and support for all

*students in diverse, inclusive contemporary classrooms. The Collaborative Response Model is a comprehensive school framework focused on three essential components.”*



#### Acknowledgements

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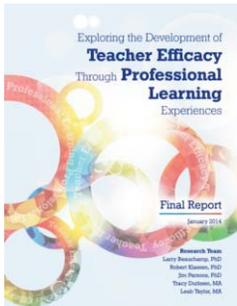
\* [https://cassalberta.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Essential-Features-of-Effective-Networks\\_JPCC.pdf](https://cassalberta.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Essential-Features-of-Effective-Networks_JPCC.pdf) – verbatim and adapted from paper with authors permission

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## Alberta Teachers Association

- Review of Provincial Policy/regulations ( to be updated August 2019)
- <https://www.teachers.ab.ca/For%20Members/ProfessionalGrowth/Section%201/Pages/Section-1-Review-Provincial-Policy-Regulations.aspx>
- Exploring the Development of Teacher Efficacy Through Professional Learning Experiences January 2014
- <http://bit.ly/ATATeacherEfficacy> Page 48-52



One theme that emerged from the research was that teacher efficacy was fostered by professional learning that allows teachers time to meet and talk, and spaces that promote conversation and collaboration. Principals are key to making this happen in schools and a principal’s work must support

collaboration (Parsons and Beauchamp 2011). This work includes building clear cultural norms that help develop teaching and learning cultures and finding times for collaborative teacher professional learning in the school’s schedule. Our research (Parsons and Beauchamp 2011) found the following characteristics act to promote collaborative teacher professional learning.

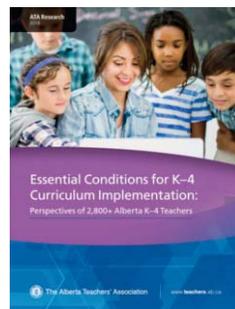
- Teachers must have strong communication structures.
- Teachers must feel empowered to act upon their beliefs.

- Teachers increase their own professional learning by collaborating in action research and school improvement.

The test of collaborative professional learning is not collegiality per se; it is how collaborative relationships advance student and teacher learning.

- Essential Conditions for K–4 Curriculum Implementation: Perspectives of 2,800+ Alberta K–4 Teachers – ATA Research 2018

<http://bit.ly/ATAEssentialConditionsK-4Curriculum>



Preface – Implementation of curriculum is a complex undertaking. Careful consideration must be given to managing the process within diverse school and classroom contexts. In particular, attention must be paid to building capacity across the education system and among classroom teachers to

deliver the curriculum by ensuring that comprehensive communication strategies, adequate time, appropriate teaching and learning resources, relevant professional development, and focused in-service activities are in place.

## Research to Practice

### Questions for reflection and dialogue within your context.

Considering the essential features of effective networks as listed in the Summary Points:

1. What are you already doing to nurture effective collaboration across your school authority?
2. What might you do differently or start doing to nurture effective collaborative practices?

## Additional Supports for System Leadership Capacity

CASS Professional Learning, Resources and Research <https://cassalberta.ca/>

Learning guide mostly coherent with the SLQS competencies indicated below.

- Building Effective Relationships
- Modeling Commitment to Professional Learning
- Visionary Leadership
- Leading Learning
- Ensuring First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education for All Students
- School Authority Operations and Resources
- Supporting Effective Governance