



## **CASS Leadership Excellence: Sharing Stories of Practice During COVID-19 Dr. Scott Morrison Superintendent, Christ the Redeemer Catholic Schools**

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 – Dr. Morrison Presentation**

- Organizational stories about our problems of practice have a compelling ability to communicate information, convey beliefs, and share lessons learned. When system leaders share their stories of practice with one another, they become involved in the co-construction of meaning that amplifies the efficacy of their leadership. In this session, Scott Morrison will share a COVID-19 story of practice followed by a short debrief on the story using themes from the literature.
  - Listen to this session recording where Scott shares a story of practice based on the first week of planning for continuity of learning during covid-19. Scott shares research and lessons learned about the value of using stories of practice to convey leadership beliefs.
- Watch the recording here:**  
<https://youtu.be/OLMYSxM3jeM>
- COVID-19 Continuity of Learning Preparation Story** (start – 16:55)
- Research and Lessons Learned about Sharing Stories of Practice** (16:55 – 29:56)
- 3 Ways to conceptualize a story:
    - 1) beginning, middle, end;
    - 2) good fortune, ill fortune, and good fortune;
    - 3) context, action, and result.
  - Stories are like mission statements and precedents...guiding belief and behaviours (Dowling, 2006; Boje 1991). Scott's Covid story – *The Slow Roll* – is both a mission statement and a precedent that guides decisions, combatting “rightalot syndrome” and escaping the echo chambers system leaders often find themselves in when remaining insular.
  - Stories also serve as ostensive definitions. An ostensive definition conveys the meaning of a concept by pointing out examples and stories serve as compelling and memorable examples (Denning, 2011).
  - Springboard stories communicate vision and inspire action. Springboard stories also prompt others to tell similar stories, and these stories contain a diverse set of lessons learned.

### **Acknowledgements**

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## Participants reflections - honouring collective wisdom

- Following Scott's presentation participants were engaged in small group conversations focused on sharing stories of practice (unrecorded). A summary of reflections and lessons learned about the value of story include:
- The Covid-19 story shared was all about the value of collaboration and consultation across districts – lateral capacity. Scott's district had a plan based on his leadership and input from his leaders. Reflecting with a CASS colleague allowed for a change in plans resulting in an improved plan and process. Current practice staying isolated in a district can allow for an echo chamber – “right-a-lot syndrome” that can often occur when there is not district sharing as allowed with CASS members.
- Getting involved in provincial committees (CASS, provincial and zone meetings, Alberta Education committees) supports creating your own network. Where you can hear and share stories. (e.g., role alike gatherings)
- Sharing stories of practice can allow for enhanced connections and transparency with colleagues and community, enhance trust and model honesty and guide beliefs.
- Supt role is often focused on problem solving and being solution focused. Sharing problems of practice with colleagues has the potential to enhance professional practice

### Research to Practice

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

Considering the “stories of practice” messages shared in the presentation and as summarized:

1. How can you share stories of practice within or external to your school authority to enhance assurance?
2. What might you do differently or start doing to listen for and nurture other stories of practice – as well as your own?
3. How can sharing stories of practice exemplify professional practice as identified in the SLQS and the CASS System Education Leader Practice Profile?

<https://cassalberta.ca/resources/practice-profile/>

### Additional Supports for System Leadership Capacity

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

This learning opportunity is 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