

A Shared Vision of Exemplary Teaching

(Working Document)

For

Wild Rose Public Schools

Creating Powerful Learning Environments

Introductory Comments

- 1. Affirmations serve a key role in the Shared Vision of Exemplary Teaching. I have been using affirmations for several years in my personal and professional lives. (Thanks to Lou Tice and his "Investment in Excellence" Program.) Affirmations are positive statements that extend the present into the future toward realistic and achievable goals. In other words, they are a blueprint for growth and change. They may not be necessarily true at the time but have the possibility of becoming true. Affirmations say to the subconscious, "You are there already." Our subconscious works to accept this and eventually it becomes a reality after frequent and repeated positive thinking. In the end, we act according to the positive belief and we have become what we aspired to.
- 2. The affirmations in this document are "we" statements and can easily be converted into "I" statements to make them more personal (see My Affirmations for Exemplary Teaching).
- 3. The affirmations must be re-visited on a regular basis (weekly at minimum) to ensure they are internalized.
- 4. I do not intend or expect the belief statements and affirmations in this document to be adopted by educators as their own. Instead, I hope they serve as a springboard to productive self-reflection and collective inquiry about teaching and learning by administrators and teachers. The beliefs, actions and affirmations are the result of 40-plus years of experience as a teacher, administrator and consultant in the Province of Alberta. During that time, I have observed, worked with, and learned from numerous exemplary teachers and administrators. I extend a sincere "Thank You" to all of them for inspiring me to draft this Shared Vision of Exemplary Teaching.
- 5. Mother Teresa once said, "Don't look to do great things but rather look to do small things with great love". To paraphrase her advice in the context of professional instructional practice, we might say, "Doing great things as a teacher is to consistently perform the fundamentals of teaching in an expert manner". The Shared Vision of Exemplary Teaching is grounded in that premise, and therefore might be defined as "a description of the expert and consistent application of the fundamentals of instructional practice".
- 6. Exemplary teaching is not about "tips, tricks and techniques". It is about aligning actions with core beliefs about teaching and learning. It is about developing and implementing strategic approaches to building relationships and achieving intended learner outcomes. It is about combining strategy and structure with flexibility i.e. being able to use a variety of teaching models ranging from teacher centered to student centered but always being curricula and learning centered. It is about connectedness—i.e. building bridges between curricula and the lives of students. Consequently, the Shared Vision of Exemplary Teaching that follows travels as a complete package.

A Shared Vision of Exemplary Teaching Wild Rose Public Schools

One of our goals in Wild Rose Public Schools is to develop a strong, identifiable and sustainable culture of outstanding leadership, exemplary teaching and excellence in learning, which we have defined as "the knowledge and beliefs relative to high-performance leadership, teaching and learning that are consistently and expertly put into practice by the entire staff of a school division, relative to respective roles, thereby creating opportunities for each student to achieve optimal learning".

Here is the reason for that definition – our level of effectiveness is determined by how we choose to approach our day-to-day responsibilities as educators. We make those choices based on our belief system, or personal values. Our actions are therefore determined by our beliefs, and our actions determine the type of educators we become (i.e. Believing - Behaving - Becoming).

We further realize that culture is a group, not an individual phenomenon. If the actions of our staff as a whole consistently reflect a commonly-held belief system, then our schools have a strong, identifiable, and sustainable culture. When we have consistency and cohesion, we have culture. When we have culture, we succeed together!

Putting it all together, the culture of Wild Rose Public Schools is what we believe in, what we know, and what we do. For that reason, our staff has agreed on the following "shared vision of exemplary teaching" for our schools. The vision includes our collective, non-negotiable beliefs about teaching and learning, and the actions we undertake that are consistent with our beliefs. We have expressed the actions in the form of affirmations that show the type of educators we are becoming on a consistent basis. The affirmations are specific, observable commitments that we are making to our school community. (Note: Each set of affirmations has been cross-referenced to Alberta Education's Teaching Quality Standard.) In sum, what follows is "our essence as teachers" in Wild Rose Public Schools.

OUR SHARED VISION AS PROFESSIONAL EDUCATORS:

Belief #1 In Wild Rose Public Schools, we believe our central purpose is student learning based on Alberta's Program of Studies.

Affirmations	Notes / Reflections / Questions
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As learning-centered educators:	
 We clearly recognize that schools exist for all students within a culture that is passionately committed to their learning academically, physically, socially and emotionally. Consequently, our non-negotiable goal is success for all students in terms of curricular outcomes and preparation for citizenship, employment and life-long learning. 	
 We are fully aware that exemplary teaching engages our students; therefore, we do our utmost to facilitate connections between curricula and the daily lives of our students. 	
We passionately model that morality, ethics and citizenship are integral to everyday actions.	
Teaching Quality Standard	
Teachers understand the legislated, moral and ethical frameworks within which they work.	

Belief #2 We believe all students are capable of succeeding and believe in the ability of our staff to significantly improve the achievement levels of every student.

Affirmations	Notes / Reflections / Questions
As highly positive and confident educators:	
We are adamant that the most important factor affecting student learning is the quality of teachers' instructional and leadership practice in the school. We recognize the range of social and economic variables that influence student learning, but we use those variables to understand students rather than excuse their performance as learners. We can and will profoundly influence student learning in our schools!	
 Our goal for learning is that each student excels. We are determined that each of our students will achieve high standards and reject outright all excuses for low and mediocre achievement levels. 	
We recognize and consistently act upon the importance of our students knowing that we believe they can all be successful learners.	
Teaching Quality Standard	
Teachers create and maintain environments that are conducive to student learning.	

Belief #3 We believe that strong interpersonal relationships between teachers and students are a prerequisite and essential to helping students learn and become respectful, caring and responsible citizens.

Affirmations	Notes / Reflections / Questions
As exemplary relationship builders: We know respect earns respect; therefore, we consistently use teacher-to-student interactions characterized by caring, empathy,	
fairness, politeness, and a positive regard for what the student brings to the school. We always model the behavior we wish to see in our students.	
We demonstrate a genuine interest in students' lives beyond the classroom. We willingly and empathically listen to students to understand things from their point of view.	
We consistently seek to promote student development. Consequently, we are reasonably accessible to students outside of instructional time.	
Teaching Quality Standard	
Teachers create and maintain environments that are conducive to student learning.	

Belief #4

We believe that exemplary teachers use a strategic, systematic, deliberate and collaborative approach in four primary areas of instructional expertise: (1) planning, (2) lesson design and implementation, (3) classroom leadership and management, and (4) assessing and reporting student learning.

Belief #4 (1) Planning

Affirmations	Notes / Reflections / Questions
 As exemplary instructional planners: We continually improve our understanding of the knowledge, concepts and methodologies of the subjects we teach and strive to be fully aware of the available resources and technologies for teaching and learning. We consistently use student assessment "for" and "of" learning to guide instructional planning. We fully adhere to the prescribed curricular outcomes in the Alberta Program of Studies; therefore, our plans clearly outline a reasoned and incremental progression toward the attainment of curricular outcomes. We consistently and diligently engage in curricular and cross-curricular 	Notes / Reflections / Questions
 conversations with colleagues to enhance student learning connections in all subject areas. Our planning documents clearly identify: intended learner outcomes; an instructional and learning plan; and assessment strategies based on the basic principle of differentiated instruction. Teaching Quality Standard	
 Teachers understand the subject disciplines they teach. Teachers engage in a range of planning activities. 	

Belief #4 (2) Lesson design and implementation

Affirmations	Notes / Reflections / Questions
As exemplary lesson designers and implementers:	
We maximize classroom instructional time by engaging students in "bell-to-bell" learning.	
We consistently utilize strategies at the outset of lessons to ensure the physical readiness of students, secure their attention, and create anticipation and interest.	
We regularly link new student learning to prior student knowledge so that students remember, transfer and integrate previous learning into new situations.	
We use an outcomes-based approach in our lessons to identify clearly and communicate what students should know, understand, and be able to do at the end of instructional and learning activities.	
We regularly use research-based teaching models, a wide variety of instructional strategies, resources, technologies, differentiated learning activities and classroom assignments to:	
 a. facilitate students' mastery of fundamental skills and processes; b. generate interest, understanding and meaning for students; c. actively engage all students, especially in creative, critical and complex thinking; d. advance independent and interdependent learning; and 	
e. accommodate and expand the learning styles of our students.	

Belief #4 (2) Lesson design and implementation

Affirmations	Notes / Reflections / Questions
continued	
We consistently present exemplars of excellence and clear explanations, illustrations, demonstrations, directions and procedures to maximize students' knowledge, skills and understandings relative to curricular content.	
 We leverage technology to ensure students have multiple ways to access, represent, process and create information. Technology must always be used as a means to advance and demonstrate learning rather than be the focus of learning. 	
 We work diligently to ensure that all students participate regularly. To create a participatory learning culture, we regularly promote active listening and use interactive dialogue by: a. posing thought-provoking questions; b. soliciting student opinions about content; and c. probing, clarifying and affirming student learning. 	
 We recognize that students cognitively process information differently; therefore we teach in a way that gives thinking opportunities to all of our students. 	
 We regularly check for student understanding by: a. observing their initial and subsequent attempts with new learning; b. providing immediate, constructive and specific feedback and encouraging comments; c. assisting them to self-monitor their learning, evaluate their performance, and to know what constitutes improved performance; and d. adjusting and focusing instruction on the learning needs of each and every student. 	

Belief #4 (2) Lesson design and implementation

continued		
meanir	ng instruction and learning experiences to an efficient and negful conclusion that may include: consolidating new learning; integrating new learning into prior knowledge; generating applications of new learning; developing new questions; moving students to insightful thinking; inviting students to reflect on changes in their thinking as a result of new learning; and creating a strong sense of accomplishment.	
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a. b. c. d. e. We alw	practice and reinforce newly acquired skills; help students prepare for classroom activities; apply and elaborate upon previous learning; strengthen study and organizational skills;and complete in-class assignments. yays ensure homework is clear, appropriate and monitored.	
Teaching C	Quality Standard	
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learningTeacherlearning	ers know there are many approaches to teaching and g. ers translate curricular content and objectives into meaningful g activities. ers apply a variety of technologies to meet students' needs.	

Belief #4 (3) Classroom leadership and management

Affirmations	Notes / Reflections / Questions
As exemplary classroom leaders and managers:	
We actively promote our schools as learning communities where everyone feels physically, emotionally, socially and culturally secure.	
We create and maintain well-managed and well-led classroom environments that serve as springboards to excellence in teaching and learning. We recognize that management involves "things" and leadership involves "people".	
We successfully establish, embrace and model respect in our schools.	
We promote the right of teachers to teach and the right of students to learn.	
We use procedures and routines which maximize our instruction and engage students in purposeful and productive learning activities.	
We reflect on and revise as necessary our behavioral expectations, procedures and routines to ensure they are working well for individuals, the class and the teacher.	
We address individual student behavior in a positive, constructive, fair, consistent and professional manner.	
We create and maintain safe, caring and respectful educational environments by consistently using strategies and interactions that enhance:	
a. teacher-student relationshipsb. student self-regulation;c. socially responsible behavior; and	
d. personal responsibility for choices made.	
Teaching Quality Standard	
Teachers create and maintain environments that are conducive to student learning.	

Belief #4 (4) Assessing and reporting student learning

Affirmations	Notes / Reflections / Questions
To assess, record and report student learning in an exemplary manner:	
 We thoroughly prepare students for classroom assessment in order to set students up for success. We regularly provide exemplars of excellence toward which all students can aspire. We ensure all students have the opportunity to display success using multiple means to represent their learning, including oral, written and visual formats. We use a continuous balanced program of multiple indicators and sources of evidence to check student understanding and to inform instruction (i.e. assessment for learning/formative assessment). When outcomes are not met, we use alternative strategies and activities to advance learning. We use a continuous balanced program of multiple indicators and sources of evidence to clearly describe and accurately report how students perform relative to learner outcomes over an extended period of time (i.e. assessment of learning/summative assessment). We involve students as active participants in classroom assessment by building on their strengths, determining growth areas, and developing strategies for improving their learning and peer learning (assessment as learning). We maintain detailed, accurate and systematic records of students' progress on learner outcomes. Teaching Quality Standard Teachers gather and use information about students' learning needs and progress. 	

Belief #5 We believe in the importance of out-of-classroom contributions to the school community.

Affirmations	Notes / Reflections / Questions
As exemplary team members:	
We willingly assume responsibilities, as well as establish and maintain collaborative relationships as they relate to the school, student programs, the teaching profession, and the local community.	
Teaching Quality Standard	
Teachers establish and maintain partnerships among school, home and community, and within their own schools.	
Teachers understand the legislated, moral and ethical frameworks within which they work.	

Belief #6 We believe professional learning is necessary for exemplary instructional practice and excellence in student learning.

Affirmations	Notes / Reflections / Questions
As exemplary career-long learners and members of professional learning communities:	
 We acknowledge our professional responsibility to participate in collaborative learning to continuously improve our instructional practice. We therefore achieve our greatest successes through interdependent relationships by learning with and from each other. We continually seek the most effective strategies to facilitate student learning, both individually and collectively through reflective practice and inquiry to achieve excellence in learner outcomes. We consistently pursue the implementation of a shared vision of exemplary instructional practice while honoring teacher creativity and diversity in our school culture. We continually assess our effectiveness on the basis of student achievement. We persistently seek, analyze and act upon relevant data and information to provide the best possible instruction for every student. 	
Teaching Quality Standard	
 Teachers are career-long learners. Teachers establish and maintain partnerships among school, home and community, and within their own schools. 	
Over-arching Teaching Quality Standard	
Teachers' application of pedagogical knowledge, skills and attributes is based on their ongoing analysis of contextual variables.	

Lyle Lorenz (Lorenz Consulting) and a committee of individuals from Wild Rose Public Schools have drafted The Shared Vision of Exemplary Teaching Construct to be shared with all educators for feedback in the upcoming months. Members of the committee who need to be thanked and recognized for their contributions are:

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