



Tuesday, January 17, 2012

### Collaborative networks support teachers

*Learning Networks offer meaningful and accessible support for division teachers*

Research shows that one of the ways we learn best is through one-on-one dialogue and sharing with colleagues and peers. Northern Gateway Public Schools supports Learning Networks in our division through professional development opportunities, time for networks to meet, and other supports offered through Learning Services. Led by a Learning Network Facilitator, the groups meet periodically to discuss challenges and successes in the classroom, share promising practices, and learn from each other's experiences.



Organized by grade and/or subject, we have networks for kindergarten, music, grades 1-6, junior and senior high core and option courses, special education, outreach programming and senior high counsellors. When a network meets, all of the teachers that are a part of that network, from Valleyview to Onoway, come together to talk about their subject areas and/or grades, their questions, concerns, successes and challenges.

Learning Network Facilitator for kindergarten, Marie MacRitchie, elaborated, "Our Learning Network is a valuable resource for me. We share ideas and experiences on any topics that pertain to our kindergarten classrooms and students, be it classroom management, new ideas for programming or understanding policies and procedures. The time set aside for us to meet supports relationships among all kindergarten teachers in the division, and the resulting team is a huge resource for us in the classroom."

The teams work collaboratively to support each other, and students. They review and question provincial and divisional policies and initiatives, share best practices and classroom experiences, find needed information and answers to questions that teachers in the division have, and provide feedback for division administration and provincial cohorts.

Facilitators also meet with Learning Services staff where they can share their group's questions, concerns and feedback, and learn new ways to best support their network.

“It's really about developing strong working relationships with our colleagues throughout our large school division, and using each other as a resource in our daily work,” commented Learning Services Director, Roger Lacey. “It's also a way of garnering valuable feedback from our ‘front line’ that we in turn share with our provincial counterparts, and others, who are responsible for setting policies and direction at the provincial level.”

For more information on Learning Networks, and how they help teachers and students, please contact Roger Lacey, Director of Learning Services.

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