Rich Accountabilities: Moving Beyond "Datafication"

by

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Abstract: The predominant focus on grades, graduation rates, and other instrumental indicators of school performance can prevent educators from focusing on excellence through equity, particularly as this refocus relates to reconsidering assumed indicators of student engagement. This thesis explores how enhancing the adaptive capacity of a school serves as an equitable and effective way to measure a school's success rather than the accountability practices that currently exist in Alberta. This thesis further explores the question: "How can a commitment to equity as a path to student engagement contribute to the adaptive capacity of a school?"

This study will attempt to broaden how the value of education is measured for students by focusing on narratives that showcase the work of one school—Jasper Place High School, in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada—as it worked to address a more fulsome education for its school community, including students, parents, and teachers. To do this work, the idea of a "ResponseAbility Lab" was offered as a set of protocols and a vehicle for our school to test the belief that it can and should evaluate how we nurture students' abilities to learn and thrive in the context of the growing complexity and volatility of their lives, communities and global context.

This analysis describes how three key engaged commitments can be transformative in ways that help a school community reflect more deeply on its values; gather and critically examine information about varied perceptions about the experience of learning and life in the school; and act in responsive ways to create an entire community of more engaged learning. Moving through and past the inertia of *not knowing* and *not wanting to know* offers hope and possibility for creating "rich accountabilities" (Sellar , 2014, 2015; Alberta Teachers' Association, 2015c) that sustain the work of schools committed to equity as a path to student engagement.

Preface

This thesis is an original work by Penelope Stiles. The research project, of which this thesis is a part, received research ethics approval form the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board, Project Name "Rich Accountabilities: Moving Beyond "Datafication"", No. Pro000666033, June 20, 2016

When you look at this thesis, what will you see? The following document represents one completed aspect of a larger action research project that began several years ago and will undoubtedly continue into my future as both an action researcher and school leader. I believe schools learn best when they engage in small, local research that is rich, engaged, and accountable. I believe we should move past "datafication" to a place where schools are continuing sites of action research.

To this end, the work represented here is only one part of a larger work. The writing of this thesis is based upon extant data that had been gathered as part of the everyday work of our school over the two years before I began to write this thesis. The work discussed here had already been completed, had been distributed publically within the community, and had become part of the public records of our school. As part of school records, it had been shared between teachers, students, and the community prior to the genesis of the study you read here. Teachers, students, and the community had also been invited and had engaged in feedback upon the work we had engaged. It is important to note that the thesis written here began only after the work discussed within this thesis had been completed. Thus, the further study represented in the thesis therefore contains insights about the depth of what the work that had already been done meant and how that work might be moved forward.

Dedication

To my family-Shirley, Mike, Christian, Jalen and Sky-for all the dinners

where "education" is the always the main course.

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Setting the Context

This thesis explores how enhancing the adaptive capacity of a school serves as an equitable and effective way to measure a school's success rather than the accountability practices that currently exist in Alberta. This thesis further explores the question: "How can a commitment to equity as a path to student engagement contribute to the adaptive capacity of a school?"

To address this question, I am coming to this thesis with a set of beliefs and values that have come from my work as a long-time teacher and school leader. I have, in my work, come to believe that we shortchange our students' abilities and options (and capacities) by engaging them in a treadmill of narrowness as specified by connecting their success to narrow quantitative measures arrived at through systems of high-stakes testing that privilege certain students and dis-privilege others; by tying school success to industrial models and neo-liberal philosophies; and, by creating curricular and instructional practices that automatically disengage a vast number of our students.

Frankly stated, I have witnessed so much systemic distress (a system based not on citizenship but on consumption) that I have come to question much of how schools have been structured. As a result, in my everyday practice and in my overriding philosophy as a principal, I have come to actively push back against this system by working to lift up an alternative kind of practice that, as I see it, accepts the innate value of all my students, believes in the practice of seeing all students as being gifted in unique ways, and challenges each student towards a citizenship of relationships with others, the environment, and the world. I have come to believe

that our job as educators is not to make learning easy, but to engage students in challenges that inform their knowledge, edify their spirits, and enlighten all of our communities.

This thesis represents a case study of a school that embraces a systematic approach to school change relying on an emerging body of literature on adaptive capacity. It highlights some of our work at Jasper Place High School over the past three years as we have collaborated to engage a different way of teaching young people and, concomitantly, ourselves as teachers. We have worked to build a deeper and broader sense of a learning community than what sometimes seems so banally present in much of the literature. We have taken this quest seriously; and, as this study will illustrate, we have failed often, but we have also succeeded as school teachers and school leaders. We have committed to the work of creating an eco-system that supports what we have come to believe are foundational principles of human growth and learning in a school known for its adaptive capacity.

In this study, I have defined adaptive capacity as the capacity of a system to adapt if the environment where the system exists is changing. This definition is our own, and one we have used at the school throughout the course of this study. However, the definition represents and has been adapted from the work of a number of researchers, including Berkes et al.(1998, 2002), Folke et al. (2002, 2004), and Gupta et al. (2010). Applied to human social systems, adaptive capacity is determined by the ability of human institutions and human networks to learn and store knowledge and experience (Folke et al., 2003). Institutions with adaptive capacity exhibit creative flexibility in decision-making and problem solving (Holling, 2001). Organizations with adaptive capacity foster power structures that are responsive and consider the needs of all stakeholders (Gupta et al., 2010).

The Case for Change

The current state of the accountability system in Alberta and globally is top-down, test-driven, and based on technical values of efficiency and progress. As an administrator in Alberta, I have seen the effects of schools being measured by these types of instrumental approaches and question the accuracy of their claims of school success. I have witnessed how these practices can lead to marginalizing students and creating inequities in our schools.

I see a need to develop new ways to embody values of justice, equity, and care when engaging in any discussion of school success. This embodiment will require individual and collective discipline to make choices to measure a school's success in broader terms than a system that only privileges academics. There is a need to develop processes and protocols that ensure we can transform accountability information into knowledge and wisdom that can impact and inform our practices in schools. This work compels us to develop a sensibility towards developing the wisdom to listen attentively and respond ethically to our discoveries about our schools.

This work also accepts that information, values, and practice are interrelated and that these components interact to strengthen the adaptive capacity of the eco-system, in our case a school (Sellar, 2016). This work is relational and cannot happen without trust and acceptance of differing views. In particular, there is a need to pay close attention to the increasing diversity in our schools (Gibson, 2012). Diversity in all of its forms (for example, racial, ethnic, gender, sexual orientation, country of origin, age, and physical abilities) must be seen as a positive asset and a key element in the change process. Tension can be viewed as a positive force in this work.

Leadership processes must encourage inclusiveness, which increases both the opportunities to learn through practice and the quality of decisions by bringing more perspectives to the table.

This work suggests a feedback loop of communication strategies to involve as many voices as possible (Boal & Schultz, 2007). Active participation in leadership processes by as many individuals within the organization as possible is necessary to take full advantage of the nature of systemic leadership processes. With the multitude of resulting voices, at times the school climate may appear to become almost chaotic (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007). However, whenever a voice is ignored or remains silent, the entire organization is placed at risk because the silent voice may possess a perspective that would help our organization cope with the serious challenges facing the school (Hargreaves, 1994). Through feedback loops, we gain the information we need to respond to the broad range of challenges we all face (Folke et al., 2003).

The greater the shared learning that takes place within a school, the greater the ability to respond to challenges that the school, community, or larger society will encounter. Individuals must continuously learn if they are to function in complex systems with any degree of effectiveness. Structures and processes for learning will need to be developed throughout an organization so that the system is capable of adaptation to changes in technology, social structures, or economies (Marion & Uhl-Bien, 2002).

My Conceptual Framework

I am coming to this thesis as a critic of the status quo. Although I do not consider myself a critical theorist in the lineage of Habermas, Giroux, or McLaren, I do align with the spirit in which they worked. My critical response is not to the works of Marx, Kant, Hegel, or Weber, but to the narrowness and lack of human compassion found in the present accountability systems, such as in the work of the Fraser Institute, which I feel does little to help learners, teachers, parents, and schools.

Ontologically, I assume that reality for teachers, students, and parents is created and shaped by social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic, and gender-based forces that have been reified over time into social structures that have been wrongly accepted to be natural or real. In this case, I am speaking specifically of schools and the insidious belief that there are no other choices outside of the way in which we have engaged learning.

I also function under the assumption that these structures seem real to those who live within them. As I present in this thesis, I believe these assumptions are inappropriate at best and unprofessional at worst. In short, they do not serve the best interests of students and school communities.

It has been difficult for teachers to separate themselves from the system they have come to know and that inevitably influences the way they live. This view is shared by Sellar (2016), who believes that accountability has become the global system. However, as our work at Jasper Place High School shows, we believe we can start to engage changes for all of us. And, this thesis will articulate through story some of those changes.

This work is motivated by the following assumptions about my research enterprise.

1) I believe it is possible to both see and critique our reality through collaborative and interactive engagements constructed through language and action.

2) I believe that individual researchers are able to observe, engage, and create insights about reality that may be shared and understood by others.

3) Although I believe objectivity might exist (for example, in the natural sciences), I believe there are no "objective" practices in the life worlds of teachers or school leaders. I recognize that my research is both subjective and interpretive. I extend this belief to my critique of student measurements of learning. Here, I believe that what

passes in the so-called objective nature of high-stakes examinations is a privileged artifact of a system created to advantage a certain group or kind of person. Therefore, I dismiss it as valid (as will be apparent in this thesis).

4) Furthermore, I believe the system in which education has for so long existed without interrogation created a reality for students that promotes protection, privilege, and future opportunity mostly for economically powerful groups, both in the education system and throughout society. I believe this system is neo-liberal in its orientation and does not promote the kind of education our students need and should expect. I also believe schools can and should be reimagined—a notion that informs the motivation for this current research.

My Methodology

As noted, my methodological approach is loosely arranged around a critical approach, but also relies on aspects of dialogic and reflective practice, collaborative values framework, and applied action research. Some of the data for my work emerges from my long-time experiences and insights from being a teacher and a school leader. I believe these experiences have been weighing upon me even before I knew they were and that this research has become a circumstance wherein I have discovered and created a reality that I did not specifically know existed until I began to bring it forth in my writing. Thus, a first sense of data collection for this research has been organized around personal reflective insights that have emerged as I engaged the writing for my research. In some ways, I have written into insight.

A second method for this research was more traditional. In January of 2015, a team of teacher-researchers called the ResponseAbility Lab assembled to discuss protocols that could be

administered with Jasper Place stakeholders to establish a values framework for a school committed to equity and student engagement. Engaging in protocols to collaboratively build a values framework centered on equity and student engagement also provided the conditions necessary to measure the adaptive capacity of the school. Chapter 5, on methodology, will describe the methods, study design, and study participants used to collect data from these particular protocols.

This research was also built around and relied upon dialogic methods. Specifically, within Jasper Place High School, where I have been principal for nine years, we have attempted to create and sustain a broad dialogue about teaching. We have, insofar as possible, worked so that this dialogue has been open, egalitarian, and inclusive. Much of the support for insights shared about the possibility of school and curricular changes emerged from our dialogue—part of that dialogue resulted in actions we attempted and evaluated. Within this dialogue, different people provided insights and arguments based on their own claims of validity but not on power. Many of these insights are shared within this research.

Although some formalized observations or interviews were utilized in creating or collecting data, some of the research insights themselves have been realized through daily approaches that have fostered and counted as important continual conversations and reflections. Some of these I have personally authored; others are corporate insights which I have carried into this research work. Within our reflective dialogues, I, along with my teacher, student, and parent colleagues at Jasper Place High School, have collaboratively inquired or questioned what we have seen as the given state of education, and we have actively challenged the order and maintenance of this system. By this work, we wish to make a way to reclaim education for our students—in fact, for all of us.

My research has worked to problematize and challenge the guiding assumptions of the educational system we have come to take for granted in Alberta. To do this work, I have engaged assumptions about what is morally and inherently good (specifically learning and democracy) and have asked people within the social life, culture, and curricular organization of our school to reflect upon and to question their past, present, and hopes for future experiences with regard to the values we have identified together. In this work, we resemble critical theorists: we are not just trying to describe the situation from a particular set of values we have posited through critical dialogue (for example, the system's need for greater equality or democracy), but we are actively working to change the situation in which we live. I feel as if I am part action researcher, part critical theorist. I am also both pragmatic and philosophical—I have a school to lead, which I take seriously. But I also take seriously the philosophy-in-action that believes schools should be places of partnership, examples of which I will explicate in the body of this work.

As this research is based upon an ongoing, site based cycle of inquiry and reflection, my methodology is further grounded in Action Research. The Alberta Teachers' Association's *Action research guide for Alberta teachers* (2000, p. 3) notes that "Action Research is a process of systematic inquiry into a self-identified teaching or learning problem to better understand its complex dynamics and to develop strategies geared towards the problem's improvement" (Hamilton, 1997, p. 3, as cited in ATA, 2000, p. 3). As well, the *Action research guide for Alberta teachers* notes, "Action research is an open-ended, ongoing, cyclical process. The solution one develops to address the initial problem will generate the next problem to be addressed. This is the catalyst to continuous professional improvement" (Halsall & Hosack, 1996, p. 16, as cited in ATA, 2000, p. 14.). I have utilized this philosophy and definition of

action research within the methodology of this study because it offers the richness of what action research is and can be for schools and for teachers.

Specifically, the study here is both continuing action research and a reflective case study of one completed part of that larger study. As Halsall and Hosack note, one problem is completed and another problem (based upon insights gained from the completion of that first problem) is engaged. The initial, completed problem addressed centered upon the everyday work we undertook at our school to build a values framework. As a school, we had engaged and completed this work (this "research problem") prior to the genesis and the writing of this thesis. In other words, I did not know I would write this thesis when we began the work within our school. The thesis itself – although divorced in time from the completion of the original problem – carries on the larger question that grounds my continued action research and contributes to further insights about our school. One part of the action research (the values framework) was completed, and another part (this thesis) began.

The result, I believe, suggests how powerful action research is and can be for schools and teachers. Action research complicates traditional research in rich ways. It means that the foundational and grounding principles of schools can continually be addressed, one small study at a time, toward greater collective understanding in the work of school improvement writ large. It means that, for engaged school leaders such as myself, action research is never finished. It also means that an action research project can be both finished and continuing – it can engage an ongoing research agenda and it can complete small, locally initiated school research problems at the same time.

This thesis is an example of how action research might be completed in schools. Specifically, the thesis represents a case study that is a part of a larger action research project where the larger construct can include the completed projects.

Finally, I am an applied researcher. From my perspective, in order for this project to amount to good research, I must discuss the meaning and implications of the research I have engaged in. I cannot nor should not ignore the tensions of living within the competition for hearts and minds implied by an active critique of the current system. As well, I believe research should be based upon collaborative insights and community agreement; therefore, as a researcher I have a responsibility to justify my work in order to address any tensions that manifest from the implications that my research might bear out. Most of these implications will come later, and for the sake of remaining concise, they will not be a part of this work.

In summary, I believe that research should have social and corporate value—including school improvement, teacher and student learning, social change, and the expansion of our educational discourse and the way we see and understand the world.

The Organization of My Research

My research is organized into eight chapters. Chapter one will set the context for this work and for my current ontology as a school leader in one of the largest high schools in western Canada.

Chapter 2 explores the context of a "Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, and Ambiguous" or "VUCA world" as described by Berliner in Gariepy, Spencer, & Couture (2009, p. xi), and critiques current top-down accountability regimes that fail to give adequate public accounts of the success schools achieve. Drawing from a variety of emerging research on " rich accountabilities"

(Alberta Teachers' Association, 2015c; People for Education, 2014; Sellar, 2014, 2015, 2016; Couture, 2015; Spencer & Couture, 2012), this chapter outlines the possibility of new narratives that see schools as *eco-systems* (Keri, 2002; Berkes & Folke, 1998; Berkes et al., 2002; Folke et al., 2002, 2004).

Chapter 3 describes in detail how we might begin to see schools as eco-systems with change and reform driven by pedagogy as opposed to standards (Keni, 2002). Several authors have explored the merits of an ecological approach to school development, including Keni (2002), Berkes et al. (1998, 2002), Folke et al. (2002, 2004), and Fazey et al (2007).

Chapter 4 will examine the current focus on student engagement as an indicator of school performance while offering a critique of the potential for these efforts to become yet one more mechanism of surveillance and control of schools. As an alternative narrative, this chapter will explore efforts to address student engagement in the broader contexts of students' social and community circumstances, particularly through the critical lens of the need to consider equity as the overarching goal of a public school education.

Drawing on the foundational principles of action research, Chapter 5 will describe the methodologies used to gather the perspectives of students, teachers, and community members in respect to their views on what defines success for the school. The protocols for this work will be outlined in detail, in particular with respect to the formation of the ResponseAbility Lab as structure for addressing the complexities of this work.

Chapter 6 will review the initial findings of the study and will theorize about the capacity of the ResponseAbility Lab to contribute to the development of a values framework that informs and sustains communities of practice dedicated to the inextricable link between equity and student engagement.

Through the use of vignettes and snapshots, Chapter 7 offers examples of the reflections of the school-community members involved in the ResponseAbility Lab. The complex and compelling stories of their personal interactions with the school are shared as the chapter unfolds.

The study concludes with chapter 8 describing the possibilities for developing "rich accountabilities" (Sellar, 2015) as an alternative to the predominantly narrow focus on performance in easily measured areas such as literacy and numeracy. Possibilities for transforming schools do exist in the context of our broad definitions of professional and institutional "response-ability."

My Journey

There is global recognition that the role of school is transforming and that all partners, including students, are vital to this conversation. Given this context, it is imperative that we attend to the meaning of democracy and the purpose of education, specifically public school education (King, 2015). McMahon (2013) suggests that we ask more frequently the questions "education according to whom and for whom?" (p. 17). Although many reforms aim to graduate more students as literate, numerate, productive citizens (McMahon, 2013), we are compelled to question what it means to live in a civil society and to respect one another, to understand one another's differences, and essentially, to come to terms with an ethics of how to accept one another.

I consider our present context, which includes accountability systems and the neo-liberal commodification of education, to present both challenges and opportunities. As we re-define *school* and challenge the notion of the school as simple resource management, we can question

what it means to be a citizen and prepare students for more than narrow academic targets or job skills required for the marketplace (Caldwell & Spinks, 1992).

In my current role as the principal of a school with 2400 students in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, I have an unfaltering commitment to equity. Equity matters deeply to me, partially because of my South African heritage and largely because of my history in schools. Now, more than ever before, our ability to engage globally is increasing. How we understand, have empathy for, and treat one another in our schools and in society are of paramount importance. Our Alberta high schools are full of inequities; we need look no further than our First Nations, our Indigenous, or our Sexual and Gender Minority students to realize we have much to take care of in our own society.

My view is that our collective responsibilities in schools and in the community-at-large include providing safe learning environments for all students. The school and all aspects of a school culture should help students feel accepted and encouraged. Students deserve adults who are willing to care about their well-being socially, emotionally, and physically. These same professionals should be committed to providing learning environments that embrace diversity, host intellectually safe learning commons, and address the needs of all learners.

As an educator for thirty-one years, and a principal for twenty of those years, my interests and personal commitment revolve around school leadership and the impact it has on school climate and student learning. I am particularly interested in how adaptive leadership, which includes attending to the voices of all stakeholders, contributes to transformation at the secondary school level (Heifetz et al., 2004). I consider such transformation a real need in Alberta schools and have a strong conviction that student voice and agency are key components of any school change endeavor. As we attempt to operationalize the now six-year-old Alberta government's

vision articulated in *Inspiring Action on Education* (2010), I see an opportunity to play a lead role in these efforts. I trust that my extensive leadership experience, including school and system initiatives (for example, the Alberta Initiative for School Improvement), as well as international partnerships and academic pursuits, provide a sound basis for my graduate research.

My journey as a teacher—starting as a French immersion teacher in British Columbia, and continuing as a teacher in Alberta of grades 1 through 12 and now as the principal of Jasper Place High School in Edmonton—has prepared me to engage questions that challenge me as a research-practitioner. In particular, as the principal of a large high school in Edmonton Public School Board (EPSB), I have been challenged by the diversity and complexity of our school-community. Listening to and engaging student voices about their school experiences has pushed my thinking about the importance of supporting local initiatives and scaling these up to the system level. Through a number of action research projects in collaboration with the University of Alberta and the Alberta Teachers' Association, as well as with international researchers such as Andy Hargreaves, Dennis Shirley, and Pasi Sahlberg, I have seen the benefits of research-in-action and action-in-research as a driver for scaling school innovation to the system level.

Support for my international work includes a variety of leadership roles. During the past five years, I have served on the steering committee of an international partnership between Finland and Alberta (FINAL, 2012). This partnership has received growing recognition and has clearly demonstrated that the internationalization of education is not just about sharing ideas and conducting congenial visits. As a research initiative, it is about reflecting on practice, seeing our immediate realities through new eyes, and thinking beyond *what is* to *what could be*. As a result of the FINAL partnership, I have initiated and supported numerous action research projects in my

school as well as working with the four Alberta high schools and the seven Finnish schools within the partnership.

I am currently on the steering committee for an international partnership between Norway, Ontario, and Alberta (NORCAN, 2016) focusing on equity in mathematics. In addition to these international partnerships, I am also on the provincial steering committee for the High School Redesign project. Moreover, I am currently the chair of the EPSB High School Principal network and act as an advisor for the Career Pathways initiative for EPSB. I believe my colleagues view me as a forward-thinking, progressive, and competent leader.

Study Purpose

This study pursues emerging research in the areas of transformational, adaptive leadership; principal, teacher, and student communities of practice; and school networks that move through jurisdictional, provincial, and international boundaries. In this respect, school principals are key agents of change, positioned to leverage transformation from the inside out. School principals, working across school systems and national boundaries, are critical catalysts for change.

The role of principal in educational institutions for K-12 education in Canada is becoming increasingly complex, and many problems principals face fall into the category of what Heifetz and Linsky (2002), among others, describe as adaptive problems rather than technological problems (Squires, 2015; Heifetz, Kania, & Kramer, 2004; Owens, 2004). Adaptive problems relate to the intricacy of the public, political, and policy environments that K-12 school leadership must navigate in order to successfully design and provide educational experiences for all learners. Squires (2015) notes that complex problems are "not well-defined. They are complex and require multiple perspectives and dialogue" (p.16). As such, they also require complex and

flexible solutions that are implemented responsively and context-sensitive. Squires and others suggest that these kinds of challenges are better served by shared or distributed leadership models rather than those that are traditionally hierarchical, noting that within shared leadership models each school is able to better respond to needs in specific and appropriate ways and with greater efficiency (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009; Murgatroyd, 2011). Distributed leadership, then, can be seen as one path to increasing the adaptive capacity of an educational institution so that it may better function in changing and diverse contexts.

This research study examines how traditional hierarchies established in schools, described by Campbell (2015) as ego-systems, can be deconstructed, and how the adaptive capacity of a school can be enhanced through the development of an action research culture that encourages distributed leadership through fostering new relationships of practice and research. Using Berkes, et al.'s (1998, 2002) understanding of schools as unique eco-systems, this frame was developed to discuss ways in which new architectures for student and teacher learning can lead to meaningful and sustained practice and efficient responses to changing contexts. Protocols were tested to determine how and where teacher expertise, student voice, learning, innovation and experimentation can be recognized, supported, and used to inform administrative and policy decisions at school and district levels.

In Alberta, an increased focus on results-based reporting at district and provincial levels, and on current narrow frameworks for school assessment, demand that school reports focus on grades, graduation rates, and certain kinds of programs to describe and define successes (Murgatroyd, 2011; Gariepy, Spencer & Couture, 2009). School performance has been measured by student results on Provincial Achievement tests at grades 3, 6, and 9, and on 50% diploma exit exams (recently reduced to 30%) taken by students in grade 12 courses. Parent, student, and staff

surveys are administered on an annual basis to measure a school's performance in the areas of safe and caring schools, school leadership, teacher quality, and overall public assurance in the school. These measures are publically reported, and in many instances schools are ranked in the province by media and special interest groups.

These reporting demands stem from, and also feedback into, a data infrastructure in which many other kinds of success go unreported or are even framed as failure. The creation and support of communities of practice that actively innovate simply do not fit within standardized understandings of annual school goals, and innovation that does not produce clear markers of success is not counted or acknowledged as an end in itself (Boal & Schultz, 2007). This situation remains the case despite clear evidence that innovation unsuccessful in its original goals still brings teachers together, inspires teacher investment in professional development, and changes student engagement for the better (Biesta, 2013).

Despite these findings, studies of policy implementation and decision-making at the district level find that common ways to study policy implementation often use frameworks that fail to account for the role student voice or teacher learning plays in implementing new programs and practices (Spillane & Louis, 2002; Stein & Coburn, 2008). This systemic disconnect between policy and practice is the first way in which the ability to acknowledge and implement teacher research can lead over time to a devaluing of teacher work as research. The result is a system in which some of the best innovative professional work goes unrecorded and some of the most interesting findings go un-scaled (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012).

From Ego- to Eco-System

The most recent iteration of the Alberta Teachers' Association's (ATA) model of *A Great School for All*: *Moving Forward Together* characterizes contemporary educational organizations in Alberta as "ego-systems" (Alberta Teachers' Association, 2015a). Instead of ego-systems, the ATA publication advances an alternative reform agenda driven by the construct of schools as part of an "eco-system" (p. 1) that calls for reform efforts that recognize the interconnectedness of the 12 dimensions[1] of educational change (ATA, 2015a, p. 2). Moreover, the ATA publication asserts that educational change needs to emerge from networks of educationalists and community members who essentially "flip the system" (p. 1) by repositioning students as the focal point, with the goal of both understanding the fundamental purposes of educational organizations and serving as well as supporting student learning. (See Figure 1.)

Figure 1: From Ego-system to Eco-system
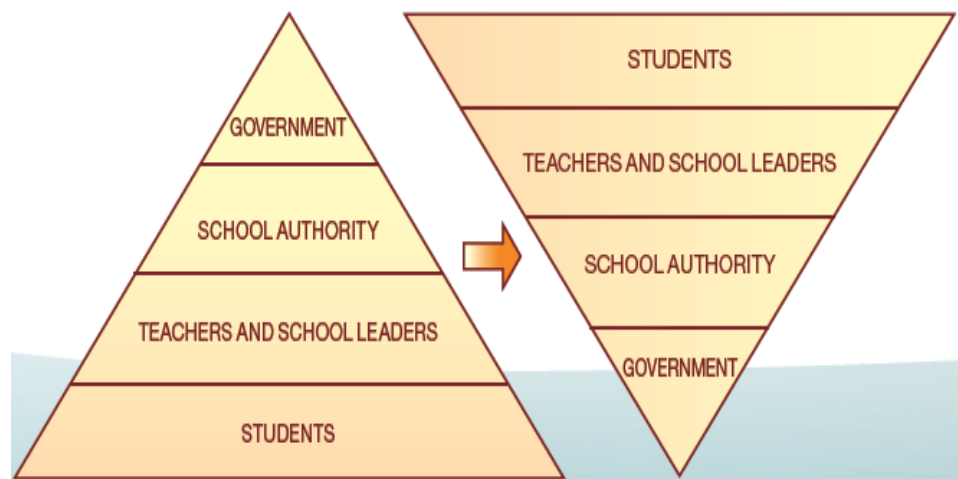
Note: "From the 'ego-system' we have to the 'eco-system' we need."
Source: *A Great School for All: Moving Forward Together* (Alberta Teachers' Association, 2015a, p. 1).

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[1] 12 dimensions: 1) assessing and reporting student learning; 2) curriculum development and implementation; 3) digital technologies and learning; 4) inclusive education; 5) optimal conditions of practice; 6) differentiation for learning; 7) professional development and autonomy; 8) public assurance; 9) school leadership; 10) teacher leadership; 11) early learning; and 12) governance and vibrant communities.

Table 1: Moving from Ego-systems to achieve a Public School Education for All

EGO	ECO
STUDENTS	
Students as objects of the goals of schooling	Student engagement and agency
Students as *subject-to* pre-determined outcomes of learning	Students as *subject-of* and co-creators of learning
Standardization, measured on core skills mapped on to narrow defined measures of literacy and numeracy	Multiple pathways to success demonstrated by a broad range of competencies
The *good* student privileged through the binary of "academics vs. vocational"	All students demonstrate unique talents and gifts

EGO	ECO
TEACHERS	
Performance management by district leaders positioned as system implementers	Multi-lateral accountabilities and public assurance
Standardized, prescribed methods of instruction and curriculum delivery (learnification) (Biesta, 2010)	Shared risk taking/innovation through collective professional autonomy
Privatized practice by teachers monitored by system leaders	Collaboration/networking among teachers as research-practitioners
Focus on student achievement and "learnification" (Biesta, 2010).	Curriculum designers, empowered to teach and assess in ways that address the needs of the students in the classroom

EGO	ECO
PRINCIPALS	
Achieving pre-determined system goals	Adaptiveness, responsiveness—organizing around local contexts to achieve broad goals
Focus on conservation and stability	Innovative and culture building
School sites as isolated units of action	Learning networks working across boundaries (community, schools, systems)
Hierarchy of leadership as system implementers	Distributed leadership, co-creating school cultures

EGO	ECO
SYSTEM LEADERS	
Surveillance	Trust then verify
Control and compliance	Coherence
Competition	Equity
Bureaucratic accountability	Assurance

My Role as Research-Practitioner

In the fall of 2014, I assembled a pioneer leadership team at Jasper Place High School (JP) committed to engaging all stakeholders in the work of teaching and learning. Compelled to being responsive in nature and responsible for the success of each and every student at JP, a team of school leaders and researchers met to consider protocols that would assist in identifying, building, and sustaining JP's adaptive capacity to enhance student engagement as an equitable school. The school set out to capitalize on current conditions of practice focused on equity, flexibility, creativity, and curricula that were culturally responsive, relevant for students, and meaningfully engaging among the community. To enhance public assurance in the school, the team chose to adopt an iterative multilateral approach to measuring the adaptive capacity of the school.

This work takes its impetus from recognition of the complexity of learning suggested by an analysis of how the larger social, cultural, and economic background of students' lives are integral to how they understand and experience engagement in school. The focus was to build an understanding of teaching and learning considered in a broader context than what occurs in the school and classroom.

As will be described further in this study, to move this work forward, a number of protocols were developed by the school's research team. This work focused on recognizing that organizations must place adaptive capacity, resilience, and innovation at the center of the work of school development.

Any efforts to enhance student engagement and measure school success must return to fundamental questions of what school is for and what capacities children and youth will require in order to live fulfilling lives in the future. To determine what is meant by *a great school for all*,

this research centered on the following three questions: "How can a commitment to equity and engagement contribute to the adaptive capacity of a school?" "What is an engaged school?" and, "What is an equitable school?"

In Alberta, the current narrow forms of accountability based on assessing lists of discrete skills and competencies will fail to provide feedback or insight into what children and youth require in order to be successful. Given the growing complexity of Alberta's school-communities, increasing income disparity, and the persistence of systemic obstacles to learning, today's challenge is not the absence of learning, but rather the need to ensure that all children will be part of more hopeful futures (Couture, 2011).

Study Site and Context

The study and work site is Jasper Place School in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. Jasper Place is an urban, composite high school with 2400 students in grades 10 through 12. The vibrancy of Jasper Place lies in its diversity. The school serves three-hundred self-identified First Nation, Metis, and Inuit students, 300 English language learners, 300 students with special needs, 600 students taking advanced placement or International Baccalaureate classes, and everything in between. The school has been described as a microcosm of the Alberta province.

Over the past nine years, the staff and students at Jasper Place School have worked diligently to develop a reputation as an inclusive, innovative, and forwarding-thinking school. The school members have been engaged in a variety of action research projects and initiatives for an extensive period of time, and although much of this work has been recognized at district and provincial levels, few were formally documented. These include the Alberta Initiative for School Improvement (AISI) projects and, more recently, international projects related to the FINAL

partnership (2016) and NORCAN (2016) work. Evidence does exist that some of the initiatives and innovative approaches to teaching and learning starting at Jasper Place were being taken up in the field and were influencing some policy directions. However, the provincial professional association, the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA), drove publication and sharing of these initiatives because it believed that schools were in the best position to drive new policy directions about curricular reform, assessment practices, and school transformation (ATA, 2015b, 2015c). This action was grounded on the belief that new ways to re-assert teacher and school expertise in these areas—first by using internal research and dialogue, then linking to academic partners—must be found. In the case of JP, we began by documenting our own work as a school, tracing the ways in which our practice has led to our research and vice-versa.

Democracy, Equity and Schools as Eco-Systems

Canada has a long history of commitment to goals of equity and social justice in public education (Corson, 2001). Equity policies existed to address issues of students living in disadvantaged situations (Agocs & Osborne, 2009). However, we have witnessed a trend away from equity ideals as neo-liberal market ideologies and associated discourses of accountability, efficiency, and effectiveness have risen in prominence. These discourses undermine work toward equity and inclusion (Apple, 2007; Portelli & Vibert, 2001; Sears, 2003).

This rise of neo-liberal ideologies and subsequent undermining of equity as a serious and specific value within educational systems demands a response from those who work within these systems. As McMahon and Portelli (2004) suggest, "A democratic education system that honors robust democracy has to consciously and, at times, subversively challenge the neo-liberal practices in educational institutions" (p. 70). There is an imperative and a "moral responsibility"

to question the myths of the "achievement gap" (McMahon & Portelli, 2004, p. 70). Portelli and Vibert (2001) petition that democracy requires a curriculum that takes life seriously, and does not just focus on aspects that continue to privilege certain groups of society.

Apple and Beane (2007) state that the values and principles central to democratic school systems are the following:

- Concern for the dignity and rights of individuals and minorities.

- Concern for the welfare of others and the common good.

- Faith in the individual and collective capacity of people to create possibilities for resolving problems.

- The open flow of ideas that enable people to be as fully informed as possible.

- The use of critical reflection and analyses to evaluate ideas, problems and policies.

- The understanding that democracy is more than an ideal to be pursued but an idealized set of values that act as a guide for our life as human beings.

- The organization of social institutions to promote and extend the democratic way of life (Apple & Beane, 2007b, Chapter One, para 21).

Although such values are important, it is also imperative to note that, for a democratic curriculum to be responsive to the communities it educates, it must also take into account the voices of all stakeholders, including the concerns young people have about themselves and their world (Apple & Beane, 2007). In 2013, high school students in Edmonton rallied against the budget cuts to education proposed by Jim Prentice of the Progressive Conservative party in Alberta. More than 400 students walked out of their high school classrooms and gathered at the Alberta Legislature (Klingbeil, 2013; Mertz, 2013). The organizers were students from our school who had been involved in an international partnership with Finland for a number of years.

Students reacted with strong opinions about the proposed government cuts. "Opportunities are being lost and programs that we love dearly and have for our entire school career are being tossed out the window without a single care for the students' opinions. That is why we are here today. We are here to prove that we have a voice" (Jasper Place grade 12 student).

The students who had participated in the Finland-Alberta (FINAL) partnership had learned the power of exerting their voices into the serious discussions they had been a part of with FINAL teachers and leaders about school transformation. They had learned to question the status quo as they lent a crucial insight into their lived experiences in school. These students were "encouraged to express voice in civil society" (Shirley, 2016, p. 20).

Success for learners should not be the privilege of those who come from families and backgrounds advantaged by social or economic status. As Murgatroyd (2010) writes, "success for all is the cornerstone of a shared commitment to provide good schools for all students" (web log post, para. 15). Education should help learners understand how to be healthy and happy, and it should support their efforts to develop and maintain their emotional, physical, and mental well-being. This effort requires acknowledgement of a variety of contexts from which students and families approach schooling. Schools should therefore recognize that learning takes place both in and outside of the school, and facilitate, enable and recognize learning in a variety of settings. Education must be a partnership where a focus on equity through the process of building adaptive capacity is paramount (Murgatroyd, 2009).

At Jasper Place, we saw our work as both educational and political. As we worked together, we solidified our belief that our role was to be a leader of education. Specifically, we came to believe that pursuing equity, as determined by the engagement and success for all students, and engaging this public funding had to be done transparently. That is, we needed to demonstrate

what we were doing, which meant more than simply collecting results from standardized exams—school amounts to more than this, and such results represent cheap (as in less-valued) data. There is rich evidence to support the notion that the current accountability regime does not effectively measure the success of our schools. In this regard, broader measures and richer accounts of how schools are performing are needed (Lingard & Sellar, 2013). To begin to understand what broader measures could look like with respect to equity and student engagement, it is vital that we shift the discussion from accountability to public assurance (Spencer, 2013).

At Jasper Place, we realized we were not alone in our quest for democratic education. Unfortunately, there are multiple indicators that Alberta's system is under extreme stress, as are systems in other provinces (King, 2015). Educators who value a democratic school system are concerned that the disparity gap in Canada is widening. The literature is rich with accounts of where the system could and should invest energy to get back on track. To address some of these issues, an Ontario group called The People for Education (2013) is engaged in an important public dialogue about the need to redefine school success in broader terms. This collective aspires to create and leverage a pan-Canadian/global discussion to shift educational policy. However, there is evidence of some trepidation on the part of school staff and administrators who believe that broader measures imply more accountability measures that schools might be forced to attend to. At Jasper Place (JP), we believe our work is connected to the national context and the need to rally around a re-definition of education; we believe our school is a site of values and ethics.

To address this tension, my study demonstrates how one school (as an example of many) can move away from measuring the engagement and success of individual students and towards examinations of the school staff's abilities to respond to the learning needs of the students. As outlined in the following chapter, measuring a school's adaptive capacity will serve as an

effective method to begin this shift in how we describe and measure school success through the lens of equity and student engagement.

The following chapters examine how adaptive capacity as an emerging approach to leading change can help to build possibilities for rethinking equity and engagement in an ecological sensibility. As the chapter describes, although there are many unknowns and much work to be done, it is possible that we can learn to tell different stories about why and how educators accomplish the daily miracle of nurturing, sustaining, and promoting vibrant learning environments, and that these stories would then become part of how we understand a rich, complex picture of school success. Based on networks of shared, rich accountabilities and trust, schools can and should be drivers of change in the way we assess the quality and influence of educational systems.

Chapter 2: Moving to Rich Accountability

This chapter describes the current context of school leadership framed by Berliner (2009) as a global transformation to a VUCA world—a world of volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity. How schools can be conceived as complex eco-systems within this context is the leverage point for our leadership work.

Trust in our schools and our teachers must be fostered to leverage school change. For trust to be sustained, communities should be involved in the work of schools (Murgatroyd, 2009; Berliner, 2009; Hargreaves & Fink, 2004). Trust can only emerge in a framework of public accountability that enables different accounts of public purpose and practice to be deliberated in democratic environments. Such a framework must be constituted to include difference and to enable participation, voice, and dissent through collective judgment and decision that is in turn accountable to the public (Ranson, 2003).

Current accountability regimes do not provide adequate accounts of what society invests in education nor do they guide programs for educational change and improvement. Sellar (2014) advises that there is a need to reclaim the "ethical sense of giving responsive accounts" (p. 6) of school success. He suggests that we address the complexity of ways that schools and systems are interacting with the contemporary educational environment in our accounts of school success. Top-down accountability policies limit an authentic reflection of the realities and conditions that exist at the local level (Lingard & Sellar, 2015). In the Pursuing Equity Through Rich Accountabilities (PETRA) project, Sellar (2014) asserts that decisions about schools need to be based on the outcomes of a participatory democracy. Communities should be engaged in the work of their schools. To make learning meaningful, schools need a curriculum that is accessible, authentic, and valued by learners (Murgatroyd, 2009).

Sellar (2014) describes broader measures of school success as "rich accountabilities." These rich accountabilities are multidirectional, multilateral, and designed to guide educational practices and improvement with respect to both performance and equity within schools (p. 17). If schools are to be truly democratic, more people should be involved in debates about what matters in schools and what should be measured. Sellar (2014) suggests including and involving as many stakeholders as possible in these conversations, especially those who have been disadvantaged by the current means of measuring school performance.

In the PETRA project, Sellar (2014) states that "rich accountabilities support equity goals by providing alternatives to accountability practices" that advantage those who fit the narrow "focus of curriculum and pedagogy in an effort to improve testing scores" (p. 17). Rich accountabilities could make a "broader spectrum of what schools achieve for students" (p. 17) more visible. In Alberta we could describe a movement toward rich accountabilities within our current system as being a movement toward public assurance—a shift from working for communities to working by, with, and within communities (Spencer, 2013). Unlike accountability, which is predicated on a lack of public trust, assurance assumes a positive stance and asserts a tone of good will. In this sense, public assurance is a discourse of fidelity, confidence and shared ownership (Spencer, 2013, para 12).

Changing Models for School Context and Purpose

Hargreaves and Fink (2004) suggest that schools and communities should look for new ways to define a successful school that extend beyond the restrictions of testing and standardization. They add that adopting an eco-system metaphor could provide the breath of fresh air necessary to rally our education system into a new place. With this new energy, schools might

become places where students can use skills to foster incredible levels of creativity, innovation, and solution making. Factories are a poor model for educators and schools: just as factories failed because their mental model was not nimble enough to react to the changing forces in our global society, so might schools follow if we remain with the factory model for education. We need to reimage our society away from the factory notion and into a model that accurately describes the system that is called today's schools (Hargreaves & Fink, 2003). Hargreaves and Fink also define three areas that could help schools reimagine themselves as healthy eco-systems: they suggest tapping into the innovation of teaching staff to gain momentum and efficacy, documenting, and celebrating the work that is occurring, and supporting conversations in schools with multiple stakeholders to bring many opinions to light.

Berliner (2009, 2011) advances the notion that teaching and learning is restricted when teachers are assessed by means of high stakes testing. Teachers as professionals should register judgment upon matters of educational importance (Berliner, 2009). Berliner, citing Dewey (1902), also reminds us that the design of assessment systems should be about furthering democracy, as well as improving performance. Education must be about improving the fullness of children's lives as well as about the scores they yield (Berliner, 2009, pp. xii-xiii). It becomes about more than preparing students for tests. Schools are environments that shape lives, not just places where outcomes are measured.

As we consider the nature, purposes, and processes of education, Berliner (2009) challenges us to consider the effects that contemporary, linear performance management systems of accountability have on curriculum, instruction, and the lives of our students and teachers. Berliner (2009) maintains that pursuing the discourse on developing broader measures for determining school success has never been more important, because our world is changing

rapidly and we risk losing our public school systems if we do not act in haste. Berliner claims that we presently face what he has named a "VUCA"—Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, and Ambiguous—world (Berliner in Gariepy, Spencer, & Couture, 2009, p. xi). He raises questions about what knowledge and skills would be most valuable in this postmodern world, and of what else will be needed to succeed in a VUCA world. Finally, he declares that our students will require more than the literacy, numeracy, and scientific knowledge currently privileged in our education systems. Yet, high-stakes assessment and tests drive what teachers teach (Berliner, 2009, 2011). Often, Berliner states, what is taught to succeed on these tests directly opposes the skills necessary to succeed in the world. Multiple-choice questions (relatively cheap ways to evaluate) do not have the capacity to measure skills such as creativity or a student's ability to collaborate with peers. Such tests rarely assess a student's moral reasoning or propensity for citizenship.

A Survey of Broader Measures of School Success

In an effort to support clearer goals for the education system in areas beyond literacy and numeracy, People for Education (2013), a non-profit advocacy and policy group, held numerous community and stakeholder focus groups to hear what the public felt should be measured in our schools. After many meetings and consultations, stakeholders agreed that schools should measure progress towards goals in social-emotional skills, creativity and innovation, physical and mental health, and citizenship (People for Education, 2013, para 4). People for Education then commissioned a number of research papers to explore new frameworks to measure student success and build greater public assurance in schools. They declared the need to help the general public understand how schools contribute to students' success in other domains (People for

Education, 2013). The five domain papers the group produced provide an excellent literature review in the study area commissioned.

Bascia (2014) provides a useful overview of the literature on the ways in which school context connects with and shapes teaching and learning processes. By examining school context as it relates to learning and teaching, Bascia broadens measures of student success to include indicators related to student wellbeing, satisfaction, health, social and political relationships, and community partnerships in adult life (Bascia, 2014, p. 1). Bascia's research also provides a brief theoretical background on qualities and characteristics of school life and their possible impact on students' academic success, teachers' and students' wellbeing, teacher commitment and efficacy, teachers' professional learning, micro-political practices and power relations within schools, bullying prevention, school leadership, and school reform. To better understand these kinds of school relationships and their impact on student success, they can be broken down into two areas: school climate and school context.

School climate includes a range of school factors that broadly shape students' school experiences. A focus on school climate assessment through a model that acknowledges the complex interactivity between variables adds necessary depth to the process of creating school success indicators. It is important to incorporate both process and context indicators into any model of assessment.

School context shapes core processes of teaching and learning. Schools are dynamic systems. The key process in schools is learning, and the key actors are leaders. In such a model, both administrators and teachers lead for learning (Sellar, 2014). In particular, teachers are concerned with their own professional learning as well as students' engagement in learning and achievement.

Social and Emotional Measures: Shanker (2014) provides a clear and comprehensive literature review that surveys the following: (1) the emergence of social and emotional development as an area of research focus; (2) "five core competencies" associated with social and emotional development (p. 2); (3) the role of schools in promoting this development, including the nature of "teacher-student relationships" (p. 8) and measurement instruments that may be used to assess different aspects of social and emotional learning. In reviewing the above areas of social and emotional measures, Shanker (2014) suggests that the role of schools and teachers in developing social and emotional competencies must be carefully weighed against the role of non-school factors in shaping these competencies.

- The difference between social and emotional development as an issue to which schools might respond or seek resourcing. Social and emotional learning for which schools might be held accountable is important to consider here.

- The instruments that might be used as accountability or internal feedback measures describe increases in pro-social behavior and decreases in negative ones. Behaviors, however, do not reveal values or even attitudes that have and should be part of educational programming.

Clearly schools can only contribute so much to the development of social and emotional competencies, and there is a concern about the extent to which teachers could be held responsible for aspects of psychological development that will be influenced by factors beyond school, including parenting styles. There must be caution that teachers do not perform roles analogous to parenting, and care must be taken around potential implications of measuring the efficacy of this role in relation to social and emotional development.

The discussion of affect and teacher-student interpersonal relationships is interesting. Clearly, the *feel* of learning environments and relationships at school can play an important role in learning. Of course, this affective quality presents difficult measurement challenges. Interestingly, many principals will talk about their schools having a good *feel*, which is often an indicator they are happy to own. This discussion raises interesting questions about whether the *feel* of a school could be captured as an indicator. There are also questions about the use of pre-packaged instruments for evaluating school programs. Teachers might feel like they wouldn't be qualified to administer them, and they might be right. Implicit in the instrument and whatever training might be necessary in interpreting the instrument are values and frames that could be measuring something other than what a given school wants to analyze and evaluate.

Health and Wellness Measures: Ferguson and Power (2014), in reviewing the history and effectiveness of health education and promotion programs in Canadian schools, determine that physical and mental health promotions are linked. They test the theory and assumption that the establishment of a healthy lifestyle and the capacity to make informed choices about health will be sustained into adulthood. They find little research to support that early intervention does indeed relate to adult benefits. These authors determine that inadequate measures are being used to determine the effectiveness of programs reviewed in this study.

There is evidence to support the idea that mental health problems often emerge during childhood and adolescence. Suicide is the second leading cause of death for youth ages 10 to 24 years. Unfortunately, most young people do not seek help or receive adequate, timely access to evidence-based mental health services and supports. There is still great stigma placed upon mental health issues. School-based mental health promotion holds the promise of reducing short- and long-term distress to individuals, in addition to reduced costs to society. Ferguson and Power

(2014) suggest that a more consistent, comprehensive approach is necessary when measuring the impacts of current health and Mental Health programs being implemented in schools.

These authors make a strong case for a comprehensive school health approach (Ferguson & Power, 2014). All school relationships are central when establishing safe social and physical school environments. Policy and community partnerships should be focused on the broad outcomes of a *healthy life*. School health is about establishing a school culture where *everyone* feels safe and respected, and about rigorously examining the school culture on a consistent basis and addressing areas of need without hesitation.

Ferguson and Power (2014) acknowledge that measures used to assess current programs have been primarily tied to academic outcomes and school engagement. Little evidence currently supports that these programs actually translate into healthy adult lifestyles. Nevertheless, the authors have excellent suggestions for next steps. They suggest that Resiliency Programs could be a key component in improving Mental Health in students. However, they note that measures of "resiliency" (p. 13) have not been used when assessing current programs. It is critical in this context to see mental health interventions as means to improve student performance as defined by the neo-liberal agenda. This action, in my view, would be akin to supporting efforts to do the wrong thing better (Sahlberg, 2014).

Resiliency can be a contested concept, and some educators in conversations with me have defined it as learning to put up with the way things are; however, the authors cited here see resiliency as a promising measure for assessing students' mental health and define it as the ability to recover readily from illness, depression, adversity, or the like. Their definition equates resiliency more commonly with buoyancy. For our work at JP, adaptive capacity includes a notion of resiliency but is always coupled with innovation when referring to adaptive capacity in

eco-systems. In many ways, we agree with those who argued against a more status quo definition of resiliency. We agree that any definition of resiliency must include an acknowledgment that the system must be redefined and reimagined, and not simply put up with.

Creativity Measures: Upitis (2014) shares a model of creativity comprised of inquisitiveness, persistence, imagination, collaboration and discipline, which shows how creativity links to academic performance. This paper presents a rationale and a useful measurement instrument, the Creativity Wheel developed by Lucas, Claxton, and Spencer (Upitis, 2014; Lucas et al., 2012). Upitis (2014**)** suggests that evidence supports that creative pursuits help students grow intellectually, emotionally, physically, socially, and spiritually. Creative explorations give students experience with situations where there is no known answer; there are multiple solutions; where the tension of ambiguity is fostered; and where imagination is honoured over rote knowledge.

Upitis (2014) links creativity to health and the economy. We live in an era when problem-solving is increasingly valued in the workplace. As I write this thesis, our claim at Jasper Place is that we believe creativity can be sponsored and that it is important to focus less on the creative potential of individual students and more on the conditions necessary for creativity to flourish. The measurement tool suggested by Upitis (2014) is therefore about more than creativity and links strongly to work on resilience in adolescence, life pathways, and work on emotional intelligence. This tool, or adapted versions of it, could provide powerful ways to engage students in conversations about their learning, and engage teachers in professional learning conversations about their teaching and student engagement. Such tools would help assess where specific students are in their life journeys and developmental pathways.

Citizenship Measures: Sears (2014) provides an extensive literature review and a sound case that current Canadian approaches to teaching citizenship need to morph dramatically. He argues that educators must change from teaching "citizenship" as a discipline and begin to identify it as a "social status and practice" (p. 8). Sears (2014) draws attention to the key question of how attention to citizenship education contributes to the development of a fully-educated person able to lead a productive and prosperous life. I believe we need to clearly define the concept of citizenship and reach an agreement that knowledge is not the only important outcome for civic education. Students should be supported to develop their abilities and disposition to act in ways that are consistent with democratic values.

A range of philosophical beliefs exists about what constitutes citizenship education. Sears (2014) claims that, although many countries address these issues, Canada seem to be lagging. One challenge of measuring progress toward effective citizenship has been a lack of coherence about citizenship education and subsequently a lack of clear and measurable goals.

Although Sears presents many important aspects of citizenship education, he also leaves room for further work. For example, Sears (2014) believes civic education begins at home but does delve into the ways schools are addressing inequality among their student population. There is an acknowledgment of the importance of embedding citizenship education in many aspects of education, specifically literacy (reading, writing, speaking, and listening). However, although Sears (2014) suggests redefining citizenship education, he does not address the concepts of belonging, duty, and responsibility to one's community, co-creation of communities, voice, and civic engagement. Sears (2014) brushes against these aspects of citizenship when describing community service learning and volunteerism, but there is room for more study. Sears also expresses an appreciation for the measurable outcomes suggested for community service and

volunteerism—open mindedness, social trust, and a commitment to a broad common good. However, the measurements he suggests focus on the political competency of students. It would be useful to see some measurements focused on a student's ability to understand power dynamics and cultural competencies. The civic engagement profiles identified are useful. But simply measuring this on an individual level might not necessarily yield the desired results.

Broader Measures of School Success in a VUCA World

Considering broader measures for school success to build public assurance poses challenges and provocations. Adopting an empathetic stance toward the complexity and diversity of students in our schools necessitates the need to nurture relationships and community (Couture, 2012). Navigating these competing needs compels us to consider how we avoid measuring criteria as performance indicators, nurture student's individual capabilities, and develop resilient individuals and communities (Couture, 2012). How do we develop public consensus regarding the desired purposes of school? We are challenged to stop seeing students as the object of schooling and start seeing them as co-creators. We also need to stop seeing education as a form of social engineering driven by the instrumentalist impulses of command and control (Couture, 2012).

It is apparent that communal participation is preferred. All partners, especially students, are crucial in the conversation. Thus education accepts and engages risk (Biesta, 2013). Yet, taking risk out of education is exactly what teachers are increasingly being asked to do. There are increasing demands on teachers to adopt "best practices" in a robotic, mechanistic way. This act implies that educating has "a one size fits all" curriculum and pedagogy that can be applied to any and all students. Such a business model does not account for human, cultural, or

demographic differences. Teachers need to accept that the outcomes of education are neither guaranteed nor secure (Biesta, 2013).

While the domain papers commissioned by the People for Education offer insight and suggestions into what we should be measuring in schools in order to build public assurance in a VUCA world, the caution remains that we do not enter into an extended and attenuated version of what some have called an "accountability arms race," where schools, districts, and ministries of education simply add on to an already burdened set of expectations for reporting purposes. Instead, we need to move beyond looking at the individual and school system performance and begin to establish measures that identify the preferred characteristics that contemporary schools must have in order to meet an increasingly diverse set of needs and demands (Couture, 2013).

Summary

As this chapter explored, while current accountability regimes offer an incomplete snapshot of the complex work of schools, promising work is emerging to engage broader measures of school success. Given the highly relational nature of teaching and learning, these measures (for example, well-being, citizenship, creativity) require more sophisticated and nuanced approaches to gathering information about schools as eco-systems in a VUCA world. The following chapter will expand the concept of adaptive capacity and present a frame for broader measures of school success.

Chapter 3: Schools as Eco-Systems: Building Adaptive Capacity

In this chapter, I will define the concept of adaptive capacity, especially as we have used it within our work at Jasper Place High School. We chose the concept *adaptive capacity* (Boal & Schultz, 2007) because, to us, it represents a broader way to share our story with our community and to re-envision a school that engages the needs of more students than those we conventionally saw to be not fitting in. We hope to see our work as being proactive about change—being in front of the curve of our VUCA world (Berliner, 2009).

As Hargreaves and Fink (2004) suggest, considering schools as eco-systems offers a promising approach to educational change. This ecological approach frees us to view change and reform as pedagogically driven as opposed to standards driven (Keni, 2002). The impetus to collaborate emerges from a concern for mutual advantage as communities of learners engage and commit to constructing knowledge about educational change across boundaries of specific spheres of expertise (Keni, 2002).

Several authors have explored the merits of the ecological approach to school development. Keni (2002) claims that ecological thinking across borders has the underlying principles of self-organization, reflexivity, circular causality, and relationships. Her approach would see insiders interacting within the system to bring about necessary reforms. Keni (2002) further suggests that top-down and bottom-up approaches are based on linear thinking that simplistically implies cause-and-effect and power-and-control. An ecological view suggests a non-linear approach with interaction as the main principle.

Another perspective on ecological models of change theory comes from Berkes et al. (1998), who claim that traditional ecological knowledge systems (schools) are compatible with the emerging view of eco-systems as unpredictable, non-linear, and full of surprises (p. 409).

These authors view the maintenance of ecological processes essential to promoting institutional change (Berkes, et al., 1998, 2002). All schools understand unpredictable events and many have developed excellent systems to anticipate and support unforeseeable events.

Finally, Fazey, et al. (2007) state that the ability of individuals and societies to adapt to changing conditions and appropriately align their behaviors will be of greater importance as the world responds to vast global changes in technology, economics, social conditions, and the environment (p. 375). Individuals will need to develop their abilities to adapt and align their behaviors to adjust to changing environments and to promote institutional change (Fazey, et al., 2007).

A growing body of recent literature suggests that we should measure the adaptive capacity of eco-systems to determine how resilient and innovative they are in a VUCA world (Berliner, 2009; Sussman, 2004). Developing frameworks and instruments to determine how responsive institutions are to changing circumstances could be an effective way to measure a school's improved performance, relevance, and impact (Sussman, 2004). Organizations focused on developing adaptive capacity are responsive to what is happening outside their own boundaries, have an environment where feedback is imperative, and stimulate learning in all aspects of the system (Folke et al. 2003). Schools responsive to the ever-increasing demands placed on them by parents and society in general are well-versed in this type of non-linear thinking and operation. However, school leaders need to be more assertive and proactive in the measurement, documentation, and reporting of these attributes and abilities.

Making Meaning of Adaptive Capacity

Folke et al. (2003) explain that, although some organizations feel threatened by new circumstances, organizations with high adaptive capacity view turbulence as a challenge and opportunity for renewal and innovation. For Folke et al., adaptive capacity is the ability to respond to and initiate change. Often this type of change will require an organization to seek external partners and initiate relationships that cross their typical boundaries. Folke et al. (2003) therefore describe adaptive organizations as possessing four key qualities: (1) an external focus, (2) network connectedness, (3) inquisitiveness, and (4) innovation.

In Alberta, schools have had difficulty building and sustaining effective networks. This difficulty often takes place through no fault of their own, as a response to jurisdictional leaders and government policies dictating that schools exist in isolation. The termination of the Alberta Initiative for School Improvement (AISI) funds is a recent example of this type of control. During AISI, many schools flourished within innovative networks committed to action research. Network projects had elements of inquisitiveness and innovation as schools conducted on-site research to improve student learning. Although AISI funds were discontinued, many Alberta schools had by then developed cultures of innovation and reflexivity. Fortunately, in this sense, it is difficult to turn back the clock and many schools continue to creatively find ways to do the work under the radar.

Schools have often needed partnerships with external stakeholders, but in many instances such relationships have been poorly executed. Fostering relationships with external partners is an area in which schools need assistance and further sustained effort and insight. Significant resources are available when schools pursue activities of community building. It is possible that

school personnel need to reach out and begin to avail themselves of these resources to build or enhance their adaptive capacity.

Berkes and Folke (1998) build on resilience theory to describe adaptive capacity. The guiding principles in this definition consist of designing systems that flow, enable the development and use of local knowledge, promote self-organization, and develop values consistent with resilient and sustainable social-ecological systems. They see resilience as the capacity of a system to absorb disturbances and to bridge the divide between social research and ecological research.

Schools are poised for this approach to transformation. A wealth of knowledge and expertise resides within and amongst schools (Schneider and Somers, 2006). The challenge is to trust and leverage local knowledge for effective self-organization (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007). Schools embody their values but have done little work to develop processes and protocols to measure or communicate their values with the greater public. School leaders lament being ranked on narrow accountability measures, but few have established alternative ways of telling their stories.

Building on the existing definitions and literature, Gupta, et al. (2010) define adaptive capacity as the inherent characteristics of institutions that empower social actors to respond to short and long-term impacts either through planned measures or through allowing and encouraging creative responses from society, both ex ante and ex post. It encompasses:

- The characteristics of institutions (formal and informal; rules, norms and beliefs) that enable society (individuals, organizations, and networks) to cope with change; and,
- The degree to which such institutions allow and encourage actors to change these institutions to cope with change.

Adopting this definition of adaptive capacity implies that institutions should allow actors to learn from new insights and experiences to flexibly and creatively manage the expected and the unexpected, while maintaining a degree of identity.

Although some organizations feel threatened or rendered powerless by new circumstances and struggle to accommodate a changing landscape, others experience agitation as a challenge, an opportunity to rethink what they do and how they do it. Moreover, the process itself helps them realize that their discomfort with perturbation may actually be a long-term asset, making them stronger, resilient, and higher performing. This ability to question the status quo is evidence of adaptive capacity: the skill to initiate making adjustments for improved performance, relevance, and impact. Fundamentally, it is the ability to respond to and instigate change in the midst of volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity (VUCA) that adaptive capacity speaks to. This frame of leading change in a VUCA world is one that Berliner (2009) has offered as a promising approach to understanding our ethical imperative as leaders in the midst of growing inequity and instability.

The importance of developing the aptitude for change grows as organizations appreciate the breadth, complexity, and dynamism of their organizational ambitions and operating environments. As used here, adaptive capacity includes the ability to generate or initiate change - challenging the organization's external circumstances. This level of change may require the organization to forge relationships that extend beyond its organizational borders.

Schools that develop a high degree of adaptive capacity in a VUCA world will not wait for initiatives or programs to appear from the outside. They take initiative to evaluate the needs of the students they serve and develop programs and interventions that address those needs. They typically embrace a culture of risk-taking and understand that failure is an important component

of innovative practice (Senge, 2014). Small incubator, pilot innovations are most effective in these schools. These schools foster external relationships to assist in the development and execution of innovative plans (Breakspear, 2016).

Building Adaptive Capacity within Organizations in a VUCA World

Synthesizing general concepts such as adaptive capacity into organizational practice is a challenge; although, in this case, the following four qualities capture the essence of adaptive organizations: an external focus, network connectedness, inquisitiveness, and innovation. Folke, et al. (2002) propose four principles for building an organization's adaptive capacity: (1) learning to live with uncertainty and change, (2) nurturing diversity for reorganization and renewal, (3) combining different types of knowledge for learning, and (4) creating opportunities for self-organization. Folke, et al., (2002) expand this definition of adaptive learning systems. They view adaptive learning as a method for capturing the feedback component of learning. Folke, et al., (2002) claim that adaptive organizations must address where *truth* resides and must have a mechanism where truth statements regarding reality may be constructed and modified.

A feedback component to school success implies receiving input and feedback from all interested stakeholders. For this feedback to be meaningful, it must include more than *narrow* surveys where leaders are often left wondering "Why?" Focus groups and qualitative data could assist in garnering richer information (Lingard, et al., 2015).

The insight that we need to decide where truth resides is a poignant reminder to school leaders working in a VUCA environment. It is imperative that we hear all voices in the discussion, especially students marginalized in our school communities. Schools in Alberta need to address issues of growing inequity. From my multitude of conversations with other school

leaders, I am confident that we are well aware of who is not succeeding and why, but we seem ill-equipped or creative enough to respond to these ever growing needs of inequity and marginalization that characterize this province (Couture, 2015; Murgatroyd, 2015; and, Lingard, et al., 2015)

Gupta, et al. (2010) determine six dimensions of adaptive capacity that institutions could use as assessment categories: (1) the involvement of a variety of perspectives, actors, and solutions; (2) social actors enabled to continuously learn and improve their institutions; (3) permission and motivation for social actors to adjust their behaviour; (4) the ability to mobilize leadership qualities, (5) the ability to mobilize resources for implementing adaptation measures; and, (6) the enhancement of principles of fair governance.

These categories provide an excellent structure for how we might begin to measure school success more effectively in an ecological frame. The challenge will be how to effectively capture indicators and evidence in the six dimensions. Processes and protocols to solicit deep information from multiple actors are required.

Gorley (2012) veers from resilience theory and identifies innovation as the core element of adaptive capacity. She describes adaptive capacity as organizations taking an organic, dynamic approach to proactively preparing for change and anticipating unpredictable forces. She cites a gap in the literature on *proactive* adaptive capacity. She believes institutions must shift from thinking about past or present impacts and should anticipate and vision challenges that have not yet occurred. This view of adaptive capacity has elements of a continuous learning.

Gorley (2012) synthesizes the literature on human and organizational systems and argues that innovation is a core component of adaptive capacity. She does not provide a definition of adaptive capacity but outlines key themes arising from the literature and suggests that the critical

components of adaptive capacity are (1) an entrepreneurial mindset, (2) a future orientation, (3) ideas, creativity, and innovation, (4) effective and healthy systems, (5) communication, (6) the culture of a learning organization, and (7) leadership.

These components of adaptive capacity seem to best align with the school context and provide potential characteristics of adaptive capacity that could be demonstrated and measured in schools. Contemporary principals and teachers in effective schools do possess entrepreneurial mindsets (Uhl-Bien, et al., 2007). These mindsets are not linked to a business model but are better suited to the notion of pioneers exploring best and promising practices to support teaching and learning. As Uhl-Bien, et al. suggest, effective schools are future-thinking and are unafraid to challenge the status quo if it no longer effectively serves goals.

Synthesizing these measurements, adaptive schools should have a culture of risk and innovation. They should be capable of maintaining stability while simultaneously living on the cutting edge of change in our VUCA contexts. Adaptive schools should also have healthy systems where relationships permeate the culture. Communication is key in these schools, and it is accepted that there is no single best method for communication. Relationships and a multitude of proactive communication strategies are necessary for effective communication to exist within the culture. These schools proactively search out those who are not typically heard to plan and respond to the needs of all students and stakeholders.

Schools are continuously learning and school leaders realize that this learning must happen intentionally in the company of peers. These schools are always pushing the learning boundaries to challenge assumptions and promote promising practice (Heifetz & Linsky, 2002). Yet, it would not be helpful to discount teachers or leaders who do not possess qualities that embrace

change. It is probably more accurate to accept that these teachers do not know how to change and are looking for ways to proceed with grace while saving face.

Finally, adaptive schools have effective leadership where trust is the foundational component in the culture where micromanaging and diminishing teacher's professional autonomy and the multiplicity of student identities have no place. No longer is a leader at the top of the food chain. Instead, highly-functioning schools have cultures where the leadership has been distributed to every member of the learning community (Parsons & Beauchamp, 2012). Systems are in place to shape and promote leadership at all levels of the organization.

Summary

This chapter summarized a body of recent literature written about adaptive capacity and applied it to our work in schools. Interrogating the adaptive capacity of a school might provide an excellent structure for how we might begin to measure school success more effectively in an ecological frame. Using the frame of adaptive capacity suggests a promising way to tell the complex story of a school's success.

Chapter 4: Equity as a Pathway to Student Engagement

Central to our work at Jasper Place High School is the imperative that we begin to think of students as more than products or subjects of change initiatives. In recent years, our staff has become increasingly concerned about expectations that we intensify efforts to improve student engagement as measured by indicators identified in a nationally circulated instrument called *Tell Them From Me* (2013). This chapter explores efforts of our staff and school community around the questions, "How do we reconcile a simplistic focus on student engagement with the reality that 1 in 7 students in Alberta schools are living in poverty?" and, "How do we construct intentional strategies to enhance student engagement given the growing rates of psychosocial dislocation?"

A key policy driver in the Alberta government's *Inspiring Education: A dialogue with Albertans* (Alberta Education, 2010) agenda was the focus on the ephemeral promise of enhancing student engagement as a means of transforming Alberta's basic education system. Yet, four years later student engagement remains a highly-contested policy terrain and in many respects has been subjected to much of the same scrutiny and criticism that accompanies the ambitious goal of redesigning Alberta's curriculum and assessment programs and processes. This chapter will use the work of Biesta (2013), Parsons and Taylor (2011), McMahon and Zyngier (2009), and McMahon and Portelli (2004) to explore the tensions between these concepts of student engagement and how they are not necessarily irreconcilable with one another. As a conclusion, a nascent set of strategies being developed by one high school research team is offered as a way to bridge these apparent different concepts of student engagement.

Threaded throughout this chapter is the central tenet that the focus on student engagement as a policy driver offers a strategically important opportunity for advancing educational reform in

Alberta that is shared by other forward-thinking reformers, such as People for Education in Ontario (People for Education, 2013). In the case of the Ontario initiative, a community of activists and researchers is working in consort to offer alternatives to decades-old accountability measures that fail to address the growing complexity and diversity of school-communities. Meanwhile, here in Alberta, as proponents of *Inspiring Education* have argued, enhancing student engagement and accounting for it as an indicator of school performance reporting will act as a policy fulcrum for leveraging improvement in student learning to achieve the aspirational goals of 21st century skills development (Willms, Friesen, & Milton, 2009).

Examining these promises of transforming basic education through a focus on student engagement, Kent Den Heyer (University of Alberta), at a May 2014 symposium hosted by the Alberta Teachers' Association, raised important questions about the efforts to ramp up student performance on learning outcomes that have recalibrated around a neo-liberal view of a future where efficiency, productivity, and instrumentalism are the focuses of reform. Drawing on the work of Biesta (2010), Den Heyer (2013) critiqued "learnification" as the transformation driver that inscribed "learning" and "learners" as objects of surveillance and control. He asked whether the future of education reform in Alberta is simply going to become "more of the same [but using a different language] in the name of change" (Den Heyer, 2013, as cited in Alberta Teachers' Association, 2015b, p. 27). In reviewing the promises of enhanced student engagement and student performance, he suggested that Alberta was experiencing system confusion, policy amnesia, and political tourism, infused by an explicit political lack of trust in educational professionals and the attempt to denude the profession of its historical role in determining the process by which students learn.

Further, focusing on 21st century skills was a way of making a stronger connection between education and the needs of the economy—reducing education to the role of economic servant. Again, inspired by Biesta and Safstrom (2011), Den Heyer (2013) wondered "what was educational about education" (Biesta & Safstrom, 2011, p. 544) in such a conversation, noting the need for socialization, engagement, discovery, exploration and understanding as equal to the need for academic mastery, skill and competence. The implicit challenge to schools implied by a focus on a certain kind of curriculum and efforts to enhance student engagement was clear: "[Curriculum making] is a mechanism or tool deployed to manage the political, professional, and public fields around schooling, more often than not designed to mute rather than amplify calls for educational reform and change" (Den Heyer, 2013, p. 33).

In this context, and informed by the provocative critique of "learnification," my analysis argues for ways to move beyond instrumental and individualistic measures of student engagement. Beginning with a survey of the available literature, this chapter builds on the work of leading international researchers to offer strategies to address the often-hidden and systemic obstacles for student growth in terms of their psychosocial development (for example, racism, poverty, community, and family characteristics) through networks of youth leadership groups including cross-jurisdictional, provincial, and international partnerships.

The Alberta Student Engagement Context: Engaging Questions and Questioning Engagement

In 2013 a new Ministerial Order for Education was passed in Alberta (Alberta Education, 2013). The order, titled *Ministerial Order on Student Learning: Inspiring Action* (2013), proposed that the Alberta Education system would be committed to "inspiring all Albertan students to reach success and fulfillment, and reach their full potential by developing the

competencies of Engaged Thinkers and Ethical Citizens with an Entrepreneurial spirit" (p. 1).

This dovetailed with Alberta Education's *Inspiring Education* report (2010), which described three key qualities that students should develop through schooling:

- "Engaged Thinker: who thinks critically and makes discoveries; who uses technology to learn, innovate, communicate, and discover; who works with multiple perspectives and disciplines to identify problems and find the best solutions; who communicates these ideas to others; and who, as a life-long learner, adapts to change with an attitude of optimism and hope for the future.

- Ethical Citizen: who builds relationships based on humility, fairness and open-mindedness; who demonstrates respect, empathy and compassion; and who through teamwork, collaboration and communication contributes fully to the community and the world.

- Entrepreneurial Spirit: who creates opportunities and achieves goals through hard work, perseverance and discipline; who strives for excellence and earns success; who explores ideas and challenges the status quo; who is competitive, adaptable and resilient; and who has the confidence to take risks and make bold decisions in the face of adversity" (Alberta Education, 2010, pp. 5-6).

In addition to this new ethos for citizenship education in Alberta, an invitation was extended to students to become engaged in an initiative called *Speak Out: Student Engagement Initiative* (Alberta Education, 2008). This engagement was part of Alberta's Student Engagement Initiative, created to support Alberta youth in sharing education ideas and experiences with each other and with the Ministry. Alberta Education defines student engagement as a process of active collaboration with students in ways that best support their needs, goals, and learning preferences.

Speak Out: Student Engagement Initiative worked to provide students with opportunities to be leaders of change in their schools and communities (Alberta Education, 2008). Central to the discussion and ministerial order was the term *engagement*.

By these proposed policy shifts, Alberta Education was attempting to foster the aspirations of students who want to participate as democratic citizens in their school communities and the community at large, and to meaningfully engage students in their learning and school life. However, current approaches like *Speak Out* often make students the objects rather than subjects of reform efforts that aim to further control their school existence and to appropriate their voices. In this context, according to some observers, students become token participants in initiatives that place them as pawns in the discussions pertinent to school reform. Engagement is often narrowly defined and tools used to measure engagement are suspect at best (Couture & Murgatroyd, 2013).

Therefore, how might we better understand Alberta's foray into the highly-contested discussion spaces of student engagement? In recent times, attempts to enhance student involvement in the discussion about their education have challenged the notion that education is something that happens to people (Bahou, 2011). According to Mullen (2010), school must be more than simply resource management. Instead, school must prepare students for more than narrow academic targets or job skills required in the marketplace; "There is global recognition that the role of school is transforming. All partners, including students are vital to the conversation. Many reforms are aimed at graduating more students as literate, numerate, productive citizens" (McMahon, 2013, p. 17). Given this context, it is imperative that we attend to the meanings of democracy, the purposes of education, and that we ask more frequently: education according to whom and for whom? The first step in this process is to recognize that student engagement has multiple definitions and approaches. These are outlined in the following

section, with particular attention to the kinds of approach that correspond to current Alberta initiatives.

Defining Student Engagement: Four Contested Spaces

The concept of student engagement has developed over the past forty years. There is extensive literature on the subject and a general consensus that an *engaged* student will experience enhanced learning and achievement. Numerous theorists and education researchers have noted the ambiguity associated with the term *student engagement* (Harris, 2008; Parsons & Taylor, 2011; Chapman, 2003). The term heralds a contested space because there is much debate and disagreement about what counts as student engagement and how to measure it. As McMahon and Portelli (2004) suggest, "the term is used in a variety of ways, which more accurately correspond to varying, competing ideologies" (p. 61). Although the literature consistently refers to a central matter that student engagement does not enjoy a common definition nor is there a common or shared understanding about what it is, we know it when we see it (Newmann, 1993). Engagement and motivation are often used synonymously.

There has been an evolution of how the term has been incorporated into educational reform, including here in Alberta (Parsons & Taylor, 2011). Research has revealed correlations between non-cognitive skills (motivation, interest, curiosity, responsibility, determination, perseverance, attitude, work habits, self-regulation, social skills, etc.) and cognitive learning results (improved academic performance, test score, information recall, skill acquisition, etc.). The student engagement concept is at the forefront of discussions about educational priorities that address the intellectual, behavioral, physical, and social factors that either enhance or undermine learning for students (Schmieder, 1973).

In Alberta and in OECD countries, there has been a shift from understanding student engagement as a means for improving achievement and attendance to examining student engagement as a means of improving a student's ability to learn, which has moved from a place of being a response to negative behaviors to a place where its intent is to help disadvantaged, disengaged students as a preferred, proactive strategy to create positive, learning environments (Parsons & Taylor, 2011). Although the historical progression of the way in which this term is used is interesting, the philosophical, worldview positioning of the term is of greater significance. With this in mind, a review of four concepts of student engagement follows. These are not fixed or rigid categories, but fields of coherent approaches that offer fundamentally distinct epistemological assumptions regarding the nature of the learner and learning, and consequent strategies for determining student growth and learning.

Contested Space 1: Current Instrumental Individual

Instrumental Engagement emerged as a technical approach that was grounded in an external, objectivist world-view (Zyngier, 2008). This discourse carries a deficit view that a student's background or socioeconomic status (SES) plays largely into their engagement with schoolwork. Teachers played an important role in this definition of engagement. There was an assumption that, if teachers employed effective pedagogical experiences for students, there would be increased engagement and improved achievement.

Research on instrumental student engagement was focused on students who were *at risk* of not succeeding or *dropping out* of school. A vast body of research was conducted to learn more about disengaged learners, or so-called "early leavers." The phenomenon was examined through the lens of disengagement, because the impacts of students not completing school had negative

societal repercussions (Willms, 2003). Disengaged students were described as bored or disinterested in learning. They commonly exhibited non-participatory and negative behavioral traits, and were generally estranged from their schools (Harris, 2008). Measures employed to ascertain student engagement were primarily centered on student "time on task" and participation (Harris, 2008)

Subsequent models of instrumental engagement investigated the behavioral dimensions of engagement. These were still one-dimensional approaches to the phenomenon (Harris, 2008). There was a shift from an emphasis of time-on-task to a more compliance-based definition of student engagement. Nystrand and Gamoran (1991) distinguished two general kinds of student engagement: (1) procedural concerned classroom rules and regulations and (2) substantive involved sustained commitment to the content and issues of academic study. Student engagement was measured primarily by attendance, the willingness to participate in routine school activities or to follow teacher directions in class, and submission of required work. The most common way student engagement was measured was by students' self-reporting (Chapman, 2003). As Parsons and Taylor (2011) report, some studies included teachers using rating scales to assess student participation in a task or compliance with classroom expectations.

McMahon and Portelli (2004) claimed that engagement, interpreted in a hierarchical, narrow, or limited way, was almost exclusively identified with academic achievement or a process identifiable by behavioral traits or observable psychological dispositions. This framework included attempts to offer abstract conceptualizations of engagement meant to apply to all settings irrespective of differences in context or need. These conceptualizations, in turn, led to a linear or a simple cause-effect characterization of student engagement. Moreover, the role of

student involvement in the creation of meaningful engagement was not considered, because the full responsibility for determining curriculum rested on the teacher (McMahon & Portelli, 2004).

Contested Space 2: Instrumental Collectivist

Beginning in the early 2000s, Doug Willms developed a slightly different construct for defining student engagement in his work for the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). He developed the notion of "belonging" as important to student engagement. He described student engagement as the degree to which students identified with and valued school outcomes and participated in extracurricular activities (Parsons & Taylor, 2011, p. 17). Willms (2003) theorized that student engagement was a student's disposition towards a variety of engagements – including learning, working with others, and functioning in a social sphere. Willms also identified two measures on PISA that measured student engagement: (1) a student's sense of belonging (whether students felt accepted at school as opposed to feeling lonely or rejected) and (2) student attendance (which Willms considered to be the primary indicator of participation).

In Alberta, this approach was characterized by the *Tell Them From Me* (TTFM) survey, which described the imperative to measure student engagement in an effort to develop life-long learners. The aim was to create competitive "knowledge workers" who were motivated to succeed and work effectively in team settings. The belief was that students in "contemporary times needed to develop a wide range of skills that included curiosity, endurance, perseverance, and problem solving that will allow them to learn throughout their lives" (Parsons & Taylor, 2011, p. 11).

Case Study of Contested Space 2: Alberta's TTFM Assessment System

The TTFM assessment system measured a wide variety of indicators of student engagement and wellness, as well as classroom and school climate that were said to affect learning outcomes. The TTFM surveys were administered annually in many Canadian schools to students aged 10 to 18. Provincially, the TTFM survey was used as a measure to sort and rank schools. The granular questions that determined student engagement fell into four categories: (1) social engagement, (2) a sense of belonging, (3) academic engagement, and (4) intellectual engagement (Willms, Friesen, & Milton, 2009).

Social Engagement: Participation in Sports and School Clubs: Questions asked students how often they did the following during the past month: (1) played sports with an instructor at school, other than in a gym class; (2) took part in art, drama, or music groups or participated in school clubs (e. g., a science, math or chess club); or, (3) were members of a school committee, such as student council or the yearbook committee.

Sense of Belonging: Questions asked students whether they felt accepted at school by their peers and felt that school was a place where they belong.

Academic Engagement: The construct of academic engagement was described as still evolving. In its development thus far, it was based on three aspects of attendance: (1) the frequency during the previous month that students' skipped classes; (2) missed days at school without a reason; or, (3) arrived late for school or classes.

Intellectual Engagement: The construct of intellectual engagement centered around statements pertaining to the students' enjoyment, interest, and motivation to do well in their

language arts and mathematics classes, as well as the extent to which they see these classes as relevant to their everyday life (Willms, Friesen, & Milton, 2009).

Contested Space 3: Individual Agency through Subjectification

Social Constructivism focused on Individual Student Engagement was anchored in a conservative worldview that explored more student-centered approaches to influence and garner student engagement. This view required teachers to employ more active learning in the classroom, where students could be self-directed, reflective on their learning, and employ goal-setting strategies to succeed. Here both socioeconomic status and an individual's personal characteristics influenced outcomes for the learner (McMahon & Zyngier, 2009; McMahon & Portelli, 2004; and McMahon, 2013).

Skinner and Belmont (1993) described a two-dimensional framework to define student engagement: behavioral and emotional. Behavioral engagement encompassed students' effort, persistence, participation, and compliance with school structures. Cognitive engagement was a matter of students' will—how students felt about themselves and their work, their skills, and the strategies they employed to master their work. Teachers described the student who employed consistent effort but was unable effectively to demonstrate their learning. The student might have been behaviorally engaged but not cognitively engaged. "On-task" behavior did not necessarily equate to learning. It is important to note that effort was involved in "both behavioral and cognitive definitions of engagement. In this sense, cognitive engagement referred to the quality of students' engagement whereas sheer effort referred to the quantity of their engagement in the class" (Skinner & Belmont, 1993, p. 572).

Dunleavy (2008) expanded the two-dimensional framework that included the terms "social engagement," referring to participation in the life of the school, and "academic engagement," participation in the requirements for school success. Dunleavy then added a third dimension, "intellectual engagement." Intellectual engagement measured students' psychological and cognitive investment in learning, and provided a broader framework for understanding the role that student engagement could play in both raising the bar and closing the gap (Dunleavy, 2008).

Each of these dimensions—social, academic, and intellectual—framed the conditions and outcomes of engagement differently; and, when considered together, they offered distinctly different perspectives in their stance to students. In many ways, however, the concepts were also complementary (Dunleavy, 2008). Portelli (2004) described this concept of engagement as ''liberal'' or ''student oriented'' and claimed that "it broadened the meaning of engagement beyond traditional notions of the academic and focused on the students' strengths" (p. 65). Portelli's work expanded a deficit model, which maintained that ''the student who fails in school did so because of internal deficits or deficiencies'' (Valencia, 1997, p. 2). Although still connecting engagement with behavioral and emotional dispositions, Smith, et al. (1998) accepted ''the premise that the purpose of schooling was broader than individual academic achievement but included a constellation of learning experiences—intellectual, kinesthetic, artistic, social, personal and vocational'' (p. 33).

However, this work failed to address fundamental questions of engagement relating to the purposes of engagement, and the issue of possible substantive or evaluative differences among types of engagement. This concept still had some major problems. These interpretations of student engagement questioned the purpose of engagement or the implicit assumption that the purpose of education was to preserve the existing social order. In most instances, the treatment

of engagement focused exclusively or primarily on procedural matters, such as teaching strategies or styles of teaching or attitudes teachers ought to adopt to enhance engagement.

Contested Space 4: Collective Critical Transformative

Critical Transformative engagement saw student engagement as rethinking a student's individual exploration of interests and experiences in more communal and social terms for the creation of a just, democratic society, not just advancement of the individual (McMahon & Zyngier, 2009). If students saw purpose to learning in their own lives they were more likely to do the work. This notion of *relevance* in learning took on a deep meaning in this type of engagement. Students needed schools where they felt safe, listened to, respected, and known (McMahon & Zyngier, 2009). The notion of democracy that informed this "position was based on participatory democracy as a way of life. In short, democracy was conceived as an ongoing reconstructive process associated with equity, community, creativity and taking difference seriously" (McMahon & Portelli, 2004, p. 40).

Levin (2000) claimed that students needed to be placed at the center of educational reform instead of being the objects of reform. Reforms would be more successful if students were more involved and meaningfully engaged in their school experiences. He went on to claim that the conceptual basis for thinking about student engagement had been quite limited. Change required participation from all involved in schooling, including students and teachers. Students have unique perspectives.

Finally, student engagement in a critical transformative sense qualitatively differed from the concepts identified earlier. This notion of engagement included both a procedural and a substantive aspect. Engagement was not viewed simply as a matter of techniques, strategies, or

behaviors. Engagement was realized in the processes and relationships within which learning for

democratic reconstruction transpired. As a multifaceted phenomenon, engagement was present in

the iterations that emerged as a result of the dialectical processes between teachers, students, and

the differing patterns that evolved from transformational actions and interactions. As enacted,

engagement was generated through the interactions of students and teachers, in a shared space,

for the purpose of democratic reconstruction, through which personal transformation took place

(McMahon, & Portelli, 2004).

McMahon and Zyngier (2009) also stated that the assumption that the problem of

engagement lay solely with the student, and that students needed changing, was problematic.

Building on this construct of critical transformative engagement, Fielding (2001) and Bahou

(2011) expanded the discourse on student engagement to include "student voice" (Fielding, 2001,

p. 100; Bahou, 2011, p. 2). They emphasized the importance of using student voice as more than

reinforcing current, accepted school operational structures and policies. Fielding (2001) noted the

value of student engagement with student voice and suggested that

> Many within the student voice movement talk with enthusiasm and passion about
>
> students being able to speak about what matters to them, about the insights and
>
> understandings that many teachers and other adults had not thought young people capable
>
> of to any significant degree (p. 100).

However, students continued to express frustration that they were not included in the

important school discussions that shaped school policy and school culture. In many instances

students were asked their opinion as a perfunctory measure, *after* the adult discussions had taken

place—the decisions had been made and the policies were ready to be implemented. They were

consulted as an afterthought in the process of transformation. The consequences of ignoring

student voices were visible in the disillusion and disengagement of the many youth for whom this was a reality. As Fielding (2001) remarked,

When we stand back and ask questions not only about who is allowed to speak, but to whom their words can legitimately be addressed, what those students are allowed to speak about, what language is encouraged or admissible, then our advocacy has to face up to hard realities that remain unevenly open to either the possibility or the practicalities of change (p. 100).

Fielding (2001) and Mitra (2006) identified the importance of student agency, which they saw as the ability of students to be involved in their own learning and the freedom to speak about motivating factors in the learning. They described student engagement using a four-point framework that fell within a critical transformative paradigm and included: (1) the re-engagement of alienated students to give them a sense of ownership; (2) an identification of school issues and possible solutions; (3) an involvement of students and school personnel, so to adopt an appropriate stance and not shift blame; and (4) the development of positive identities as learners.

Building on Contested Spaces: From an Ego- to Eco-System

Figure 2 summarizes the competing conceptions of student engagement outlined in the preceding discussion. As a heuristic device, the schematic offers a way to identify the underlying theories on a continuum from collectivism to individualist (horizontal axis). The vertical axis differentiates various approaches to system change ranging from transformative (Biesta, 2013) to the ecological (Dunleavy, 2008) to the instrumental or linear (Newmann, 1993).

Figure 2: Student Engagement - Four Contested Spaces

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT—FOUR CONTESTED SPACES

A schematic discursive map of the orientations to student engagement.

Instrumental Collectivist

Concern for disengagement as a loss to the institution and society (Willms)

Instrumental Individual

Focus on interventions to address individual deficits and achieve compliance (Harris, Portelli)

Focusing on the broader democratic purposes of school beyond learning (Levin, McMahon)

Collective Critical Transformative

Building capacity for students to become an agentic self through others (Biesta; Fielding, Mitra, Ruddick)

Individual Agency Through Subjectification

instrumental

ecological

transformative

THEORY OF CHANGE

collectivistic   *individualistic*

VALUES ORIENTATION

The crucial element in this graphic is the central node where the four competing discourses are interrogated and interpolated to address the various societal orientations and investments in the way that the learner and learning is configured in the popular imaginary. As with any typology, this schematic offers a way to bring a degree of coherence to the wide variety of divergent orientations to grappling with student engagement reviewed earlier in this paper.

Assessing the Multiplicities of Student Engagement: An Ecological Approach

In an effort to support clearer goals for the education system in areas beyond literacy and numeracy, and for measuring progress towards goals in social-emotional skills, creativity and innovation, health and citizenship, the People for Education (2013) commissioned a number of research papers to explore new frameworks to measure student success and build greater public assurance in schools. They declared a need to help the general public understand how schools contribute to students' success in domains like social-emotional skills, creativity, health and citizenship, and to have information about the learning environment in a school (People for Education, 2013). Finally, and perhaps most importantly, how do we measure equity?

Summary

My experiences, combined with my critical reading of student engagement, suggest to me that, if schools are to be truly concerned with student engagement, it would be necessary to re-frame and re-position the multiple discourses mapped in Figure 2. As well as taking up an empathetic stance toward the complexity and diversity of our students in our schools, we must also attend to the need to nurture connection and community. Navigating these competing needs poses some challenging questions and provocations. How do we avoid measuring engagement as performance and nurture students' individual capabilities and develop resilient individuals and communities? How do we develop public consensus regarding the desired purposes of school. We need to stop seeing students as *objects* of schooling and start seeing them as co-creators. We also must stop seeing education as a form of social engineering driven by the instrumentalist impulses of command and control.

In terms of attending to the development of individual students, these imperatives demand a certain amount of consideration. There is an imperative to listen to students, to hear their feelings, and understand the paradoxes, mysteries, and complexities of their worlds. An inter-subjective conversation generates knowing and personal relations in the community (Buber, 1965). Conversation is the basis for hermeneutic community. Respect for others requires careful observation. "To respect someone is to look for the springs that feed the pools of their experience" (Isaacs, 1999, p. 110).

In their work on educational reform, Hargreaves and Shirley (2009) urged education leaders and policy makers to ensure that students are recognized as

> Partners in change rather than merely targets of change efforts and services—more involved in their own learning and learning choices, actively consulted about the quality and improvement of teaching, and substantially engaged in the overall governance of the school and its development (p. 59).

Recognizing schools as complex ecologies communal participation is essential. All partners, especially students, are crucial in the conversation. Thus, education accepts a risk (Biesta, 2013). But, taking the risk out of education is exactly what teachers are being asked to do. There are increasing demands on teachers to adopt "best practices" in a robotic, mechanistic way (Berliner, 2009). This push to best practices implies that the act of educating has *a one size fits all* curriculum and pedagogy that can be applied to any and all students. This "business model" does not account for cultural or demographic differences. The outcomes of education can be neither guaranteed nor secure (Biesta, 2013).

Chapter 5: A Methodology for an Ecology of Change through Adaptive Capacity

Chapter 5 will describe the methodology, study design, and protocols used to gather the perspectives of students, teachers, and community members in respect to their views on what defines success for our school. Studies surveyed in Chapter 2,3, and 4 indicate that the accountability environment in which Jasper Place resides has been shaped by a neo-liberal agenda that has values of efficiency and progress at its core. However, Jasper Place worked to infuse the values of equity and student engagement into the conversations with a view to build rich accountabilities to tell the JP story of success. Thus, action research principles guided and framed the protocols for this work, in particular with respect to the formation of the ResponseAbility Lab as a structure for addressing the complexities of this work.

Methodology

As described in Chapter 1, ontologically, I assume that reality for teachers, students, and parents is created and shaped by social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic, and gender-based forces that have been reified over time into social structures that are taken to be natural or real. As noted earlier, I am speaking of the belief that no other choices exist than how we have engaged learning. I also assume that, for all practical purposes, these structures seem real to those who live within them.

As I outlined this thesis, I named these assumptions inappropriate and unprofessional because they did not serve the best interests of either students or schools. It has been difficult for teachers to separate ourselves from the system we have come to know and that inevitably influences the way we live. This view is shared by Sellar (2016), who says that globally

accountability has become the system. However, as our work at Jasper Place High School shows, we believed that we can start to engage changes for all of us. This thesis will story some of those changes.

I wrote this thesis motivated by the following assumptions about my research enterprise.

1) I believe it is possible to both see and critique our reality in collaborative and interactive engagements constructed through language and actions.

2) I believe that individual researchers are able to observe, engage, and create insights about reality that may be shared and understood by others.

3) Although I believe objectivity might exist (for example, in the natural sciences), I believe objective practices in the life-world of a teacher or school leader do not exist. I recognize that my research is both subjective and interpretive. I extend this belief to my critique of student measurements of learning, where what passes as the objective nature of high-stakes examinations is a privileged artifact of a system created to advantage and work to create a certain group and kind of person. Therefore, I dismiss it as valid (as will be revealed in this thesis).

4) Furthermore, I believe the system in which education has for so long existed without interrogation created a reality for students that promotes protection, privilege, and future opportunity for economically powerful groups both in the education system and throughout society. I believe this system is neo-liberal in its orientation and does not promote the kind of education our students need and should expect. I also believe schools can and should be reimagined—a belief that has motivated this current research work.

As this research is based upon an ongoing, site based cycle of inquiry and reflection, my methodology is further grounded in Action Research. The Alberta Teachers' Association's *Action research guide for Alberta teachers* (2000, p. 3) notes that "Action Research is a process of systematic inquiry into a self-identified teaching or learning problem to better understand its complex dynamics and to develop strategies geared towards the problem's improvement" (Hamilton, 1997, p. 3, as cited in ATA, 2000, p. 3). As well, the *Action research guide for Alberta teachers* notes, "Action research is an open-ended, ongoing, cyclical process. The solution one develops to address the initial problem will generate the next problem to be addressed (ATA p. 14). This is the catalyst to continuous professional improvement" (Halsall & Hosack, 1996, p. 16, as cited in ATA, 2000, p. 14). I have utilized this definition of action within the methodology of this study because it offers the richness of what action research is and can be for schools and for teachers.

Specifically, this study is both continuing action research and a reflective case study of one completed part of a larger study. As Halsall and Hosack (1996) note, one problem is completed and another problem (based upon insights gained from the completion of that first problem) is engaged. The initial, completed problem addressed centered upon the everyday work we undertook at our school to build a values framework. As a school, we had engaged and completed this work (this "research problem") prior to the genesis and the writing of this thesis. In other words, I did not know I would write this thesis when we began the work within our school. The thesis itself – although divorced in time from the completion of the original problem – carries on the larger question that grounds my continued action research and contributes to further insights about our school.

Study Design

In the fall of 2014, a pioneer team of researchers and school leaders at Jasper Place High School (JP) were assembled to discuss both the current ways we assess school success and to explore broader ways school success could be measured. This team committed to the values of equity with the intention of creating pathways to student engagement. Committed to being responsive in nature and responsible for every student at JP, this ResponseAbility Lab met to review current research and consider protocols that would assist in building and sustaining JP's adaptive capacity, and to build pathways to student engagement in an equitable school community.

The ResponseAbility Lab team committed to capitalize on current conditions of practice focused on equity, flexibility, and creative curricula to meaningfully engage teachers, students and community members. The team chose to adopt an iterative multilateral approach to measuring the adaptive capacity of the school by developing what will be described as "rich accountabilities." As described in Chapter 2, rich accountabilities are multidirectional, multilateral in character, and designed to guide educational practices and improvement with respect to both performance and equity within schools. Sellar (2015) explains that rich accountabilities provide for a broader spectrum of measuring what schools provide for students to lead them to academic success while also supporting pathways to student engagement.

The team committed to developing protocols to facilitate discussions with multiple stakeholder groups. It decided that a values framework would be established by meeting with focus groups within the school community to reflect deeply on its values; to gather and critically examine information about varied perceptions about the experience of learning and life in the school; and to act in responsive ways. It would move through and past the inertia of *not knowing*

and *not wanting to know* as a way to offer hope and possibility for creating rich accountabilities that sustain the work of schools committed to equity as a path to student engagement.

Critical to this research was the quality and focus of the questions that we used to engage students, staff, and community members in discussion. The initial approach was to hold prototype sessions for the purpose of *problem-posing* and encouraging students to articulate their questions about how they see their learning in relation to the broader societal context. Those questions were subsequently refined to conduct further focus group sessions in the school. To move this work forward, a deeper examination of adaptive capacity by team members informed the protocols for moving the school forward. The ResponseAbility Lab, consisting of the school research team, developed a number of protocols, which are included in the appendices.

Developing the Adaptive Capacity of Schools—A Theoretical Framework

As described in Chapter 2, in Alberta, current narrow forms of accountability based on assessing lists of discrete skills and competencies fail the test of what children and youth require to become successful; and so too will the well-intended but misdirected strategies that take up *student engagement* as an indicator to be measured separately from the contexts of Alberta's diverse communities.

Given the growing complexity of Alberta's school-communities, increasing income disparity, and the persistence of systemic obstacles to learning, today's challenge is not the absence of *learning*, but rather the need to ensure that all children will engage more hopeful futures. If we conceive of the challenge of building pathways to student engagement only in terms of the boundaries inscribed by *learnification*, we will miss a strategic opportunity to create

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the kind of Alberta and Albertans that we need to accommodate an increasingly complex, promising, and volatile world.

Schools function within conflicting cultures of assessment and community building, where they must adhere to standards of academic excellence while at the same time acknowledge that students occupy contexts that require personalization, relationships, and non-traditional skillsets related to areas like knowledge transferability, lateral thinking, and social skills if they are to succeed. To meet multiple sets of expectations for caring for students and providing a vibrant educational experience while addressing problems, school-level leadership must be adaptive in nature, with each unit in the school responding to change with creative solutions based on context while aligning with the organizational vision and values (Squires, 2015; Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009; Owens, 2004). As schools respond to student and stakeholder needs and aspirations, the strength of their adaptive capacity could be what defines their success in both traditional academic fields and traditionally unmeasured areas of importance, such as socialization, community building, and student resilience.

Understanding the adaptive capacity of a school can be a difficult undertaking, which is complicated by the complex eco-systems in which schools are nested in a VUCA world. An ecological view of schools and school systems allows school leaders to take a non-linear approach that has interaction as its main principle (Keni, 2002) and allows for better study of adaptability. Viewed through this lens, each eco-system has a distinct culture that has a unique set of rules of operation and engagement.

Schools function between these systems and are also eco-systems in and of themselves. Those designed using an industrial model of operation function from top-down and bottom-up; and these linear thinking approaches imply cause-and-effect and power-and-control. Such a

model is ill-equipped to address adaptive problems as they arise and allow few spaces for dialogue and diversity. Berkes, et al. (1998) claim that eco-systems are unpredictable, non-linear and full of surprises, mirroring Heifetz and Linsky's (2002) description of adaptive problems and environments. As such, we claim, in our commitment to adaptive capacity, that schools need to be nimble, responsive in nature, and able to absorb and initiate change. Through networks of relationships, schools navigate and facilitate adaptability and resilience.

Schools that demonstrate high levels of adaptive capacity are responsive to what is happening inside and outside their organizational boundaries, and have a culture where feedback is imperative, where learning is stimulated in all aspects of the system (Davidson-Hunt & Berkes, 2003). Principals in such schools must distribute leadership and learning, thereby increasing diversity and flexibility within each community of the school and allowing those communities to find their own best ways of working through problems they might face while aligning broadly with the values and parameters of the school eco-system (Folke et al., 2002). This approach to problem-solving allows both staff and students to develop areas of expertise and address changing contexts while still working toward a common goal. For this reason, adaptive leadership has trust as the central tenet. Leadership and trust in leadership ability at all levels within the school determines both the extent and depth of response to externally imposed requirements (Murgatroyd, 2015).

Study Participants

Study participants included 150 Jasper Place staff members, including all the school's teachers, all support staff, and some custodial staff. Six classes of students were participants in focus group discussions. Each class had approximately 35 students; thus, 210 students

participated in initial focus group sessions. Classes were chosen to represent grades 10, 11, and 12, and also represented all academic levels within the school community. Student classes were chosen to represent programming from International Baccalaureate, Advanced Placement, academic and vocational streams, Career and technology, Special Needs and Fine Arts programs. An additional focus group included participants that represented our First Nations, Metis, and Inuit (FNMI) student, staff and community population. A final student group was comprised of students who had recently graduated from our school and are JP alumni. This group included approximately 24 students who participated in an evening focus group session. Overall, over 240 students participated in these discussions, representing approximately 10% of Jasper Place High School student body.

The ResponseAbility Lab team facilitated three community focus group sessions and 30 community members joined in the discussions. Although we made many attempts to host parent focus groups, this area did not experience great success. Overall, parent participation was extremely low and I chose to follow up with individual parents to solicit feedback and insight into the Values Framework. One parent meeting dedicated to this process was scheduled with the Jasper Place School Parent Council, but less than 10 participants came to the focus group and it was impossible to follow focus group protocol with fidelity.

Research Method

Through research, collaboration, and practical application, the Jasper Place ResponseAbility Lab intended to build an evidence-based case for broader measures of school success. Current research demonstrates that engagement and equity within learning environments directly affect student outcomes (Darling-Hammond, 2000). The team's intent was to add to this

research while also demonstrating that, when schools actively pursue a broader range of goals for success, they experience benefits beyond grades and graduation rates in key areas like student development, citizenship, health, resiliency, and life-preparedness.

The process design allowed work with school stakeholders (staff, students, and community) to determine what an equitable and engaged learning environment should look, feel, and sound like. An overall goal was to make this process scalable to other schools with the hope to broaden their definitions of success, and that other schools will emerge with their own values frameworks and strategic plans for equity and engagement based on local conditions.

The outcomes of this process extend beyond the visible end products outlined above. By demanding new spaces for listening and responding to school constituents, this process broadens the adaptive capacity of each school involved. The acts of conversation, reflection, and revision necessary to achieve broader measures of success become part of each institution's ongoing success story, a measure of their ability to nimbly respond to changing contexts. By engaging students in the work of learning and becoming, this Jasper Place High School process and protocols helped to build our school's ability to be a responsive organism that adapts to and works within changing student, community, and sociopolitical contexts.

Research Aims

As a group, we decided that our aims were to:

1) Identify gaps in existing information about students and schools;

2) Seek richer information that provides more complex and balanced pictures of schooling and its multiple achievements;

3) Support schools, communities, and government to develop methods for sharing knowledge and information during the design, practice and reporting of teaching and learning;

4) Better understand factors that impede schools making a difference for their students and communities; and,

5) Develop the concept of adaptive capacity and response-ability at Jasper Place High School and, perhaps, learn to share what we had learned with other schools.

Action Research Projected Outcomes

As a group, we saw our work as action research, and decided that our project outcomes would be to:

1) Develop and pilot an effective process for defining and measuring broader measures of school success;

2) Use the process to build a values framework and strategic plan for engagement and equity at the pilot school;

3) Share results with key collaborators and build a conversation with other schools and education networks;

4) Measure and track the ways in which engagement with this process affects the school's adaptive capacity;

5) Create a map of ways in which school initiatives support outcomes in strategic plan and affect broader measures of success; and,

6) Collect data that might be used to adapt, reflect, revise, and update school practice.

An Action Research Model for Adaptive Capacity

Systemic and coherent supports for leadership at the school level are essential for sustained improvement strategies to be realized. Leithwood, et al. (2004) suggest that "the chance of any reform improving student learning is remote unless district and school leaders agree with its purpose and appreciate what is required to make it work" (p. 2). In particular, the focus on building the adaptive capacity of the school will require support for enhancing the collaborative professional autonomy of teachers (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012).

In their framework, Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) suggest that the catalyst for building teacher capacity is a sustained focus on three domains of professional capital: human, individual and decisional. A school's adaptive capacity can be enhanced by encouraging the development of individual teachers' professional capital through a commitment to participation in communities of practice. The re-framing of individual supports and professional learning through a focus on collective efficacy is a key element of the ATA's school development program articulated in *A Great School for All— Transforming Education in Alberta Schools*.[2]

A central element of the conceptual frame for building adaptive capacity is the recognition that a school site is part of a complex organic system of relationships that is nested in the community, the province, and the broader sociopolitical milieu. Given this reality, this work was informed by the long and rich tradition of educational action research that flows from the writings of John Dewey. Dewey (1902) believed practitioners should engage in community problem-solving. Action research practices and protocols grant recognition of the inter-connectedness of

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[2] This research monograph outlines the need to support the goals of *Inspiring Action*, including public assurance, through a comprehensive set of strategies that builds leadership capacity at the school level through lateral networks of sustained support. Available at: http://www.teachers.ab.ca/

the relationships between schools as institutions located within a nexus of Alberta's complex web of school jurisdiction authorities and ministry governance.

We adopted action research in ways that recognize the complex ecology of the school as a hub of the community while avoiding the realities of current accountability regimes that limit and inscribe what is defined as school success (O'Brien, 1998; Sellar, 2014). Our work in communities of practice focused on building the capacity of the school to be responsive to the community while avoiding privileging the status quo and taken-for-granted assumptions of what constitutes school success. This study called for an approach to action research that recognized co-emergence as an ongoing characteristic of the work. O'Brien (1998) cites Gilmore, Krantz and Ramirez (1986) when he states that action research

> aims to contribute both to the practical concerns of people in an immediate
>
> problematic situation and to further the goals of social science simultaneously.
>
> There is a dual commitment in action research to study a system and concurrently
>
> to collaborate with members of the system in changing it in what is together
>
> regarded as a desirable direction. Accomplishing this goal requires the active
>
> collaboration of researcher and client, and thus it stresses the importance of co-
>
> learning as a primary aspect of the research process (Para 4).

Action research has a long established footing in Alberta schools, including more than 2500 projects sponsored during the fourteen-year life of the Alberta Initiative for School Improvement (Parsons & Beauchamp, 2012). This study is a concrete example of an application of action research, as proposed by Couture and Murgatroyd (2013) and applied to a systems view of school change is currently underway in Alberta.

Summary

This study examined key factors that influence a school climate to produce an engaged and equitable school. In February 2015, the Jasper Place ResponseAbility Lab researchers invited 110 Jasper Place (JP) teachers and fifty support staff members, six classes of JP students from grades 10–12, a group of JP alumni students, and three JP community groups to reflect on the school's programs and environment, and to develop characteristics and indicators of an *engaged* and *equitable* school. A process plan accompanied by a facilitator's guide was established for every focus group (See appendix C).

The data were sorted and the responses were mapped to discover emergent themes for each stakeholder focus group. The process for exploring and determining themes within the data was done through the old-fashioned cut and paste approach to coding. Themes were tracked and mapped onto a Values Framework that would be described for the school. Follow-up surveys and interviews were conducted with stakeholder focus group participants, and many participants engaged in further focus group discussions to discuss the data and explore new questions that had emerged from the data. The themes were then be mapped onto an adaptive capacity framework to discover pertinent categories. The final revised themes will be reported and discussed in detail in Chapter 6.

Once the Values Framework was developed with the themes, it was shared with staff at a Professional Learning activity. In cross-curricular teams, staff built indicators for the 10 Values. These teams developed indicators that could be used to measure progress in 10 Values pertaining to an equitable school with pathways to student engagement. The indicator documents established by school teams were refined and are included as appendices G–O. The research project timeline and activities are documented and can be located in appendix P.

Study findings will be discussed in Chapter 6 and Chapter 7. Chapter 6 explores how these activities and themes map onto the adaptive capacity, but also how engaging in these activities enhanced the adaptive capacity at Jasper Place. Chapter 7 explores vignettes that highlight findings from engaging in these processes and protocols.

Chapter 6: Equity and Engagement through Adaptive Capacity

Study Findings

The question that drove this work was: "How can a commitment to equity as a path to student engagement contribute to the adaptive capacity of a school?" As the work of this study progressed, it became increasingly apparent that the methodology and design, although well-intentioned and sound, was somewhat inadequate to capture the richness and complexity of the voices of students and teachers. To navigate these complexities, this chapter attempts to make sense of the ecology and multiplicity of our school by drawing on the conceptual framework of rich accountabilities developed by Sellar (2015). The conceptual framework evokes a commitment to (1) reflect on values; (2) gather and critically examine information about varied perceptions about the experience of learning and life in the school; and (3) act in responsive ways through practice and policy (Sellar, 2016). Essentially, this chapter will describe the values revealed through these processes, how these values in turn revealed new information in the learning community, and how this information began to inform practices and policies within the school community. Chapter 7 will contain deeper descriptions and examples of the interplay of values and information leading to practice and policy.

Values Framework—Jasper Place High School

The purpose of building a Values Framework for Jasper Place High School was to create a landscape of meaning that reflected goals and ways of working within the school. Each staff member, team, and student group worked to identify a value or goal that resonated for them over the course of their time at the school and, using this framework, endeavored to implement them. Rather than a prescriptive set of goals to meet, the framework was intended to provide a base

from which individuals could learn about the school community's priorities and become inspired about their own agency within it.

Initial findings from the focus group protocols were sorted, coded, and arranged as a Values Framework. The data were sorted and the responses were mapped to discover emergent themes for each stakeholder focus group. These themes were then mapped onto an adaptive capacity framework to discover pertinent categories. Each value was described as it related to the data and represented the themes drawn from the focus groups conducted with students, staff, and community members.

An important finding from this study was the recognition that themes emerging from all the focus groups were interrelated and did not differ dramatically between the stakeholder groups. The only outlier was the theme "confidence," which emerged repeatedly from the student focus groups but was not present in the themes described by the adult participants. In general, themes showed considerable overlap between staff and student priorities, and provided a cohesive picture of what the school community felt was important in order to both keep education as a focus in school and support students in developing as whole people and citizens of a community.

The attributes of a *Great School for All* at JP, where equitable practices allow pathways to student engagement, are described below. These values are based on focus group data and data from surveys of staff, students, and community members on the purpose of school and ways of creating a more equitable learning environment with pathways to student engagement. The Jasper Place Values Framework includes themes that emerged from focus group data and are accompanied by suggestions of rich accountabilities that might be used to measure progress in the stated value. For each value, staff described rich accountabilities; indicators of success, which include descriptions of staff and student outcomes in the value; measures of school *response-*

ability; and recommendations for *next steps* to pursue as a school community in the work of being an equitable school that was building pathways to student engagement.

This chapter is a synthesis of the values information from the focus studies that served as the basis for the indicators for future work. They are examples of *action research* in progress.

Theme 1: We Are Diversity

This theme represents an understanding and acknowledgement of the complex, diverse staff and student populations at Jasper Place High School. Inherent in this theme is the acceptance that differences should be understood and celebrated. Diversity in the school population and diversity in how students differ as learners was viewed by the focus groups as an asset. Staff and students had long discussions, in some cases debates, and questions arose about how the school currently responded to this value. Participants explored how diversity was celebrated in the school, including the physical space, events acknowledging diversity and whether equity existed in celebrating a variety of programs.

> *Teachers and staff being supportive of the variety of needs that students have, and making that known—we need to let kids know that if they need to learn differently, they can. —Staff member*
>
> *You should learn that no matter what, everyone is equal and we need to experiment with different relationships. —Anonymous student*

Staff felt that rich accountabilities of this value could include students' self-reporting of a sense of belonging and students connecting with at least one staff member because of a shared identity or interest. Staff also indicated that inter-departmental collaboration among teachers would promote teacher commitment to planning for learning that included seeing students in a more holistic way.

Theme 2: We Support Multiple Pathways

Participants acknowledged that many paths could lead to success, and that the school should work to find opportunities to recognize and celebrate all forms of success. There was an understanding by participants, reluctantly by some staff members, that there was a hierarchical "pecking order" in the school. Many participants considered that athletics and academics were at the top and constituted most of the ways we celebrated success in the school. The other differentiator that was identified was the streaming of classes and courses that indicated class structures from honours programming, to classes in a non-academic stream (-2 classes), to special needs classes. It seemed imperative to find multiple pathways for students to pursue their dreams and that student success should be described in broader ways than just academic success. As Blessie Matthews, University of Alberta, reminded teachers in a recent presentation at Jasper Place (February 1, 2016), "in surveying numerous adult populations we discovered that only about two percent of the people claim to be working now in the occupation that they had planned when they were eighteen years old" (Krumboltz, 2010, p. 25).

> *Adults need to be talking about the fact that there's more than one way to do something. Possibilities and process—teachers need to understand the student's process and then work with that build on it, expand it. —Community member*

> *Play up everyone's strengths—equality and advancement for everyone. Remove stigmas around things like the arts, they are just as important or difficult. —Anonymous student*

Rich accountabilities could include the number of events where students would be recognized at all levels for a multiplicity of talents as well as their unique approaches to goals and solutions. Programming options and alternative learning opportunities would be easy to identify as success indicators. Finally, students could self-assess and define success for themselves using school support. Students would see themselves as co-creators of a multiplicity of pathways to

engagement in learning and success in school. Students would feel valued and respected in school regardless of their chosen pathway.

Theme 3: Layered, Equitable Supports—Everyone Has the Support They Need

There was consent by all stakeholders that a multitude of supports were necessary for students, including academic, remedial learning, mental health, and career planning support. The complexity of classrooms in the school and the increasing numbers in classes also demanded layered support for staff so that they could be effective with the students in their charge. Teachers cannot do it all themselves, and the focus group data recognized the number of existing supports already available for staff efforts in the school. There was sensitivity about providing support for students that did not marginalize them further by placing new labels and stigmas on them. Rather than focusing on a community of inclusion, which assumes a *middle,* the data supported the idea of equity for all. Questions that continued to be discussed included: did the school have safe spaces; was the school accessible; did the school offer programming that students want; did the school have supports for students with barriers to accessing school?

> *Students with financial needs could have the chance to get a lunch.* *—Anonymous student*

> *How do we ensure that students who need support get it with grace? —Staff member*

> *All schools should have special programs for the disabled. —Anonymous student*

> *Gender neutral washrooms help us feel safe. —Anonymous student*

> *Such a wide variety of excellent things going on that there is choice for people and that we provide such depth in programming that there is supports/opportunities for community, students and staff to engage in the JP school community. —Staff member*

Indicators that layered, equitable supports were present for staff and students might include student achievement data at the school as revealed by teacher grades in courses. Staff suggested that how students and staff were accessing the existing supports and programs at the school, such as the mental health program and student services, should be tracked. Finally, there was a suggestion to identify the kind of classroom support teachers and students receive and to determine its impact by surveying students or documenting improvements in attendance or grades.

Theme 4: We Build Relationships

Themes showed considerable overlap between staff and student priorities and provided a cohesive picture of what the school community felt was important both to keep education as a focus in the school and to support students in developing as well rounded people and citizens of a community. Both participant groups identified *in-school relationships* as key aspects of teaching and learning effectiveness. Conversations regarding this aspect of the work demanded a re-thinking of the understanding of the validity of assessment. Participants reinforced the idea that outcomes of both performance and assessment were dependent on student and staff relationships to each other, to the space and to teachers, rather than necessarily on the intelligence or learning of the individuals involved.

> *Being there to pick up kids or colleagues when they need support or really ensuring to acknowledge those times—relationships need to be at the centre. —Staff member*

> *Building relationships with students is so important/critical to opening doors for students and helping them build, sometimes restore, confidence and a sense of belonging outside the classroom. —Staff member*

Recommended rich accountabilities ranged from ascertaining the number of relationships students might identify on a "support card" to observing the visible interactions of staff and students. Staff also felt that rich accountabilities might include studying the relationships among staff members to determine the nature of the interactions and the overall health of the staff culture.

Theme 5: Open, Ongoing Communication (A Networked School)

Focus groups felt communication was an issue and that school communication needed to be transparent, open, and ongoing. For efficient, open communication, feedback loops were suggested that included students, staff, and community members. A central location and processes for sharing school news and opportunities was suggested to be available with an up-to-date website that was accessible to all learners. Students felt strongly that they should have opportunities to participate by creating and sharing school news.

> *We need ways that we can update each other so that we all know what is happening in the school and can support programming. —Staff member*

> *JPTV JPTV JPTV!!!!! —Anonymous students*

> *I want to keep my awareness of the many activities fresh when working with students. I need a document to keep available or pin up in my office to remind me and help me make stronger connections with students to their interests. —Staff member*

> *Something I learned today was how to communicate as a way to bring everything together and make visible the great work of our school. I am hoping to set up a community hub tab in the Rebel Report for all staff to be able to contribute to. It can be a holding space for all narratives about how we build relationships for our communities and make meaningful relationships. —Staff member*

Indicators suggested that the school should monitor the centralized places where staff, students, and parents could find information quickly and easily. Staff members felt that, if the school communicated effectively about news, program changes, successes and resources, they would know what was happening in the school on a weekly basis. Staff, students, and community members would indicate whether they were informed of program updates and show evidence that they had processes in place to keep their own updates current. Students would identify that they felt connected and had even participated in communication and updates, and could name key school events and opportunities. Further measures could include attendance at school events. Parents could express how they were more informed about the day-to-day school activities.

Theme 6: Community of Participation and Belonging (Everyone Belongs)

The school aspired to be a community where everyone felt they belonged. All participants felt that the school should promote a sense of belonging and that the school should be a home away from home. Structures should be in place to ensure that all students felt they were cared for and that the school had an ethos of care. A culture of participation and "buying-in" was declared to be important for both staff and students. Engaged staff expressed a sense of frustration that their peers either did not see the merits of participating or actively blocked ideas and initiatives. Trust and relationships should build a culture where everyone has someone and cares for one another.

Conversations, welcoming, acceptance, belonging, TRUST. —Staff member

If students would help each other and everybody felt safe. —Anonymous student

> *Staffs want to see students motivated to learn, participate and "choose" school. Students and staff feel as though they have a place in the school and are accepted. —Anonymous student*

Staff proposed rich accountabilities for this value of participation and belonging that could conceivably be measured by the number of student volunteers in school events; by surveying students to identify how and where they feel they belong in the school; and, perhaps, by asking visitors to the school to describe interactions with students and their sense of the culture of the school community.

Theme 7: We Prepare Students for Life, Not Just Academics

Students and staff indicated the need to ensure opportunities for students to build transferable life skills and knowledge. It was decided that programming should include curricular and co-curricular offerings that help students create healthy, meaningful, resilient pathways to life after high school. The curriculum should be tied to relevant student interests and current social problems, and should also be contextualized for students. Learning life skills and the opportunities available for learning how to make friends should also be included.

> *School should provide an environment to discover what you enjoy doing, learn what you want to be, what skills you need as an adult, how to be a valuable, responsible citizen who has the ability to create change in the world in some regard. —Anonymous student*

It was agreed that students should be able to articulate why they learn the things they do and how this helps them feel prepared for career and life decisions. Students should be able to indicate that they feel confident that school was a place where they learned about academics, relationships, practical aspects about adulthood, careers, and important life choices. Students would know where to find information about programming related to health and wellness, mental health, career preparation, study tools and life skills. They would be able to identify where the curriculum addresses these areas and they should feel confident that the information is relevant for them.

Theme 8: We Are a Safe Space (for Individuality, Risk, and Failure)

Students should be able to choose how to represent themselves in the school community.

Individuality should be cherished and it should be the source of diversity. This issue was raised in

discussions about choices and range of programming. Students should feel that classrooms offer

intellectual safety and they should feel confident to take risks in their learning. "Opportunity" was

an engagement theme that offered individuals more choice. Students are innovators: they are

curious, creative, and feel able to take risks. Was this the permission needed to structure a school

with an ethos of care? Was this the permission needed to risk developing structures that helped

students explore new ways of learning by engaging in school as authentic citizens?

> *A safe environment for exploring—mistakes help them grow, and the confidence to make mistakes. —Community member*

> *My AHA moment is a reminder that a student is essentially a work in progress and that we all need to be allowed a degree of individuality. —Staff member*

> *Students voicing their opinions without caring about what others think. Everyone is more accepting of one another and students less scared to approach teachers about issues outside of school. —Anonymous student*

Staff suggested surveying students to determine their awareness of the opportunities

available for them to engage in the school community. Another rich accountability might be the

number of open doors at lunch and after school, where clubs and tutoring take place. Student and

staff communication would suggest that members of the school community were taking risks and

learning from both successes and failures. Staff would indicate motivation to document this work

in the form of action research projects. Finally, there could be a mechanism to track the number

of activities and clubs offered at the school before, during, and after school hours.

Theme 9: Culture of Helpfulness and Support (We Care about Each Other)

A culture of helpfulness and support became a school value, and this idea was exemplified in a number of ways. Specifically, a number of guests to the school told us, "more than one student asked me if I needed help or direction." More generally, we saw examples where students and staff cared about each other. We also came to reference a culture of respect within JP. Care and support were suggested by greater intimacy or depth. And, we talked about what might happen in the informal places in the school to support an ethos of care.

> *We need structures to ensure that all students feel a sense of caring, an ethos of care. —Staff member*

> *Empathy teaches you to reach out, build your confidence, and not judge someone so harshly. —Anonymous student*

Indicators of success were plentiful in this area and the staff suggested rich indicators to track them, which ranged from recording student participation and use of services in various programs to assessing students' disposition about the culture of care and support. More traditional measures included tracking attendance and retention in classes and clubs.

A regular visitor (and previous principal) of the school coaches one of our department heads. Her suggestions for rich accountabilities in this area include the number of times she was greeted by students and was asked if she needed help to find where she was going; the number of students who were engaged in face-to-face conversations rather than being immersed in their devices; and the number of times she had to open a door for herself when arriving at the school—that number was zero.

Theme 10: Confidence

Students described wanting the school to help them develop confidence. For many students, confidence seemed to be the key to success for participating in the school community, making choices, feeling involved, succeeding socially, attending school more frequently, succeeding in their coursework, applying themselves to complex learning, applying for funding, and accessing opportunities. Students described confidence as the magic bullet to achieving all these school dimensions.

> *[Participation and sharing stories] can relieve stress; it can make people feel less alone. I mean a lot of people that don't have the same amount of confidence, I guess, because they've been shut down by other people, are the people that don't do so well at school, because they don't want to be at school, they don't want to be there, they want to stay at home, miss class, whatever, marks go down, so this is good for them, gives them a little bit of confidence, makes them feel a little bit more at home at school, and hopefully it allows them to actually learn more. So, anything that makes a kid feel at home, helps them, helps overall learning. So, I think this is one of the ways that can be done, is to help with confidence, sort of thing. —Anonymous student*

> *Something like that when someone's pushing you and opening you up like that, it just builds your character and you gain more confidence. Not in a way where you're like, "I'm better than everyone," but it gives you the confidence to do what you actually want to do. Because all I wanted to do for all of the entire semester was sing in front of my class, and finally I did, and now I've gotten solos for our guitar tour, I sing all the time in class, I'm used to singing now, I'm doing an opening for the GC, on the second-last day of school, and at first after I got comfortable with my singing, I got comfortable with my guitar playing, I can sing and play guitar at the same time. And that's some kind of multitasking I never thought I was going to be able to do. I can do it now! Student voice is important because it builds your confidence and your character. —Anonymous student*

Currently there are meetings with students to identify what they might accept as rich accountabilities for measures of success in the area of confidence. A student survey on confidence was recently piloted that will be administered to every grade 10 student who enters JP next year. We have come to believe that confidence could be an area JP students could track over

their three years and might encourage and support their abilities to develop the confidence that they feel is important for their school success.

In addition to the themes above, student responses strongly suggested that it was important to have food throughout the day (for equitable prices) and that they need a feeling of involvement with their curriculum and learning experiences (engagement).

> *Educate us!!! —Anonymous student*

> *In some cases at school it's more about good grades than it is about learning the material. So we feel that it should be more about learning. —Anonymous student*

Once the Values Framework was completed, the Jasper Place staff undertook initial development of rich accountabilities indicators for each value. These indicators are included as Appendices 7–15. One of these indicators is inserted here to demonstrate some the initial thinking of staff about how to begin to measure progress in the school towards these values.

The "indicator" documents were produced by staff members during a professional learning day in September 2015. The documents appear as appendices and are authentic artifacts of the work staff produced. Although these documents have been formatted from their original versions, the content has not been changed from the original staff working copies.

Rich Accountabilities

Value 1: Embrace Diversity—Team A

Staff Work	Student Learning	Student Outcomes	Staff Outcomes	School Outcomes
We understand and embrace the complexity of our population, we are constantly learning about each other's contexts, strengths, and requirements for success.	Our students choose how to represent themselves in our school community. Their individuality is celebrated as the source of our diversity.	Student learning process is as important as product, and how they do matters equally with making good choices about what they do.	All staff, including non-teaching staff, feel that their contribution to the school is recognized, have the chance to share and celebrate.	School celebrations for achievements of many kinds. Equal funding for clubs and school initiatives in arts, athletics, and others. Hallways reflect diversity rather than hierarchy of success. Different kinds of awards nights and celebrations.

Indicators of Success
(What it looks, feels, and sounds like at JP)

– We see staff collaborating on a regular basis (departmental and interdepartmental)
– The students want to be here (sense of belonging)
– hear students speaking positively about the school
– they come back to volunteer/coach/hang out
– Students feel comfortable enough in the school to explore their passions/interests
– Students connect with at least one staff member because of shared identity or interest

> "Teachers and staff being supportive of the variety of needs that students have, and making that known—we need to let kids know that if they need to learn differently, they can." —Staff member

Measures (What we count)

– The incredible list of clubs available for students
– Increasing number of student-led ALO sessions
– The spread of leadership activities that the students can earn credit in (Jumu'ah to first aid, etc.)

Possible Next Steps:

– Weekly profiles of JP Alumni (not just athletics)
– JP Alumni come back to share where they are now, highlight diversity of pathways (panel discussion ALO session)
– Encourage more students to lead student-led ALO sessions
– Change language from anti-discrimination to something more positive like "encouraging inclusive environment."

Indicators of Adaptive Capacity: Rich Accountabilities

As defined in Chapter 1, a school's adaptive capacity refers to the organization's ability to understand what is occurring both inside and outside of the organization, to learn from this information and to respond and plan appropriately (Sussman, 2004). This process and the data derived from focus groups indicate that Jasper Place (JP) is a school focused on developing students' adaptive capacities because of its responsiveness to what is happening outside the school boundaries. JP created an environment where feedback is essential to the work of teaching and learning; it also utilized discussions that help stimulate learning in all aspects of our school eco-system (Davidson-Hunt & Berkes, 2003). JP staff, students, and community members seemed primed to respond to the information they gathered during these processes and were eager to initiate change where necessary. In general, there is strong evidence that bringing a multitude of voices to the focus group discussion had facilitated an open, transparent way to bring information into the school, which we saw as further evidence of adaptive capacity within the school community.

As noted by Stein and Coburn (2008), the creation of an architecture of learning that supports teachers through communities of practice is one way school leaders can broaden the teacher repertoire to include new kinds of success. Adaptive capacity develops lateral networks, attends to internal and external drivers, and builds on the collective knowledge of the actors, and this was generally the case during these processes with school community members.

For Davidson-Hunt & Berkes (2003), adaptive capacity is the ability to respond to and initiate change. Once participants had worked with the feedback from discussions and data sessions, they demonstrated a greater willingness to respond to information. School community

members assumed permission and flexibility to express creativity, their willingness to change, and their ability to innovate and be risk takers.

In short, the work of developing rich accountabilities assumed that schools could and should develop adaptive capacity. Our work also helped us understand that a key factor was the idea that the site of control over transformation and change is contextual and resides within the school. Top-down policy initiatives and constructs would not necessarily lead to change or transformation. We found that JP was poised for this approach to transformation. A wealth of knowledge and expertise resided within our school and, we believe, among other schools. We also came to believe that the challenge for a school was to trust and leverage local knowledge for effective self-organization. JP is now more motivated in our work because we came to see that, although our school embodied these values, little had been done to develop processes and protocols to communicate and measure their values for our greater public.

Speaking generally, my experience tells me that school leaders lament being ranked on narrow accountability measures, but few have established alternative ways of telling their stories. We believe teachers at JP now feel the freedom to re-explore the moral imperative of teaching as opposed to reacting to the accountability pressures placed on them by current accountability regimes. JP understands the need to celebrate ourselves as a learning organization and celebrate unique approaches to teaching and learning as an outcome of all of these focus group discussions with staff.

An interesting myth uncovered by our staff was that diploma results actually matter—mostly, they don't. Through focus group discussions and ensuing research, staff learned that only Alberta uses the diploma results as an entrance criterion as described by Alberta Learning standards. Counselors revealed that no other Canadian province uses the diploma result for as

much as 50% of a student's mark. Post-secondary institutions in some provinces accept the teacher awarded mark (such as McGill University and Simon Fraser University) as the entrance criterion, while other institutions (such as University of British Columbia and University of Toronto) have developed formulae that adjust the diploma marks to raise student grades for entrance criteria.

This process highlights that JP embraces leadership at all levels of the school. JP demonstrates that information, ideas, and learning are not guarded by a few at the top; rather, all members of the school community, including students, are encouraged and even expected to participate as critical consumers of information and to contribute to the school's continual improvement.

It also became apparent through these processes that JP should establish protocols and systems so that the quality and impact of programs and services would be continually assessed and evaluated by internal measures. Formal and informal assessment of our school's strengths and weaknesses should become an ongoing, systematized process. JP school community members are thus charged with defining indicators that would provide data to assess whether improvements occurred. These assessments are needed so that adjustments can be made and learning from successes and failures can take place. This process implies that JP has adopted an affinity for risk-taking, where innovation is accepted and where failures are inherent to the process.

Schools with adaptive capacity acknowledge the need that all participants engage in healthy relationships, both within and outside the school. At JP, the data supports a recognition of the interdependence of all involved and an acceptance of a shared collective commitment to school improvement. Strong, healthy relationships and partnerships both within and outside the school

are paramount to keeping abreast of opportunities, trends, threats, and important voices around issues of interest to the organization.

We also have come to believe that regular strategic planning and collaborative listening processes and protocols that included more than senior administration are critical. Three key observations are apparent and necessary when suggesting that the adaptive capacity of a school needs to be examined. The collective action of all school community members plays a significant role in enhancing adaptive capacity and should be strongly considered when suggesting change or transformation initiatives. Social networks, multi-lateral in nature, are particularly important components of collective action for establishing and building adaptive capacity. Assuming a local nature of governance encourages the ability to respond appropriately to the diverse need of the school; as well, the response-ability of the entire school community to address the diverse school needs of all learners is crucial to building and enhancing adaptive capacity and transformation efforts of a school.

Chapter 7: Vignettes of Emergence

Work in our school has been fueled by the belief that students and teachers discover and encounter learning through increased consciousness (Freire, 1970). Further, our work is built upon the understanding that with increased consciousness students and teachers may develop agency by questioning the status quo of our current accountability measures and by creating their own stories of school success. These processes demanded that we each delve deeply into questions that challenge the traditional role of the student as object with new understandings of students as active, critical subjects. While engaging in this process, it was also important to consider how to present multiple facets of the emerging work, including the situational and personal learning that took place as a result of the study.

These vignettes are an attempt to take snapshots of our school's ecology that point to the larger study themes that are further discussed in this thesis. They have been included as illustrations of process and reflections of experience, to provide an alternative way of understanding the study's significance and relevance to participants. In doing so, they also provide valuable examples of data presented in the multiple voices of participants, thereby aligning with study values by illustrating for readers the diversity of voices within the data.

This inquiry began with the provocation that students and teachers have been lulled into a sense of complacency by the present accountability system that shapes our everyday lives in schools (Shor, 1980). In this system, intelligence has been measured in limited ways, which in turn has limited the breadth and depth of voices within our schools, marginalizing specific kinds of learners. This limited accountability system and the complacency produced can and must be undermined by educators through adoption of the axiom of freedom and equity for all learners. This axiom assumes that everyone can learn and that every human being has intelligence. The

motivation behind this work has therefore been to explore ways we can undermine current systemic accountability failings by including all voices in educational conversations, especially the voices of those who have been previously marginalized in our schools.

The following vignettes emerged from the conversations and processes described in the previous chapters. These conversations explore how we might measure school success through an ecological lens by focusing on diversity and equity and building our adaptive capacity as an institution. Each of the seven sections represents a unique perspective on study data. These vignettes are an addition to Chapter 6's findings, bringing the themes from the data to life in the words and experiences of study participants.

1. Student Voice: A Companion to Democracy

Authentic student voice was more impactful than our staff could acknowledge. Behind each student voice are some of the most powerful ideas: these students represent the builders of the future and the next community and world leaders.

> *As a Principal concerned with hearing a "multiplicity of student voices," I have hosted focus groups to ask students whether there is anything to change or improve in our school. It was often disappointing when the only suggestion students could conjure was that "we needed better soap dispensers in the washrooms." I realized that teachers were sending their "best" students to the conversation, the safe students, those who currently found success in the status quo, the "sort and select" culture of Albertan schools. There was a need to deliberately activate diverse student voices in the school, and create spaces where student voice was fostered to address questions of what it means to be an active citizen in our school and in the community at large. —P. Jean Stiles*

A multiplicity of student voices is crucial to our work lest we run the risk of making decisions about students without really understanding their lived experiences in our school. During this work we experienced that inviting students into conversations with teachers and community members shone a light on the feelings students have about school life. By including

them, we attempted to undermine Seashore's (2016) belief that too much of the research on change assumed students were passing through and didn't bear responsibility for or the weight of the change process. Seashore believed students were ignored and treated as passive recipients of change and not agents of change (Seashore, 2016).

The power of conversations that include student voices alongside teacher voices revealed that the adaptive capacity of the school is significant.

> *I used to think student voice was significant but I didn't realize how significant it really is. I feel like I inspired teachers to become involved with groups and activities outside of their comfort zone, by opening ways they could become involved. I feel like we, the students, have also opened up the doors to many great clubs [and initiatives] and now teachers are able to not only recognize them but realize there needs to be more conversations and communication about the amazing programs students have to offer. —Anonymous student*

> *After I read these teacher reflections, I began to see how the conversations I have with them sticks. It also makes me feel like I have a larger impact on this school because of my ability to just speak about my life and having someone listen. I used to think that because teachers see so much during a day, they were wiser than me…more experience, but just like I learn from them, they learn from me. To further their interest and the amount they care for students at this school, they showed that they will make a great effort to reach out to the students. —Anonymous student*

> *Students are seeking a lot of comfort (for example, longer lunches, free food, more time). WE as teachers need to focus on ensuring we make students feel comfortable being uncomfortable (building resilience). —Teacher*

> *Students have a place regardless of academic levels or sports focus. A place for opportunities for ALL. Teacher support this for ALL. —Teacher*

> *Opportunities to share opinions freely. —Teacher*

> *Our big message is the curriculum is getting in the way of learning, real world learning. —Teacher*

> *Weight of diplomas-teachers and students just feel too much pressure. —Anonymous student*

A group of students hosted conversations with staff about the initiatives and clubs they were involved in at the school. Staff visited the various professional learning stations and wrote reflections about what they had learned during the activity and how the learning might impact practice. Our staff had made the commitment to the students involved that I would share teacher reflections with them after the event. Thirty students joined two colleagues and me, and we asked the students whether they thought they had impact in our school. Then we shared the teacher reflections with them and asked the same question. The student responses show clearly that these students feel they are important voices to the teaching and learning environment of our school.

2. The Work of Learning

Students, teachers, and community members all commented that time, space, and an active, attentive, listening audience changed beliefs about the importance of the work and the contributions they make to the work. Many artifacts of reflections throughout these processes indicate how valued participants felt by being invited into important school conversations. In some cases, teachers and students expressed feeling empowered because they had the ability to "talk back" (anonymous study participants) to the data and develop a context for what the accountability evidence was actually portraying. For example, one student explained:

> *I feel like my work and achievements within the school are recognized. I feel more confident with what I do and I have gained a lot of motivation to continue on with my work within this last semester of my high school. —Anonymous student*

This feeling of agency gained through participation is best illustrated by the experiences of a student who approached the leadership team to request the opportunity to address the school staff about the Jumu'ah, the weekly congregational prayer held by Muslims every Friday. Encouraged by the conversations being held in the school about equity and student engagement,

this student felt the imperative to speak about the Jumu'ah club to bring some clarity about the club's history and purpose. The student was granted the opportunity to address the entire staff at the beginning of a professional learning day at the school. The student and his group prepared arduously and delivered an excellent presentation for the faculty. They did not shy away from any difficult topics and raised the issues of Islamophobia, the cultural norms of prayer and fasting, and the non-secular nature of the club's mission. Staff were invited to join the Jumu'ah at any time and were reassured that this open environment would welcome anyone that wanted a place to meditate or just to understand the workings of the Jumu'ah. All student presenters commented on the importance of having an opportunity to share with staff and how valued they felt by the responses they received from the presentation. The reaction by staff was overwhelming and a decision was reached to have all school meeting begin with student presentations.

Adaptive capacity in this example relies on the development of lateral networks and builds on the collective knowledge of the school community to initiate change and become more intentional in the work as responsive learners. As defined in Chapter 6, adaptive capacity is the ability to respond to and initiate change. JP staff demonstrated a willingness to respond to new information and to foster a new, creative way of hearing information from our students.

3. This is Water, This is Water, This is Water

Throughout the study, critical reflections on the purpose of school helped facilitate the emergence of hidden assumptions held by participants. We were able to unpack these assumptions to reveal in detail the accountability system in which we currently reside. In Alberta, accountability measures no longer function exclusively in an external manner to measure schools

and student achievements, but instead are the drivers that shape the teaching and learning conditions of practice within the educational system. In many instances, we were unaware of how ingrained the accountability measures are that shape all that we do in schools. Like goldfish who are unaware of the water in which they swim, school staff and students are often unaware of the accountability systems that permeate all that we do and all that we aspire to accomplish. To remain adaptive, we must constantly remind ourselves of the water we swim within, the context we inhabit.

Allowing teachers, students, parents, community members, and student alumni to discuss the purpose of school allowed a permissive space to examine and question the values that currently drive our work in the education system. Stakeholders drew similar conclusions about what an equitable school might look like with an engaged student body. These processes enabled people to voice diverse opinions, a range of experience and differing power stances to the conversations. The better the group understood and uncovered the diverse beliefs held within the school, the more able and aware school participants became of the myths and assumptions that shape the fabric of our school culture. These perturbations and interrogations seemed to move all participants toward possibility and hope for moving forward.

Participants acknowledged opportunities for seeing the world in a different way and felt that they were granted permission to take up or explore new ways of measuring school success. It became clear that the ways individual views have been shaped by the cultures to which they have an affinity, along with their values, hopes, and lived experiences, were made visible through the study conversations and were thus open to critical reflection and perhaps even review.

This ability for our current context reflects an important revelation that information does not have to be produced as a report or whole system to have merit. Engaging diverse groups in

processes that brought new values into the conversations allowed stakeholders to examine the values of efficiency and progress that currently underpin the measures being used to evaluate school success and begin the process of developing broader measures of school success centered on the values of *equity*.

A key aspect of the study that shed light on this concept was the focus group of students, staff, and parents to discuss our school's honors program's alignment with our values framework that is centered on equity and engagement. This conversation revealed the group's core values, beliefs, myths, and assumptions. The focus group was trying to make sense of which attributes of Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate classes made them successful and desirable for both students and teachers.

In this excerpt from a conversation held during a recent focus group discussion, four students (grades 11 and 12), a university student who previously attended IB classes, and a teacher who has taught AP classes for 35 years discussed the benefits of an IB/AP program for learning. The following are some key comments from study participants.

> *We are like-minded and we have a sense of trust with one another. —Focus group participant*

> *I used to be considered the "nerdy girl" in grade 9 and now I don't have to worry because nerdy is considered cool and no one will make fun of me for being motivated to get good grades. –Focus group participant*

> *We are a family and we all know that we are in this together. —Focus group participant*

> *We have trust with one another and it is ok to be wrong. —Focus group participant*
> *We learn because there is a healthy sense of competition. —Focus group participant*

> *In regular classes, it is quiet and the teachers don't wait for the responses that take a long time to get. No one puts up his or her hands and no one offers an opinion. —Focus group participant*

These observations are examples of the ways students and teachers commented repeatedly about the belief that like-mindedness is an asset. Students expressed that classes of homogeneous learners provided a certain comfort zone for learning. All participants claimed that courage and confidence were evident in AP/IB classes because every student holds the trait and attribute of motivation. More than one participant expressed that these classes felt more like a family than regular classes. They made statements such as, "We are in this together," and, "There is trust" (anonymous participants).

4. The Ecology of Adaptive Leadership

It was clear in this work that leadership does not exist in a vacuum; it emerges from systemic processes. These processes become visible when we remove the focus from the individual leader and look at the web of relationships and conditions that create change. It became apparent that central to the leadership necessary to facilitate these types of processes of dynamic conversations were the elements of acceptance and trust. We had to acknowledge that there would be little ability to micromanage and that there was no place to dictate and control. We designed processes with the intention that they would influence the system instead of attempting to control it.

There was an acceptance of this eco-system perspective that, because the school is an eco-system, the way forward was through enabling self-organization and innovation. The recognition of students, teachers, and others as important voices in the conversations demanded a respect for differences and an assurance of the safety of all participants. We found that strengthening views and embracing new ways of seeing the world helped to build the school's adaptive capacity. We were reminded that adaptive leadership is agile because it suggests innovation where risks are

supported and failures are accepted as opportunities for learning. These adaptive leadership processes indicated that building the capacities of individuals and groups are a critical priority.

This work required us to be brave, courageous, and truly attempt to understand the inherent processes of the eco-system while determining ways to interrogate assumptions and present a new paradigm. For this type of leadership to succeed, there had to be trust and allowance for honesty, some confusion, and dissent. There was an acceptance that transformation and change do not happen quickly. Merely having a conversation changes the conversation. We accepted that there is no need to develop consistency or standardization among everyone in practice and learning. People are at different places and take up the conversation in different ways. As leaders, we cannot mandate what will happen Monday morning as a result of discussions. There was no provision of a clear path or a set of instructions that everyone would adhere to and follow. Nevertheless, the conversations and the exploration of values seemed to lead to direct changes in practice.

5. Revealing the Fractal Logic of the Ecology of Jasper Place High School

"Having the conversation changes the conversation" is the fractal logic of our work at JP. As a result of our adaptive capacity work, most school conversations are now being framed with the equity and student engagement values in mind. We have begun to think of the conversations and processes of the institution as openings for enhancing empathy between students, staff, and community members. Students and staff have read each other's responses and reflected on lessons learned, and there is an energy and synergy emerging from these actions. The conversations and reflections seem less defensive while instead a growing acceptance that, as one

teacher put it, "[w]e are in this together and we are all learners" (study participant). The letters are beginning to resemble love letters between students and staff.

Conversations about the purpose of school and equity and student engagement of the school site have enabled members of the school community to bring their knowledge, experience, beliefs, myths, and assumptions to the process to be interrogated and explored that revealed the complex inter-connectedness of our school population. The value of equity has served as an attractor for teachers and students alike. Stated in a most general way, an attractor can be described as that which attracts. Attractors act as organizing forces or motifs (Kuhn & Woog, 2007). Just as the sun is an attractor for our solar system, our values in an eco-system lead actors to organize around an attractor (Kuhn & Woog, 2007). The attractor in a neo-liberal, accountability model is product and subjectification (Boal & Schultz, 2007). The attractor in this eco-system is equity and engagement. Changing the attractor changes how and what emerges. Moving from efficiency and progress to equity and student engagement and from an ego-system to an eco-system has changed the discussions in our school and placed the importance on building healthy relationships to ensure the success of every student and staff member.

Schools have fractal properties where the smallest parts represent the whole (Kuhn and Woog, 2007). Similar images are nested in one another. The fractal is equally as complex as the whole. For example, a discussion occurred where a small group of students lamented that their teacher gave preferential treatment to the "good" kids in the class. These students believed that such preferential treatment exists because of the pressure teachers face to ensure that students succeed on diploma exams. This small group of students is a fractal of the eco-system at Jasper Place. Another good example of a fractal within our eco-system at JP is a staff member who

transitioned from a belief and commitment to traditional accountability measures, through

conversation, to better advocacy and understanding with students.

6. Multiple Realities

There was a clear disconnect between what staff felt about students' school experiences and

what students actually described as their lived experiences in school. *Vorticity* describes

circumstances where radically different, nonlinear dynamics are happening in close proximity to

each other (Kuhn & Woog, 2007).

> *We have it all here. There are programs and activities for all students and this means we are accepting of diversity and differences. —Teacher*
>
> *Remove stigmas and stereotypes around certain groups/programs so everyone can be proud of what they do, and so JP as a whole takes pride in ALL of its teams. We need to find a better way to instill a more accepting feeling for things like prom, drama, badminton, etc. —Anonymous student*
>
> *We have Rebel Pride—we serve all, diverse, adaptable, student centered, no one left behind, all new, all levels, strong community, place for everyone, something for everybody, JP is the place to be, JP is where kids want to be. — Staff member*
>
> *Positive encouragement from teachers no matter what, if you fail a test they will help you, not get mad. —Anonymous student*
>
> *A safe place for you to be with all your strengths and flaws. —Anonymous student*

These conversations and protocols highlighted that multiple and virtual realities are

represented simultaneously in the eco-system of our school. We are challenged to cope with

many constructions of reality. There are also diverse perspectives about what is happening in our

school. Many staff felt that they were attending to the needs of students in such a way that equity

was addressed. However, as illustrated above, students described a need for invitation and

information about the variety of ways to feel included in the school.

7. Edge of Chaos—and the Chaotic Edge

A dynamic place between order and disorder exists within school processes (Boal & Schultz, 2007). It can be viewed as a transitional phase. During this phase people see themselves as vulnerable. As a staff, we have talked about and committed ourselves to the principle of equity, but repeatedly the question is raised, "What about the diplomas?" Teachers questioned whether we could really trust the theory of achieving excellence through equity.

Because diploma exams were *an elephant in the room,* great discomfort permeated discussions held by staff. Teachers feared they might not be able to provide reliable evidence to parents that a child had learned without the exit exam to verify student learning. Although many teachers saw differences between student achievement in their classes and achievement on a diploma exam, there was a great fear that faith in teacher judgment had been eroded by the system; teachers felt pressured and under attack in the areas of assessment and evaluation.

Many important questions were raised once we, as an institution, began to dig into the layered assumptions of traditional accountability. If we learned, for example, that students should have longer in school to achieve optimal outcomes of learning, how would our results falter as we continued to measure the number of students who complete high school in three years? How can schools provide reliable evidence of meeting expectations?

These processes and conversations have produced a sense of chaos and disruption as participants have realized that what they hold as values for the school are in direct opposition to the value of efficiency and progress that exists in the Alberta education system and which permeates classrooms within the province.

This is all nice and good [equity] and it is the "right" thing to pay attention to but there is no possibility to change as we are held to account for our results on

diploma exams and the number of students who graduate within 3 years of entering high school. —Teacher

What if we realize that students would benefit from an extra year in school to explore a pathway that held interest and passion? I still have to teach to the test if I am a grade 12 teacher teaching a diploma course. —Teacher

Although a sense of vulnerability was present, participants began to explore other ways of addressing curricula or counseling students that might veer away from the norms presented by the current accountability regime. There seemed to be a sense of excitement and a tenor of the permission to take a risk to change the system, by just doing so and not waiting for permission from some power above. Innovation seems imminent in this state of disequilibrium. The reaction of staff toward not feeling that they were meeting the needs of students seemed to create a sense of urgency to innovate and respond in a new way. In finding the chaotic edge, the dissonance between what we know and what we value, we also found new motivation, energy, and hope.

Summary

This chapter offered descriptions and examples of the rich discoveries we had in our school by engaging in these processes. We learned that bringing students into our school conversations is a game-changer if we hope to transform our school to meet the needs of every school community member. This work offers opportunities and challenges and clearly develops the adaptive capacity within the school. As we attempt to do this work, we acknowledge our vulnerabilities but also our ability to make a difference in the lives of students, teachers, and our community members.

Chapter 8: Adaptive Capacity Eco-Systems: Possibilities, Probabilities and Hope

This study demonstrated *some* promise for how we might enrich accountabilities to support *a great school for all* through improved system performance and professional responsibility. This study reinforces the possibility that we need better accountability systems; so, "rather than insisting on abolishing school accountability systems, there is a need for a new type of rich accountability policies that balance qualitative with quantitative measures and build on mutual accountability, professional responsibility and trust" (Sahlberg, 2014, p. 53).

This study examined protocols that would assist a school in measuring and developing adaptive capacity to create *a great school for all* while navigating a VUCA world. Presently Alberta schools exist in a VUCA environment and the school site in this study represents a fractal of the larger eco-system of Alberta's schools. With the diversity and complexity of the 2400 students who attend the school and a growing inequity amongst the school's students, this school site is a microcosm of the Albertan school system. One in five students in this school site is living below the poverty line and describes hunger as the main issue they face each and every day (Gibson, 2012).

Examining and developing the school's adaptive capacity allowed for a nuanced approach to measuring school success and did not suggest a "one-size fits all" approach to school development. However, I believe as a researcher that these types of protocols, with an emphasis on measuring a school's adaptive capacity, can be scalable and applicable in the transformation efforts of schools, locally and internationally. In fact, this approach to change has been already been taken up in many international partnerships and an Alberta network of schools is currently

adopting this theory of change to measure school success to enhance school adaptive capacity. These varied initiatives began as a result of the initial findings of this work.

Measuring the adaptive capacity of this school site developed an emerging set of approaches that allowed uncertainty to exist while continuing to respond to and anticipate the needs of the school community members. Many accountability initiatives and innovations run a risk of being "one-offs" and are assumed to be insurmountable because they lack a coherent theory of change.

A Theory of School Change in a VUCA World

This study builds on the premise that schools are optimal sites for transformation and change to occur. Nested within the socio-political milieu of Alberta, Canada, the school as an eco-system has many external drivers, as illustrated in the graphic in Figure 3. The influences of the professional culture, the community milieu, the political and economic environments, and global trends and pressures impact every school in Alberta. Every school culture is nested in larger political, socio-economical milieu.

Figure 3: Leadership Cycle for Innovation in Alberta Schools

Model 1: Leadership Cycle for Innovation in Alberta Schools
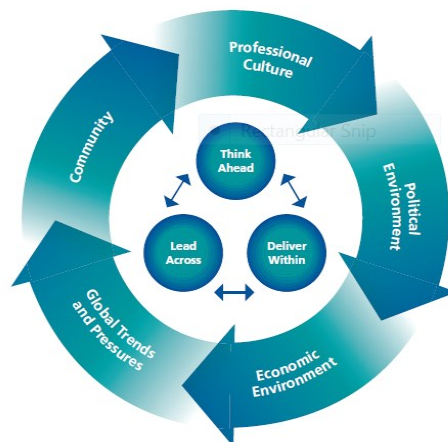
Source: Alberta Teachers' Association (2015) Renewing Our Promise: A Great School for All, p. 35.

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There has been a tectonic shift in Alberta in the past two years that highlights the political, global, and economic forces surrounding and impacting our school. The Progressive Conservative party had been in power for 43 years. Faced with oil trading below $60 US, the Alberta province braced for the impact of global oil price shock. The premier of the day, Jim Prentice, held a televised "fire-side chat" to forecast his government's plans for Albertans (Robertson, 2015). He explained it was time for all Albertans to become fiscally responsible and that this would be achieved by major cuts to public services. A health care tax and an unwillingness to put any additional dollars into education to resource the anticipated 12,000 new students who would be entering Alberta schools that year were just two of the cuts Prentice suggested for Albertans. Voters reacted decisively in the following election and elected a majority New Democratic Party (NDP). It was apparent the values put forward by Jim Prentice's government were no longer acceptable to Albertans.

The theory of change drawn upon in this study assumes that the school is an eco-system. This study builds on the premise that schools will transform by nurturing distributed leadership and fosters a culture where professionals are committed to thinking ahead, delivering within and leading across. The outcomes of these pursuits lead to system reform and transformation sustained from the inside out. For transformation to occur, teachers in a school, such as ours committed to this work, must have the professional conditions of practice and the necessary supports to help students realize their unique gifts and talents.

Thinking ahead: In this study, "thinking ahead" was defined as being bold, visionary, and forward-thinking by aspiring to create a great school for all students (ATA, 2015). Thinking ahead does not suggest that school professionals are able to predict the future in a linear, cause-and-effect fashion, but rather assumes the complexity of a VUCA world that the school is nested

within and supports that thinking ahead means fostering resilience and innovation among all members of the learning community.

The school's leaders demonstrated traits that were adaptive and responsive, and they were able to organize around the local context to examine broader goals of success that amounted to more than achievement on the high stakes exit exams. An acceptance that we face complex realities in our VUCA world and that decisions are rarely linear due to cause-and-effect inspired school leaders to accept the inability to control the future (Schneider & Somers, 2006). Instead they chose to embrace interactions with multiple stakeholders and began to enable distributed leadership to emerge in response to the complex challenges facing the school community. School leaders moved from a focus on conservation and stability to embracing further innovation while attending to culture building (Uhl-Bien, et al., 2007).

Having students involved in the focus group discussions, responding to surveys, and participating in meetings with their teachers and principal gave many students a greater sense of agency within the school. Many students expressed an increase in confidence and a heightened awareness of the power their voice can make in discussions about teaching and learning. Most students described being motivated to continue these types of discussions and described themselves as being *an important part* of the school.

> *Despite the large population, I now see myself as a **part** of the school that helps improve the values surrounding this school and with this, I feel like I am more than just a student here. Just as the school cares about us, it's a lot more if I/we care about the school and the environment we are in. It makes me feel like I have a larger impact on this school because of my ability to just speak about my life and have someone listen. —Anonymous student*

Students and teachers had opportunities to move from pre-determined outcomes of learning to becoming co-creators of the learning. An emphasis on inquiry was discussed and students

described a sense of agency to plan and execute learning interests. Students and teachers indicated that being engaged in this fashion was leading to authentic and deeper learning.

Delivering within: In this study, "delivering within" was defined as materially supporting and committing to the goals one sets while avoiding the distractions of *doing business as usual*. Assumed in this dimension are the school's context and therefore its ability to respond to the needs of students, staff, and community members. Delivering within includes a definitive acceptance that there is not a *one size fits all* approach to transformation and that it is necessary to respect and appreciate the contextual nature of schools and school cultures.

The principal and school leaders described a heightened sense of urgency to move from a focus on conservation and stability to embracing innovation while attending to culture building among all members of the school community. The principal and school leaders looked to distribute leadership among all members of the learning community. Trust was described as the central tenet of this adaptive leadership. Leadership extended to all levels of the school including students were acknowledged and engaged as leaders.

Teachers referred to a sense of *freedom* or a feeling of *permission* to be able to take risks. The front matter of the program of studies became central to many conversations. Teacher teams described moving from seeing the program of studies as a discrete set of outcomes and lessons to a more holistic appreciation of the broader aspirations of the curricular documents. Although nervous, teachers discussed moving away from designing instruction to merely teach to the test.

Throughout our journey, many teacher discussions centered on the imperative to be innovators who were able to take risks. Taking risks and becoming innovative was described, as a moral, collective, and professional responsibility if teachers were to respond ethically to the learning needs of the students they teach. This study documented ways by which teachers became

curriculum designers, empowered to teach and assess in ways that address the immediate learning needs of the students in the classroom.

Addressing the adaptive capacity of the school culture resulted in a distributive leadership model that gave teachers back a sense of ownership over practice, and that helped teachers gain recognition for their expertise in the field of education (Schneider & Somers, 2006). Several teachers appeared to take up leadership roles in the eco-system. One example of such leadership was an early career teacher who had yet to establish tenure, and who approached the leadership team to suggest a new course for Social Studies students. She took the initiative to write an outline for a course that would have grade 10 students exploring learning objectives through extra-curricular activities and community service learning experiences. This course was to be available to all grade 10 students regardless of their academic standing.

Leadership emerged among many participants to challenge complex, authentic problems about teaching and learning. Different people became leaders during different situations and conversations, acknowledging again that adaptive leadership does not imply discrete, formal leadership positions (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007).

As the case of the three Islamic students presented in Chapter 7 illustrated, students emerged as leaders to address school issues where they felt they could make a difference. Inspired by the school's values of *everyone belongs* and *diversity is an asset,* these students emerged as leaders to share wisdom about the Jumu'ah, the weekly congregational prayer held by Muslims every Friday. These students felt compelled to describe why the prayer room was important to the daily prayer rituals of the Muslim students and were eager to invite school staff to participate. The leadership these students displayed approaching the leadership team to have five minutes to *share with staff,* developed into an entire school professional learning activity.

Staff and students showcased projects, clubs, and initiatives that supported acceptance, recognized diversity, and built community partnerships with peers and colleagues. The frontier between leaders and followers blurred as leaders and followers emerged around issues as they presented themselves within the eco-system. Leadership was distributed throughout the school community and, in many cases, students emerged as leaders.

Students described that moving from the emphasis of a mastery of the core skills of numeracy and literacy provided multiple pathways to demonstrate success. Students spoke passionately about the possibility of measuring a broader range of competencies that would afford all students the capacity to demonstrate their unique talents and gifts. Students emphasized sentiments about the hierarchy and systemic dominance of the privileging of academics over all other competencies. They spoke at length, expressing feelings that teachers *have favourites* and expressed the belief that the current pressures on teachers even seem to impact teacher evaluation practices. Students demonstrated a sophisticated understanding that their individual, academic success is tied to a teacher's sense of efficacy and a school's funding**.**

Leading across: In this study, "leading across" was defined as principals, teachers, and students crossing school and jurisdictional boundaries to learn from each other. The ability to collaborate, make sense of evidence, and learn from one another is necessary, and this dimension builds upon the belief that it is necessary to move outside one's culture to actually see the culture. It provides a new lens for professionals to question, understand, and unpack myths and assumptions that lie hidden in every culture of the school and jurisdiction or milieu within which it is nested.

Given freedom to explore explicit ways of celebrating, formalizing, and supporting teacher action research, teachers described a sense of being valued and spoke at length about how the

work could be leveraged to impact the learning journeys of the students they taught daily. Teachers and leaders, networked and collaborative, in the school and beyond, forced conversations to move beyond the false hope of evidence-based decision making to developing practices where teachers themselves felt that their marks and judgments on student achievement were valid and defensible.

Crossing boundaries beyond subject departments, schools, jurisdictions, and even forming international networks and communities of practice were viewed as essential to developing improved practices in measuring school success. Principals and teachers have begun developing partners in the community and across school boundaries to foster and facilitate learning networks and communities of practice. The goal is to share and extend these promising practices about teaching and learning, and to determine how to best account for student's achievements.

The previous descriptions of a school committed to this theory of change illustrate how these three strategies, working together, can help bring about transformation. Imperative to this theory of change is an acceptance that involves trusting principals, teachers, and students to lead the way to transformation. Again, as described in Chapter 1, this work was developed with the axiom that excellence can be achieved through equity and that a process of assessing a school's adaptive capacity allows discussions to build around a triad of information, values, and practices (Ranciere, 1991, Sellar, 2016).

Study findings provided insight into many possibilities for further investigation. The findings also provided opportunities for further developing protocols and processes to assess broader measures of school success by examining the adaptive capacity of a school site. Moreover, the findings provided the vehicle for school members to describe new ways of defining school success and led to more hopeful conversations about how to ensure and maintain

an environment that nurtures the learning needs of all of the school's students. The exploration of "vignettes of emergence" in the Chapter 7 showed that infusing the values of equity and student engagement into the conversation allowed richer accountabilities to emerge in the learning community.

Developing rich accountabilities takes into account the complexity of the school site and the context of the students. This effort acknowledged the variety of contexts from which students and families approach schooling. Recognition emerged that learning takes place both in and outside of the school, and that the school needs to facilitate, enable, and recognize learning in a variety of settings. The study findings reinforced the notion that the cultures of schools are unique and accountability measures need to be fluid and operate in multiple ways to suit the varying contextual natures of schools.

Giving Accounts of Accountability in Schools as Eco-Systems

The important questions to pose when looking for information became, "What data will inform," and, "What and to whom does that data inform?" In a recent presentation in Alberta, Sellar (2016) quoted Ranson in saying "since the late 1970s … regimes of public accountability have been strengthened systematically so that accountability is no longer merely an important instrument or component within the system, but constitutes the system itself" (Ranson, 2003, p. 459). This description aptly frames the accountability circumstances in Alberta. If accountability is giving an account to the Ministry of Education and the government in the current ego-system framework, then flipping the system puts students as the focal point for accountability. The new imperative of our work is to acknowledge this shifted power relationship as moving from an ego-system to an eco-system. Our work in this project acknowledges that data must inform practice

and be transparent for multiple stakeholders, building public assurance that the school is doing right by all students.

In this work, information was gathered from multiple stakeholders, including students (present and alumni), teachers, parents, and community members, to ascertain the purpose of schooling and how an equitable school might function with all students engaged in their learning. Participants gave rich and varied accounts of the purpose of school and what values should be present in a school committed to equity and student engagement. Consider the following examples:

> *We need structures to ensure that all students feel a sense of caring, an ethos of care. —Staff member*

> *Empathy teaches you to reach out, build your confidence, not judge someone so harshly. —Anonymous student*

> *More and more schools are expected to build the whole person, not just the academic. More and more it's the person who looks for opportunities, or the kids that do struggle academically but were starting to build a growth mindset where they know that if they work hard they can improve and if we instill that in them then they can go get a job and volunteer and keep getting better etc. That's not something you can put in a curriculum but more and more it's falling on the school to build that global citizen. —Community member*

> *And teaching them how to be good humans is sometimes you need to work at things, and figure out how you can join in on things. Trying to build that internal capacity for things, and not just teaching separate things in math and English but how do they connect and how do your people and academic skills match and how can you put them together to get where you want to go. And that's what schools are supposed to do now is teach all of that. —Community member*

It is important to note that most participants saw the purpose of school as far more than preparing students for high stakes, diploma exit exams. Specifically, participants argued that academic success or reductionist instrumental accountings of student engagement, such as the Tell Them From Me surveys described in Chapter 4, do not constitute exclusive, vital outcomes

of schooling. Many participants raised the issues of developing students as confident, independent learners able to navigate a VUCA world as democratic citizens. Participants acknowledged that these attributes are difficult to assess with numbers.

Student engagement must entail more than measuring whether a student feels motivated in or *likes* instruction in numeracy and literacy or participates in a school's extra-curricular activities. A recent professional learning activity was held for all staff to provide a snapshot of the initiatives and activities happening around the school to support the values of equity and enhance student engagement. Stations were set up throughout the school and were hosted by staff, students, and community members. After the activity, participants were asked to complete a reflection sheet documenting an understanding of how the school was striving to achieve excellence through equity.

The promise made to students participating in the morning was that they were welcome to meet as a group, read the reflection sheets, and host a discussion about potential next steps. The discussions were rich and it was evident that students felt authentically engaged in the school and the learning process with their teachers. Authentic student engagement can be measured by hosting one conversation with a group of students and allowing them the space to share learning and insight.

> *It is encouraging and exciting to realize that we make up the school culture.*
> *It's cool to know that staff want to get involved with us and staff learned from us.*
> *I feel more significant now. I belong more. —Anonymous student*

> *Staff are like students. They need invitations to participate. They want to get involved but they don't always know how. —Anonymous student*

Information gathered from participants' multiple voices fueled the imperative to harvest data that will have a direct impact on practice in the classroom and school site. By moving beyond the values of efficiency and progress that drive how we currently measure school success,

and by embracing the approach of measuring and enhancing a school's adaptive capacity, we can broaden the means in which the school community describes success and how participants respond to emergent teaching and learning needs of students and staff (Sellar & Lingard, 2015; Murgatroyd, 2012). The need for relationships and trust permeated conversations and informed the work of getting to know students, collaborating with colleagues, and working alongside parents as partners.

Interrogating what constituted the most *influential* data, quantitative numbers were often described as being privileged over more complicated forms of narrative, qualitative data. A more compelling approach to data was deemed necessary, one where rich accountabilities informed practice. Stories may seem cumbersome and unwieldy, but participants acknowledged that narratives have authority and accepted that a fractal of the whole tells us about the whole. "Not everything that can be counted counts. Not everything that counts can be counted" (Einstein, online source). As illustrated in Chapter 7, a conversation about how the Honours program aligns with the school's values of equity and engagement represents not only sentiments held by the small group having the discussion, but reveals the beliefs held by many students and staff in the larger school context.

In our school community, an understanding emerged that large-scale assessments nested in a linear, hierarchical model of accountability used to assess school success are primarily based on the values of efficiency and progress (Sellar, 2016; Spencer, 2013). Participants accepted and noted that qualitative data could be just as imperfect as quantitative data, and they recognized that data cannot tell us what we ought to do but can and should compel probing and questioning. Examining contextual data led to an interrogation of assumptions about how the needs of all students are met, a questioning of current practices, and an impetus and motivation to challenge

the status quo. However, there continues to exist a level of suspicion and fear among the teaching staff that attention to non-school factors will be seen as excusing poor teaching or seem soft to the public.

The growing, underlying problems of poverty and inequity that more than 20% of our students and families face (Gibson, 2012) were brought to the forefront through the rich discussions held with participants. The need to acknowledge and dismantle barriers that produce inequities and move towards what is best for all students was a strong motivator for the school leadership and most, but not all, staff members. Participants asserted that success for learners should not be the privilege of those who come from families and backgrounds advantaged by social or economic status. These discussions led staff to pronounce a shared commitment to provide a great learning experience for every student. This action research produced numerous accounts of staff insisting that we must view all school practices and programming decisions through the lenses of equity and student engagement.

In a recent Faculty Council meeting at our school, a teacher appealed to the leadership team to rethink the messages being shared about the merits of our various programs to prospective students and parents. He described how a lens on equity was forcing him to question many of our school's practices and he felt compelled to reflect on his own practices and those of the school at large. He felt adamant that the language being used to describe the Honours program was not integral with what we were expounding as a school about our values of equity. He lamented that we were suggesting that students in "regular, academic" streams were not receiving an excellent education that would place them firmly on the path to post-secondary acceptance.

Emphasizing student engagement and equity allowed conversations to formulate around where certain learners are privileged, what participants define success in school, how students describe confidence as a predictor of school success, and finally how to unpack assumptions that permeate the school culture of which many participants had been unaware. This action research made it apparent that information from student participants was rich and useful to teachers and leaders who wanted to maximize student engagement and build equitable teaching and learning conditions in their classrooms for all students.

Giving New Accounts—Overcoming Our Passion for Ignorance

The most powerful unearthing by school staff was the power of an authentic student voice. The teaching staff, parents, and community members were impressed by how articulate and knowledgeable students were when describing their individual and collective lived experiences in schools. As we moved forward in the work, it became increasingly difficult to deny authentic accountings of students' experiences in school. This evokes Britzman's (1998) invitation for those deeply committed to the work of school development to interrupt "a passion for ignorance" (p. 58); that is, a concept developed throughout the text as a tension between wanting to learn (and unlearn) and wanting to not know (and deny). Throughout our work teachers and students constantly surprised each other, both in terms of what they revealed about each other and what they had heretofore concealed from each other. "Education," according to Britzman (1998), "must interfere. There is nothing else it can do for it demands of students and teachers that each come to something, [to] make something more of themselves" (p. 10).

Students evocatively described where and how inequities exist throughout the school culture. They gave robust descriptions of school that should lead to the interrogation of the

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current systems of assessment and funding that presently exist. They spoke at length about the privilege given to academic success and athletic prowess. Most impressive was the advice students provided, through multiple consultations, for how to overcome and address these inequities. Students gave many examples for how to celebrate the unique gifts and talents of all students.

In Alberta and globally, large-scale assessments serve the purpose of monitoring schools and jurisdictions to make decisions about policy direction and to evaluate systems in comparison with one another. Typically, such information does not give real-time information to students, teachers, or leaders that would be beneficial for making programming decisions. Changing our teaching and leadership practices and policies needs to be considered as the primary focus for student testing and other accountability mechanisms. Information must be gathered that can inform teachers' practice, parents' decision-making, school leadership, system administration and policymaking.

Teachers in our school, as in many schools in Alberta, are dealing with complex classrooms and have limited access to job-embedded professional learning to hone their craft. Teachers long for the time and tools to address the needs of the students they teach every day. The data teacher's desire is contextual and helps inform instruction and judgments about student achievement. Given the costs of current examination programs in Alberta, and a growing sentiment that it does not positively impact student learning in Alberta's classrooms, is it not time to rethink the accountability regime and put teachers at the centre of the process?

Participants considered real-time information crucial to providing enhanced opportunities to be responsive to the teaching and learning imperatives in the school. Bringing different voices to the conversations, thus digging deep into the data, gave a richer and broader accounting of

measures to examine the school. A common appreciation and wisdom arose out of both the exploration of the wide range of views about the purposes of schooling and an acceptance developed that differing points of view act as an asset to the school.

This study showed a necessity to keep judgments as close as possible to the practice to be changed. There was an ability to initiate rapid action through listening and responding to students' discussions about their lived experiences in school. Teachers and students were confident in their comments on efficacy when they were provided the real-time data. It was evident that teachers and school leaders were fueled by a sense of optimism and hope, and passion and energy for the work was evident throughout the communities of practice.

It was clear that this participatory system enhanced the coordination of gathering information and served to reduce conflict among varying beliefs and opinions held within the community of practice. It cannot be understated that this work is time-consuming and requires careful facilitation. Participants discussed views about equity and engagement, and a general consensus was reached on the indicators that could act as a guide or lens to doing this work. The resulting multilateral approach to public assurance included a variety of stakeholders who helped determine what counted (Sellar, 2015).

One of the more surprising outcomes that emerged from the research was that the members of the learning community gained the ability to build their "experience in how to think." A freedom to challenge the status quo emerged as teachers described a permission to do the *right* work for students as opposed to just teaching to a test. Students and teachers described a benefit from including authentic student voice into the community of practice. Finally, this contextual information provided a platform to inform judgment and act as a rich catalyst for change (Sellar, 2015).

Values must guide the usage of information gathered through accountability measures. A mature approach to data is necessary, where rich accountabilities can directly inform practice. Feeding values, such as equity and student engagement back into the system, develops richer accountabilities for measuring school success and allows for a more educative, ethical, and democratic accounting of school success. Involving multiple stakeholders, especially students, in the process and debate about the purpose of school allowed data to be contextual and authentic. The data allowed participants to assume response-ability, the ability-to respond to the diverse learning needs of the students.

Ultimately, school accountability is about comparisons between values, standards, and performance; comparisons between one set of practices and another; and comparisons between one kind of information and another. We cannot ignore values, narratives, and professional judgment, which are not easily measured or translated into policy or relevant forms of information, but which are necessarily at the centre of richer and more complex modes of public assurance.

Navigating the paradoxical space of school leadership in a VUCA world as described in Chapter 2, where accountability has become the system, demands that we become adaptive leaders that are nimble, creative, and innovative. It demands that leaders respond to the immediate learning needs of the school's students, develop the teaching qualities in the classrooms, and work with community members to ensure a democratic, equitable learning environment for all.

Examining the school's adaptive capacity allowed a nuanced approach, not a one-size fits all, to addressing the values and indicators of equity. Adaptive capacity is an approach that allows uncertainty to exist while still addressing the needs of each and every learner. Infusing values

into the accountability conversation allowed rich accountabilities to emerge from the information gathered from multiple actors to directly impact practice in the classroom and school site.

Given the growing inequities among students in the VUCA environment and the nature of Albertan schools, I have come to believe that it is imperative to move from seeing students as the subjects of schooling to valuing students as vital voices in the teaching and learning process. The results in this study support that schools are the best place to develop and use rich accountabilities to tell the story of whether a school is achieving success for each and every student it serves.

We can no longer accept the assumption that we can measure a school's success by determining students who perform well on high-stakes, exit exams. In many cases, a direct correlation exists between student achievement on high stakes tests and the SES of a student. Berliner (2014) asserts that schools and teachers have a minor role to play in the student achievement and that the social economic status (SES) of a student often determines a student's achievement. He suggests that we need more contextual data to measure school success and determine whether the learning needs of all students are being addressed.

This study demonstrates that enriching accountabilities by actively inviting different voices can support great schools and enhance professional responsibility and system performance. To enact and measure current aspirations for students in Alberta to become ethical, engaged citizens, able to fulfill meaningful lives and contribute to society, is imperative to employ rich accountabilities to tell the story. System leaders will be required to relinquish some control with numbers and the use of data to sort and rank schools; they will need to move from a stance of surveillance to a position of trusting teacher judgment. System leaders will need to move from the stance of competition toward an embrace of the ethics of intentional action, where

engagement and equity intersect in our lives as educators and students. In Alberta and in our school, accountability has become the system. It is now time for school and system leaders to shift from accepting accountability in a narrow sense to embracing rich accountabilities that enhance public assurance, develop professional responsibility, and build system performance.

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Appendix A: Focus Groups

Why are focus groups useful?

- Group dialogue tends to generate rich information, as participants' insights tend to "trigger" the sharing of others' personal experiences and perspectives in a way that can more easily or readily tease out the nuances and tensions of complex topics and subjects—a dynamic that is not always present during key informant interviews.

- Provides information directly from individuals who are invested in the issue or hold expert knowledge about a topic. Provides information from people who can provide insights about actual conditions and situations.

- Provides a representation of diverse opinions and ideas.

- Provides a relatively low cost and efficient way to generate a great deal of information.

What are some limitations of focus groups?

- Focus groups are susceptible to facilitator bias, which can undermine the validity and reliability of findings.
- Discussions can be sidetracked or dominated by a few vocal individuals.
- Focus groups generate important information. However, such information often has limited generalizability to a whole population.

Appendix B: Steps in Planning Focus Groups

Team conducting and facilitating focus group discussions with staff will be Faculty Council Department Heads:

1) Facilitators trained by principal and Lab members to guide the discussions.

2) Note taker appointed by facilitator at each focus group table to make hand-written notes and observations during the discussion.

3) Staff Focus Group participants, previously selected by members of the school's Faculty Council. Group participants have met in teams weekly since September. Each team has a diverse group of members including teachers (multi-disciplinary), and non-certificated staff.

4) Staff Focus groups to meet for the morning of a scheduled professional learning day.

5) The Staff Focus Group session will last 21/2 hours with a break mid-morning.

6) Staff Focus Group session conducted in Room 188, a location that is commonly used for staff learning activities at Jasper Place School. Each focus group has a table.

7) Facilitators trained with the facilitator guide the day prior to the focus group event.

8) Focus group participants reminded of the session the day prior to the actual event and reminded of the agenda for the session. Food provided for participants prior to the scheduled event.

Appendix C: Focus Group Facilitator Guide

Staff Focus Group, Friday January 30, 8:30am

Intro to the day (staff grouped by team with DH (Department Head) as table facilitators) (18 teams)

- Why broader measures of success? (What we've been working on as a school, the things we've already been doing, where we're going, etc.)

- What does "A Great School for All" mean? It means engagement and equity—"great" and "all."

- We want to work with you to define what we mean by engagement and equity at JP. In our first hour we will identify what these things mean to us for our school.

- In our second hour we'll look what we see in the school that tells us these things are happening.

- At the end of this morning, we hope to have two things. One—a clear picture of what it would mean for JP to be equitable and to be engaged. And two—some ways that we could measure those things in our environment.

Icebreaker: JP in the News

In your groups, take a minute to picture opening the newspaper to a front-page story about our school that would make you proud. What does the headline say?

We Want To:
1) Start a conversation about how we celebrate an equitable and engaged

school. Learn from staff what we already do, and figure out some signs of success.

2) Emerge with priority areas that tell us about equitability and engagement.

Get some ideas on how to measure progress.

3) Figure out how to share the story and own the story of our school.

Activity 1: World Cafe on Big Picture Questions

In this activity, groups will have a general conversation based on the two questions below (Ten groups for each topic)
Question A: What is an equitable school?
Question B: What is an "engaged" school?

1) Facilitate group conversation around the question at your table (30 min)

2) Groups trade charts, give feedback on another group's sheet (10 min)

3) Groups take back their original sheets and come up with key points/answers to the

original question (20 min)

4) Write each of the key points on its own post-it, stick it on the wall and mark your

group's favorite with a star.

BREAK: 10 Minutes

When you come back, find your star. As a group, find other things that fit with your star. If another group also needs the same post-it for their star cluster, copy it out and add it to yours.

Activity 2:

Brainstorm some ways that the things in your cluster are visible in school. For example, if there is a post-it that says, "Students feel safe in the hallways," what does this look like? Some answers could be:

- Laughter
- People smiling
- Students and staff greeting new people in the school
- Students being verbally supportive of each other
- Fewer passive bystanders when there is negative behaviour
- Students and staff chatting comfortably
- Students engaged in activities with one another in the halls or outside
- Students make eye contact

Write down as many as you can on a new piece of chart paper, with the cluster name at the top.

Activity 3: Reflection

Ask your group for "Aha!" moments or things that resonated for them during the morning. Take some time for each person to say something that they might do in their work as a result of the morning's conversation. Please give each staff their own post-it note to leave behind on the table with their reflection. No names necessary.

Final Activity: JP in the News

In your groups, take a minute to once again picture opening the newspaper to a front-page story about our school that would make you proud. What does the headline say? Has it changed since this morning?

Talking Points for Activity 1, if you need them:

A) What is an equitable school? Some talking points might include….

- What does equity inside the classroom look like?

- What kinds of success does our school celebrate?

- How do we celebrate student success?

- What does every student need in order to succeed in his or her day?

- What things do we provide as a school that set every student up for success?

- What programs do we currently offer that make our school equitable? How do they do this?

B) What is an "engaged" school? Some talking points might include….

- What does an "engaged" student look like?

- What does an "engaged" teacher/staff member look like?

- Which initiatives for staff have helped you feel engaged?

Appendix D: Qualities of an Effective Focus Group Facilitator

Roles and Responsibilities:

- Keep participants focused, engaged, attentive and interested
- Monitor time and keep the group "on task" as time is limited
- Use suggested prompts, if necessary, to stimulate discussion
- Use the focus group facilitator guide to ensure all topics are covered
- Politely and diplomatically enforce ground rules
- Make sure everyone participates and at a level that is comfortable
- Limit side conversations
- Encourage one person to speak at a time
- Be prepared to explain or restate questions
- Diffuse and pre-empt arguments

After the focus group, work with the note taker to complete the Debrief Discussion Tool. To facilitate the debriefing discussion, review the notes of the discussion, discussing areas that seemed particularly important or salient given your knowledge of the research questions.

Capture these insights using the Debrief Discussion Tools.

Effective Facilitators:

- Have good listening skills
- Have good observation skills
- Have good speaking skills
- Can foster open and honest dialogue among diverse groups and individuals
- Can remain impartial (i.e., do not give her/his opinions about topics, because this can influence what people say)
- Can encourage participation when someone is reluctant to speak up
- Can manage participants who dominate the conversation
- Are sensitive to gender and cultural issues
- Are sensitive to differences in power among and within groups

Appendix E: Staff Survey Questions

A. Are our Grade 12's adequately prepared to leave high school and move on with life? (10 min written response)

B. What communities do you belong to within the school? How do you contribute to those communities? Do you feel like you belong to a JP community? (10 min—5 for individual written response, 5 for group discussion)

C. What does a successful JP community look like? (3 min individual written response. Do we want discussion here? Small group or full group?)

D. What could we be doing to help students:

   a. Get through the day?
   b. Get the most out of classes?
   c. Pass all their subjects?
   d. Leave high school and move on with life?

E. What could we be doing to help students:
   a. Connect better with resources at school?
   b. Connect better with peers?
   c. Feel safe in classes and in the hallways/common spaces.
   d. Learn how to have healthy relationships?

F. What does success for you as a teacher mean, if you could define it as broadly as you like?

G. What does a positive teaching and learning environment look like on a school-wide level for you?

H. Please check the top 10 most important indicators of a successful student (**add in top indicators from focus group**)

   Q1: Are the chosen indicators relevant to all students in our school?

   Q2: What student voices may not be represented within this group?

Appendix F: Jasper Place Values Framework

Purpose: To create a landscape of meaning that reflects goals and ways of working within the school. Each staff person, team, and student group might choose to identify a value or goal that resonates for them over the course of their time at the school, and using this framework, move it a little further ahead. Rather than a prescriptive set of annual goals to meet, this framework should provide a base from which individuals can learn about our school community's priorities and get inspired about their own agency within it.

These values are based on focus groups and surveys with staff, students, and community members on the purpose of school, and of ways of creating a more engaged and equitable learning environment (a Great School for All) at JP.

For each value we should have:
 - Description (Staff and Student Outcomes)
 - Measures of School Response-Ability
 - Recommendations

Draft Values:
1) Embrace Diversity

2) Support Multiple Pathways

3) Layered, Equitable Supports

4) We Build Relationships

5) Open, Ongoing Communication (A Networked School)

6) Community of Participation and Belonging (Everyone Belongs)

7) Prepare Students for Life (not just for school)

8) We Are A Safe Space (for individuality, risk, and failure)

9) Culture of Helpfulness and Support (We Care About Each Other)

Appendix G: Value 1—We Are Diversity

Value 1: Embrace Diversity —Team A

Staff Work	Student Learning	Student Outcomes	Staff Outcomes	School Outcomes
We understand and embrace the complexity of our population, we are constantly learning about each other's contexts, strengths, and requirements for success.	Our students choose how to represent themselves in our school community. Their individuality is celebrated as the source of our diversity.	Student progress is as important as product, and how they do matters equally with making good choices about what they do.	All staff including non-teaching staff feel that their contribution to the school is recognized has the chance to share and celebrate.	School celebrations for achievements of many kinds. Equal funding for clubs and school initiatives in arts, athletics, and others. Hallways reflect diversity rather than hierarchy of success. Different kinds of awards nights and celebrations.

Indicators of Success (what it looks, feels, and sounds like at JP)

- We see staff collaborating on a regular basis (departmental and interdepartmental)
- The students want to be here (sense of belonging)
- hear students speaking positively about the school
- they come back to volunteer/coach/hang out
- Students feel comfortable enough in the school to explore their passions/interests
- Students connect with at least one staff member because of shared identity or interest

> "Teachers and staff being supportive of the variety of needs that students have, and making that known— we need to let kids know that if they need to learn differently, they can."
> —Staff member

Measures (what we count)
- The incredible list of clubs available for students
- Increasing number of student-led ALO sessions
- The spread of leadership activities that the students can earn credit in (Jema'ah to first aid, etc.)

Possible Next Steps:
- Weekly profiles of JP Alumni (not just athletics)
- JP Alumni come back to share where they are now, highlight diversity of pathways (panel discussion ALO session)
- Encourage more students to lead student-led ALO sessions
- Change language from anti-discrimination to something more positive like 'encouraging inclusive environment'

Appendix H: We Support Multiple Pathways

Value 2: Support Multiple Pathways —B

Staff Work	Student Learning	Public Assurance (student)	Public Assurance (staff)	Public Assurance (school)
Recognition and celebration of all kinds of success. We honor kids at all levels for what they bring to the table and their unique approaches to goals and solutions.	Our students self-assess and define success for themselves using our supports. They are active co-creators of their pathways. They feel recognized, visible, and acknowledged	Students are using ALO time effectively. They are seeking out courses of study that will enhance their skills and support their struggles.	Staff approach student problems as context problems rather than person problems. Staff find "ways in" for students.	Peer mentorship programs, STAR, ACCESS, and Global Café, Student Services team, ALO Days, student-led activities and workshops, Leadership Programs

Indicators of Success (what it looks, feels, and sounds like at JP)
- Students feel valued & respected regardless of their chosen pathway
- Counselling, career center, RAP, work experience, career fair, post-secondary fair
- ALO to explore various pathways
- Clubs, Teams, etc. —Student & Staff involvement and awareness of all that is offered
- Meeting IPP Goal; honours lunch....

- The sheer number of options that students can choose.
- Table groups for staff meeting with diverse faculties and perspectives.
- Teachers feel as if there is an "open door policy" in regards to getting into other teacher's classrooms.
- Students of varying abilities are included in commencement and other school-wide events.
- ACCESS Room.
- tutoring program
- STAR Program.
- Access to lots of CTS options: trades like hairdressing, welding, building construction, culinary, fashion design, etc.
- JP Involvement in the community: seeking work experience and contributing through volunteering
- RAP - community connections

> "Adults need to be talking about the fact that there's more than one way to do something. Possibilities and process—teachers need to understand the student's process and then work with that, build on it, expand it."
> —Community Member

Measures (what we count)
– Are students selecting appropriate ALO sessions to explore various pathways?
– How many programs we offer supporting student choice?
– How students are made aware of the various pathways (posters, TV, Announcements)?
– Teacher relaying opportunities outside of the school
  - How many different supports do we offer?
  - How often do students engage with and use the services/supports?
– This is a very difficult area to quantify—there are so many intangibles, and success is a very subjective concept.

Possible Next Steps
– Poster/Calendar with clubs (etc.) —with contacts, room #, Dates, etc. (Monthly/bi-weekly)
– Weekly bulletin...
  - Making the outcome of all courses (interactions classes, etc.) concrete/tangible or observable.
  - Data

Appendix I: Layered, Equitable Supports

Value 3: Layered, Equitable Supports —Team C

Staff Work	Student Learning	Public Assurance (student)	Public Assurance (staff)	Public Assurance (institutional)
Supports in many forms for many reasons, and multiple ways to access services.	Our students know how and where to ask for help in school, both in general and for their specific needs	Students can name the resources they use and ones they could or should use for certain things. Each student has what they need to make school a positive environment and experience.	Staff is familiar with the supports in the school and is able to improvise solutions and introductions to programs that can help students as the need arises.	Institutional tools and processes for connecting staff and students with in-school as well as community supports in appropriate ways. Program evolution to fit changing student demographics and contexts.

Indicators of Success (what it looks, feels, and sounds like at JP)

– Staff & students can describe/explain the variety of supports that exist within our school
– Staff and students
– Programs that address every level of learner
– Parents are able to communicate
– Students are advocates for themselves and others
– Fluid communication between the supports, staff and students so everyone is on the same page
– Staff support - they are aware of supports available to them
– Students feel that lived experiences outside of the school are taken into consideration within the school
– Every student has access to some type of support; for example, academic, mental health, financial, basic needs, physical, community supports as well once they leave school and while in school as well.

> "Students with financial needs could have the chance to get a lunch" —Student
>
> "All schools should have special programs for the disabled" —Student
>
> "Gender neutral washrooms help us feel safe" —Student

Measures (what we count)

– Improvements in the students (grades, emotional) did the support
– What support programs do we have, is there a need for additional (looking at holistic wellness)?
– How is each program being accessed/utilized?
– What kind of classroom support teachers or students receiving?
– How many students will actually access these types of support?
– Sign-in book in access
– Making sure students truly understand and can articulate their supports

Possible Next Step
– Creation of teaching coaching/ mentorship
– Creation of peer support group
– Support (providing) tangible supports to parents within the different areas
– Do we need to add/take away community partners
– ELL community supports
– How do we encourage and educate these students
– CALM —give top 3 supports you would possibly access
– Peer support groups
– Connecting ESL, new students, Grade 10's

Appendix J: We Build Relationships

Value 4: We Build Relationships —Teams D

Staff Work	Student Learning	Public Assurance (student)	Public Assurance (staff)	Public Assurance (institutional)
Acknowledgement that learning happens through relationships and in all circumstances — inside and outside of the classroom and the formal learning environment.	Students can name key adults in the school with whom they have or want relationships, and understand how those relationships support their learning	Students feel seen and acknowledged by staff, and approach staff to help them find solutions to school-related problems.	Staff understands and uses relationships with students to help find them supports.	Restorative Justice, relationship-centred approaches to discipline, non-teaching staff in areas where they can build relationships, good relationships between support staff, teachers, and APs

Indicators of Success (what it looks, feels, and sounds like at JP)

- One on one conversations.
- As teachers—do we know more than just the name of the student?
- CTS allows for more casual interaction, (incidental — opportunity arises), or offering up alternatives if it's over teacher's head. Whereas conversation is more intentional with core courses. (Log entry)
- How we speak and connect —surface, deep, afraid of us… (afraid to disappoint us). How do we offer up the initial contact??
- Build relationships among students (student collaboration) through classroom group work—switch group members often; teachers circulate to interact with students on an informal level
- IPPs (meaningful discussions between students and teachers regarding goals, etc.), positive connections with adults in the building
- Always somewhere for students to go (Global Cafe, Fitness Centre, etc.)
- Congregation of students in the hallway before and after schools
- Staff functions that encourage meeting new teachers, connections with other colleagues, good will
- Teachers speak informally together in the hallways (meaningful exchange of information —social and school-related)
- Kids keep coming back even when they are not in class
- Doors are open

> "Being there to pick up kids or colleagues when they need support or really ensuring to acknowledge those times — relationships need to be at the centre." —Staff Member

- Saying hi in the hallway
- Kids feel comfortable asking for food
- Kids asking for help in all sorts of areas
- Teachers feel they can get support and plans/actions are communicated back to teacher
- Kids feel that they can be part of a club/group or start up new ones.
- How many students seem not to have a place? … or are alone?
- Does staff have relationships with kids they don't teach
- Staff feels supported and appreciated and that admin and colleagues know what challenges successes and innovations are happening....staff feels "seen"
- Feedback/coaching is provided to all teachers… interaction between admin and staff is not just about dealing with negative situations
- Cross department interactions

Measures (what we count)
- Asking students if they have a person they can talk to. –Asking teachers if there's a student they can talk to.
- Log entries.
- Can the staff name all the staff?
- Number of students involved in teams, participating in school events
- Numbers of staff and student volunteers
- Visible interaction of staff and students
  - Number of school events; for example, touch of class, staff social, hockey game, ball game Terry Fox
  - Teachers are participating in school events, sports, performances
  - Frequency of conflicts
  - Frequency of students seeking help
  - Frequency of teachers seeking support for students
  - Questionnaires, focus groups
  - You can "feel it"
  - Acts of kindness
  - Nature of interactions; for example, randomized observation

Possible Next Steps
- Identify at risk or at promise students —making connections with them.
- Staff encouraged to have the opportunity to relate to students in a different platform then the classroom. (ALO, clubs…)
- Picture book of teachers' first and second semester.
- Or phone book with pictures.
- Try to target quiet, middle of the road kids, kids who leave school right away for hockey, etc.
- Supervising teachers engage students who sit by themselves in the hallway looking isolated
- Diverse club options to attract student interest
- School spirit activities
- Teachers meet for lunch more often

Appendix K: Open, Ongoing Communication (A Networked School)

Value 5: Open, Ongoing Communication (A networked school) —Teams E

Staff Work	Student Learning	Public Assurance (student)	Public Assurance (staff)	Public Assurance (institution)
We have centralized places where staff, students, and parents can find information quickly and easily. We communicate effectively about news, program changes, successes, and resources.	Students know what clubs and events are happening on a weekly basis in school. They are aware of opportunities, curricular and co-curricular, as well as the initiatives of their peers.	Students feel connected and participate in communication and updates. They can name key school events and opportunities.	Staff feel that they know what is happening in the school on a weekly basis. They are informed of program updates and keep their own updates current.	Efficient, open communication. Timely and accessible website, SchoolZone updates, calendar. Central locations and processes for school news and opportunities. Opportunities for students to participate in creating and sharing school news.

Indicators of Success (what it looks, feels, and sounds like at JP)

– Increased attendance at school functions
– Staff meetings that represent our staff's diversity - we leave informed about school events
– Parents are more informed - not always looking for clarification
– Events bulletin board that is updated
– School culture orientation package

Measures (what we count)
– Increased attendance at school events
– Do staff and students feel informed and connected?
– Community involvement
– Google analytics —school calendar, unique website hits —staff, community, parents, students
– How many new students join clubs halfway through semester
– Report on event and clubs numbers

> "We need ways that we can update each other so that we all know what is happening in the school and can support programming." —Staff Member
>
> "JPTV JPTV JPTV!!!!!"
> —Students

Possible Next Steps

– Staff meetings restructured - more informational - Agenda for meetings - sometimes meetings feel like make-work projects
– Live in-class announcements for important events.
– School newspaper
– Appointed class time for announcements (perhaps student room rep)
– Social media campaigns? —invitations to get involves
– Who is not involved/included —how do we count?
– Mid-term survey —how many school activities are you involved in —drop down menu —exit slip one day?

Appendix L: Community of Participation and Belonging

Value 6: Community of Participation and Belonging (Everyone Belongs)
(We Are A Community) —Teams F

Staff Work	Student Learning	Public Assurance (student)	Public Assurance (staff)	Public Assurance (institution)
Students and staff feel as though they have a place in the school and are accepted.	There is a student culture of belonging, welcoming, including. Students feel less alone, have a sense of agency	Students help one another, and take the time to help visitors and new students.	Staff support school events, and feel that their events are supported.	Attendance at school events is high, and there are school-wide events throughout the year. Students and staff feel that they have a role and a place at these events. Within classrooms and clubs, students and staff feel that they can contribute and encourage the contributions of others. Visible markers of belonging and participation, such as school clothing, are evident.

Indicators of Success (what it looks, feels, and sounds like at JP)

- Be more global —Global Café for everyone —how do you get everyone down there? Certain group there —do all kids have a place - Advertising
- Programs/clubs for all students —ability to start something new if possible

Measures (what we count)

- How many students volunteer for events; for example, REB tournament, open house, and registration
- Tutoring wage availability
- Everyone has a "Place" —find out what kids need
- How many students volunteer for events

Possible Next Steps

- Outdoor classroom the mid atrium —no doors
- Benches —having a place (designed —CTS)
- Art work —changes showcase kids work
- Working calendar —people know what's going on
- Website updated, current
- Advertising —twitter
- Announcements —JPTV new kids stop reading it
- Staff get 'uniform' to be easily identifiable —JP gear
- Random JP gear to classrooms
- JP wear —school pride
- Advertising of global café —more propaganda - assemblies
- Loop distance markers —11 loops + 5kms

"Conversations, welcoming, acceptance, belonging, TRUST." —Staff Member

"If students would help each other and everybody felt safe." —Student

Appendix M: We Prepare Students for Life, Not Just Academics

Value 7: We Prepare Students for Life (not just for academics) —Teams G

Staff Work	Student Learning	Public Assurance (student)	Public Assurance (staff)	Public Assurance (institution)
There are opportunities for students to build transferable life skills and knowledge. We offer programming, both curricular & co-curricular, that helps students create healthy/meaningful/resilient pathways to life after high school. Curriculum is tied to relevant problems and contextualized for students.	Students understand why they learn and study the things they do. They feel prepared for career and life decisions and commitments. They feel that school is a place where they learn about academics, relationships, practical aspects of adulthood, careers, and important life choices.	Students know where to find information on programs related to health and wellness, mental health, career preparation, study tools, and life skills. They can identify portions of the curriculum that are related to these areas and feel the information is relevant to their future.	Staff understands and incorporates strategies to link learning to life through curricular and co-curricular means.	CALM and skill-oriented classes are engaging and constantly updated to reflect student needs for relevant and up-to-date information. New knowledge-building areas are added as they become contextually relevant —i.e. cyber bullying, self-defense, urban agriculture

Indicators of Success (what it looks, feels, and sounds like at JP)

- Extracurricular activities that are provided for students to be involved in the community such as key club and interact.
- Wide array of programing such as CTS to allow students to obtain skills that will served them well whether it is a career or not
- RAP program, work experience, skills Canada
- Soft skill such as emphasizing work ethic, being on time, seeing things through,
- Mentorships that offered through ALO or other ways
- Facilitating and environment that allows empathy, acceptance and respect
- Explore passion with diverse programming
- Exposure to a variety of future career choices
- Variety of support networks to learn about career choice possibilities
- Updated displays for career pathways and the requirements
- Relationships with students allow them to see the career connections within the course material
- Life skills are given importance...organized, prepared, respect, and people skills

> "School should provide an environment to discover what you enjoy doing, learn what you want to be, what skills you need as an adult, how to be a valuable, responsible citizen who has the ability to create change in the world in some regard." —Student

- Availability to experience the 'career' outside the classroom
- Happiness in career more important than size of the paycheque

Measures (what we count)
- We can measure the number of project that have been completed such as candy grams at the school level, community level such Terry Fox and Christmas hampers, and international accomplishments such as Africa We Care Water Project.
- How many students are participating and being responsible - actual numbers
- Anecdotally by talking with students and determining their attitudes and values through focus groups
- Awards/Competitions
- Career displays/speakers
- Professionalism of presentations
- Club participation and ability for students to lead within those clubs
- Graduates give info on their 'career' success and happiness
- Variety of 'careers' after high school

Possible Next Steps
- Expose more students to programs such as RAP and Work-experience
- Survey students to see what they feel they are missing in their experience here at JP
- Continue with ALO to provide multiple experiences for our students
- Allow students to keep their EPSB email after their high school career for communication purposes
- Testimonials of graduates about good/bad and areas of improvement
- Continual upkeep of careers and the requirements therein
- Use these tools to 'educate' our students in the variety of careers available

Appendix N: We are a Safe Space (for individuality, risk and failure)

Value 8: We Are a Safe Space (For risk, innovation, experimentation, curiosity, and failure) (Intellectual Safety) —Teams G

Staff Work	Student Learning	Public Assurance (student)	Public Assurance (staff)	Public Assurance (institution)
Room is made for "failing better" and learning from risk and failure. This is emphasized through culture, procedures, language, and programming.	Students are curious, creative, and feel able to take risks. They feel comfortable showing vulnerabilities that are necessary for relationships, learning, and trust.	Students present with and for each other, mentor their peers, and collaborate on projects. Those who need help ask for it.	Staff provides support for peer collaboration and competition is friendly and light-hearted. Students are encouraged to take appropriate risks, make mistakes and fail better through role modeling, class structure, and discipline processes.	School provides programming that is focused on collaboration, student-led activity, and student-generated programming. Consequences are logical and explained.

Indicators of Success (what it looks, feels, and sounds like at JP)
- Students know that there are mental health resources and supports within the school.
- Acknowledging and validating feelings of anxiety -> students (and staff) being more open and honest with one another, asking for support and help when needed.
- Providing students with opportunities to take initiative to create their own projects, space for students to come forward with their ideas and there is a culture of learning and failing and growing (i.e. Global Café)
- Culture of community at the school; common identity, shared pride: eye contact in the hallways, not on cell phones, talking and engaging with one another
- The importance of and opportunities for self-care is actively promoted
- Staff is given opportunities to experiment and try new things (i.e. teach new classes in different areas). Space for staff to take risks and room to experiment; places to innovate and fail

> "A safe environment for exploring —mistakes help them grow, and the confidence to make mistakes." —Community Member

- Classroom participation is high because there is safety to take risks: more students participating in class —especially students who wouldn't normally say anything. They feel comfortable and safe enough to participate. Students feel safe enough to contribute and participate in discussions and ask questions.
- Classroom discussions: willingness to engage in discussion and explore ideas
- Willingness to share work (students and staff): are students feeling comfortable with peer evaluations
- Students are aware of opportunities and using resources like Access, STAR, peer tutoring: willing to mentor (be the expert) or willing to be vulnerable and ask for help. - -
- Student supports
  - able to ask questions within a diverse group at staff meetings (teams)
  - opportunities through Clubs and ALO days
  - student lead ALO days
  - staff willing to risk failure, is modelling for students
  - student tutors in Access
  - classes start with "what if's, how would you, where do you think this idea"
  - teacher share experiences, where they have been/are learners
  - ALO, teachers be students
  - teachers coming into see other teachers to get help

- In Construction Technologies, students are comfortable showing their work and know they won't be ridiculed. The feedback is constructive (both from a teaching and peer perspective). We're confident that this is a good example of what is happening in all disciplines taught at JP.

- Kids are joining new clubs in the school or clubs that are new to them (for example, a group of boys participating in a home economics oriented ALO day). Students seem at ease with the possibility of failure in this area.

- A lot of collaboration happens in our fitness centre.
- Peer tutor program fosters a climate of mentorship.

- Number of students trying out for athletic teams (it's always way more than who will make the team). Obviously those students are feeling encouraged to participate even though it is highly unlikely they will be selected at the end of the process.

- Flow of school in the first few weeks.
- Effort to ease the transition for our grade 9/10 students (for example, tours, open house, welcome week, grade 10 scavenger hunt).

- Classes start with "What if..." "How would you..." "Were do you think this idea…"
- Teachers share experiences where they have been/are learners —ALO, teachers become students
- Students coming in to see other teachers to get help

Measures (what we count)
- Survey about awareness of opportunities: How many kids are aware of opportunities for peer tutoring and mentoring; how many students are willing to participate either as the mentor and mentee. Present measure: how many students do we currently have who use/are aware of these opportunities?
- Student involvement in activities/extracurricular/opportunities in and around the school
- The open door classrooms at lunch and afterschool
- Safe spaces—Access, Student Services, Star, Global Cafe
- Number of different programs, extra-curricular activities
- Time given to collaborate
- Multiple assessment methods
- Club activities-registrations
- Access — students asking for help and students being tutors
- Track the number of different clubs and teams and students who are regular participants with those groups.
- Club activities —registrations
- ALO —ask why did you pick this— new or reinforces what you like?

Possible Next Steps
- Using failure as a step in success; part of evolving: reclaiming the word "failure" — redefining this word and the importance of it as part of learning; something you can learn from. If you cannot "fail", then you cannot "win." Rejection is part of learning, growth, potential building, strength, and resilience. Being aware of language as educators. Questioning "what don't I know?" because then you can look at what you haven't learned and examine how you can proceed
- Teachers referring students (typically high-achievers too) to STAR (and other places of support in the school) as well —breaking down the mental health stigma to serve and be available to all students.
- Acknowledging emotional reactions and validating emotions i.e. anxiety, working to combat anxiety —what's the worst that could happen?
- Teachers trained on inquiry learning (peer or in service)
- teachers can attend/experience ALO Sessions as students
- more opportunity to bring in student voice in staff meetings/ students making decisions/ having a voice in what is happening to the in this thing we call school.
- being part of school not just having school "happen" to them. Engaged vs. passive.

A focus on decreasing the intimidation factor for trying new things (like our fitness centre)

"Grade 10 Day" … the first operational day of school, ONLY grade 10's attend so they can get comfortable with their classes, the school and the flow BEFORE the grade 11's and 12's arrive (which would be the next day). This staggered start is similar to what St. St. FX does and seems to work very well for easing the grade 10's into the building. This day could include an assembly, scavenger hunt; welcome BBQ, t-shirts (for example, Class of 2018), etc.

Appendix O: Culture of Helpfulness and Support

Value 9: Culture of Helpfulness and Support (We Care About Each Other)
Teams H

Staff Work	Student Learning	Public Assurance (student)	Public Assurance (staff)	Public Assurance (institution)
There is a culture of care and support within the school.	Students know how to care for one another, and develop and practice empathy as one of their core life skills.	Students feel cared for by staff and each other. Students care for one another in the way they behave and build opportunities	Staff cares for students and each other, and model empathy for students. Time is taken for genuine interactions where possible.	Institutional procedures take place alongside a culture of understanding, and student wellbeing is always put before other outcomes.

Indicators of Success (what it looks, feels, and sounds like at JP)

> "We need structures to ensure that all students feel a sense of caring, an ethos of care" –Staff Member
>
> "Empathy teaches you to reach out, build your confidence, not judge someone so harshly"
> –Student

– Access is full of students at lunch, after school and in spare block
– Interactions between teachers and councilors
– Students and staff know the different services that are available
– Collaboration time for teaching and non-teaching staff is set aside
– Opportunities for professional development where teachers can help each other
– Staff knowledge of who to ask for help -- who is in charge of what areas
– Smiling faces, positive attitudes
– Visible Welcome Week/Orientation:
– Team building/welcome week activities
– Hallway helpers during orientation
– School tours
– Leadership team is visible first week
– Parent Sessions that are successful
– GSA participation/ awareness of the GSA
– A Mental Health care day
– A Career Day
– A Career Services department
– When the students respond with cheers for other student's successes (Levi at Grad was cheered and helped in the hallways)

- Caring between students (Responding and talking with students with differences, talking with Annie and Sean).
- Interactions students included throughout the school

- ACCESS, STAR, Peer tutors, Counselling
- Students are helpful and friendly to all
- Students work well in groups
- Teachers want to know student stories and what to do, how to help
- Staff speak positively of students
- Glass half full —talk about positives
- We give kids 2nd chances

Measures (what we count)
- # Of students registered in Access for tutoring
- # Of kids utilizing the STAR room
- # of students using Global Cafe as a place to collaborate
- Ask kids did you feel welcome at orientation / did you get the help you needed
- Attendance at parent sessions like scholarship meetings/test anxiety sessions
- Attendance at parent teacher night
- Participation in GSA
- Participation in Mental Health Care day
- Participation in Career Day
- Retention of programs
- Number of staff involved in programs, coaching, clubs
- Number of student led programs
- Student participation in extracurricular
- Measure # of students receiving supports (Breakfast club, global, access, star, tutoring, counseling)
- School and community usage of building
- Improvement in attendance
- Success of restorative practices

Possible Next Steps
  - At new teacher orientation - make a "who's who" list and teach new teacher/staff who to ask their questions to
  - New Teacher - monthly meetings (mentorship)
  - Anecdotal information matters!!! How do we collect it and make it count!
  Student/staff comment box —share how people help

Appendix P: Managing the Research Project

Timeline of Activities

November 2014: Meeting with People for Education in Toronto
– JC Couture, P. Jean Stiles to discuss broader measures of school success. Papers from Measuring What Matters were shared with P. Jean Stiles for reflection.

December 2014: Creation of JP ResponseAbility Lab
Team Members include: Auralia Brooke (Researcher in Residence, JP), Sean Bradley (JP Global Café Coordinator, Food Sustainability and Restorative Justice), JC Couture (Associate Coordinator, Research, ATA), Julia Dalman (JP Global Café Coordinator, Community Building and Public Engagement), Craig Daniel (Assistant Principal, JP), Bill Howe (Consultant EPSB, Innovation and Research), Stephen Murgatroyd (Consultant, CEO of the Collaborative Media Group), Ana Paulino, (Assistant Principal, JP), Sam Sellar, Professor, University of Queensland, Brisbane, AU.), P. Jean Stiles (Principal, Jasper Place)

– JP Lab members met to discuss different ways to measure school success and develop protocols that might help to explore rich accountabilities and measure the adaptive capacity of Jasper Place.
– JP lab members read domain papers commissioned by the People for Education, "Measuring What Matters" (People for Education, 2014). The group discussed the domain papers. A 2-day conversation helped to flush out the idea that measuring the adaptive capacity of a school would be preferable to measuring individual indicators of student success.

January 2015: JP Lab meeting
– Develop and pilot an effective process for defining and measuring broader measures of school success
– All JP Lab members convened to discuss possible protocols and processes for focus group facilitation and discussions.
– Decision that the protocol would be the same for each focus group
– Department Heads were trained to facilitate focus group discussions with their cross-curricular teams. See Appendices X, Y and Z to see facilitation-training notes.
– Decision that all staff, including teachers, support staff and custodians would be included in the focus group activity. The activity would be held on a full Professional learning day activity.
– Questions developed for focus groups and surveys.
– Sam Sellar Skype's into the meeting and reveals similar processes and questions that were developed and administered in the PETRA project in Australia.

February 2015: Meeting with People for Education in Toronto
– JC Couture, P. Jean Stiles - Shared results with key collaborators to build a conversation with other schools and education network

- Network/information sharing with partners, "Measuring What Matters" People for Education working group

February/March 2015: Focus Groups facilitated by P. Jean Stiles, JP Lab members and JP Faculty Council members
- Develop and pilot an effective process for defining and measuring broader measures of school success
- Stakeholder focus groups refine working definitions of engagement and equity, and identify indicators of each within the Jasper Place student context
- 150 staff members
- Six classes of students from Gr. 10-12, diverse representation of learners and programs. 180 students hosted in Focus Group discussions.
- Three community focus groups
- One alumni focus group of Jasper Place students graduated from the school within the previous three years.
- Focus group of First Nations, Metis, and Inuit (FNMI) community members, students, alumni and staff
- Parent Council focus group

March 2015: Shared results with key collaborators and build a conversation with other schools/education networks
- Presentation at ULEAD, ATA Leadership Conference (Auralia Brooke, Sam Sellar)
- Presentation at Jasper Place for JP Lab Members (Auralia Brooke, Sam Sellar)

April 2015: Meeting with JP ResponseAbility Lab
- Meeting with JP Lab members to discuss data sorting, emergent themes and next steps.
- Discussion about how to share findings of data back with focus groups.
- Decision to form a student group to assist and provide advice to JP Lab Members.

May 2015: Meeting of JP Lab Members to Sort Data
- Analysis of focus group data to design a values' framework unique to Jasper Place (see Appendix 6 Framework Document) Used focus group feedback to determine specific indicators for each value, and set long-and short-term targets for school
- Meet with staff and student groups to create a snapshot of the school's current progress in each of the value areas from the framework.

September 2015: Professional Learning Activity
- Staff Professional Learning activity to develop indicators for the Values Framework.

October 2015: Use Template to Document Indicators
- Refine Indicators (See Appendices G-O)
- Identify possible relationships between school initiatives, approaches, and programs and the indicators from the values' framework

– Close feedback loop with stakeholders to communicate results, revise, and adapt accordingly.

December-March 2015/2016
– Measure and track the ways in which engagement with this process affects our adaptive capacity

– Work with adaptive capacity measures to develop context-specific understandings and goals for the school's ability to respond nimbly to evolving student and staff needs, community expectations, and policy environments

– Data used to adapt, reflect, revise, and update school practice

– Continuation of feedback process both internally for school progress and externally with partners/stakeholders

March/April 2016

– Share results with key collaborators and build a conversation with other schools/education networks

– ATA conference presentations and discussion

– Network/information sharing with PETRA in Australia, FINAL (Finland/Alberta) and NORCAN (Norway/Canada) partners, "Measuring What Matters," People for Education working group

– Progress reports and final reports shared with key district and provincial partners and stakeholders

– Values' framework and strategic plan shared with partners

– Measure and track the ways in which engagement with this process affects our adaptive capacity

– Work with adaptive capacity measures to develop context-specific understandings and goals for the school's ability to respond nimbly to evolving student and staff needs, community expectations, and policy environments

– Map of ways in which school initiatives support outcomes in strategic plan and affect broader measures of success

– Continue tracking, analysis, and feedback of information between school initiatives, stakeholders, and administration. Clear communication of data results to key positions to ensure that relationships between opportunities and environments are recognized and explored

Appendix Q: Ethics Approval

Notification of Approval

Date:	June 20, 2016
Study ID:	Pro00066033
Principal Investigator:	Penelope Stiles
Study Supervisor:	James Parsons
Study Title:	Rich Accountabilities: Moving Beyond "Datafication"
Approval Expiry Date:	Monday, June 19, 2017

Thank you for submitting the above study to the Research Ethics Board 2. Your application has been reviewed and approved on behalf of the committee.

A renewal report must be submitted next year prior to the expiry of this approval if your study still requires ethics approval. If you do not renew on or before the renewal expiry date, you will have to re-submit an ethics application.

Approval by the Research Ethics Board does not encompass authorization to access the staff, students, facilities or resources of local institutions for the purposes of the research.

Sincerely,

Stanley Varnhagen, PhD
Chair, Research Ethics Board 2

Note: This correspondence includes an electronic signature (validation and approval via an online system).

Appendix R: Ethics Review

Print	Close

1.1 Study Identification

All questions marked by a red asterisk * are required fields. However, because the mandatory fields have been kept to a minimum, answering only the required fields may not be sufficient for the REB to review your application.

Please answer <u>all relevant questions</u> that will reasonably help to describe your study or proposed research.

1.0   *** Short Study Title** *(restricted to 250 characters)*:
Rich Accountabilities: Moving Beyond "Datafication"

2.0   *** Complete Study Title** *(can be exactly the same as short title)*:

Rich Accountabilities: Moving Beyond "Datafication"

3.0   *** Select the appropriate Research Ethics Board (***Detailed descriptions are available by clicking the HELP link in the upper right hand corner of your screen***)**:
REB 2

4.0   *** Is the proposed research:**
Unfunded

5.0   *** Name of Principal Investigator** *(at the University of Alberta, Covenant Health, or Alberta Health Services)*:
Penelope Stiles

6.0   **Investigator's Supervisor** *(required for applications from undergraduate students, graduate students, post-doctoral fellows and medical residents to Boards 1, 2, 3. HREB does not accept applications from student PIs)*

James Parsons

7.0   *** Type of research/study:**
Graduate Student - Thesis, Dissertation, Capping Project

8.0   **Study Coordinators or Research Assistants:** People listed here can edit this application and will receive all HERO notifications for the study:

Name	Employer
There are no items to display	

9.0   **Co-Investigators:** People listed here can edit this application but do not receive HERO notifications unless they are added to the study email list:

Name	Employer	Employer.ID

There are no items to display

10.0   **Study Team** *(Co-investigators, supervising team, other study team members):* People listed here cannot edit this application and do not receive HERO notifications:

Last Name	First Name	Organization	Role/Area of Responsibility	Phone	Email
Brooke	Auralia	EPSB	Researcher in Residence	780 408 9000	auralia.brooke@epsb.ca
Dalman	Julia	EPSB	Community Liaison Global Cafe	780 408 9000	julia.dalman@epsb.ca
Bradley	Sean	Not with EPSB anymore. No contact	Community Liaison Global Cafe	780 408 9000	No email address
Maguire	Kerry	EPSB	Department Head Leadership	780 408 9000	Kerry.Maguire@epsb.ca
Howe	Bill	EPSB	Consultant	780 429 8000	bill.howe@epsb.ca

1.5 Conflict of Interest

1.0   *** Are any of the investigators or their immediate family receiving any personal remuneration (including investigator payments and recruitment incentives but excluding trainee remuneration or graduate student stipends) from the funding of this study that is not accounted for in the study budget?**

◯ Yes 🔵 **No**

If YES, explain:

2.0   *** Do any of investigators or their immediate family have any proprietary interests in the product under study or the outcome of the research including patents, trademarks, copyrights, and licensing agreements?**

◯ Yes ● **No**

3.0 * **Is there any compensation for this study that is affected by the study outcome?**

◯ Yes ● **No**

4.0 * **Do any of the investigators or their immediate family have equity interest in the sponsoring company? (This does not include Mutual Funds)**

◯ Yes ● **No**

5.0 * **Do any of the investigators or their immediate family receive payments of other sorts, from this sponsor (i.e. grants, compensation in the form of equipment or supplies, retainers for ongoing consultation and honoraria)?**

◯ Yes ● **No**

6.0 * **Are any of the investigators or their immediate family, members of the sponsor's Board of Directors, Scientific Advisory Panel or comparable body?**

◯ Yes ● **No**

7.0 * **Do you have any other relationship, financial or non-financial, that, if not disclosed, could be construed as a conflict of interest?**

◯ Yes ● **No**

If YES, explain:

Important
If you answered YES to any of the questions above, you may be contacted by the REB for more information or asked to submit a Conflict of Interest Declaration.

1.6 Research Locations and Other Approval

1.0 * **List the locations of the proposed research, including recruitment activities. Provide name of institution or organization, town, or province as applicable**
Jasper Place Secondary School, Edmonton, Alberta

2.0 * **Indicate if the study will use or access facilities, programmes, resources, staff, students, specimens, patients or their records, at any of the sites affiliated with the following** *(select all that apply)*:
Not applicable

List all facilities or institutions as applicable:

3.0 **Multi-Institution Review**

    * 3.1 Has this study already received approval from another REB?
    ⚪ Yes 🔘 **No**

4.0 **Does this study involve pandemic or similar emergency health research?**
    ⚪ Yes 🔘 **No**

    If YES, are you the lead investigator for this pandemic study?
    ⚪ Yes ⚪ No

5.0 **If this application is closely linked to research previously approved by one of the University of Alberta REBs or has already received ethics approval from an external ethics review board(s), provide the HERO study number, REB name or other identifying information. Attach any external REB application and approval letter in Section 7.1.11 – Other Documents.**

2.1 Study Objectives and Design

1.0 **Date that you expect to start working with human participants:**

2.0 **Date that you expect to finish working with human participants, in other words, you will no longer be in contact with the research participants, including data verification and reporting back to the group or community:**

3.0 *** Provide a lay summary of your proposed research suitable for the general public. If the PI is not affiliated with the University of Alberta, Alberta Health Services or Covenant Health, please include institutional affiliation.**

This research project will study data collected during a school wide initiative where staff, students, parents and community collaborated to develop a school wide values framework to determine "What makes a great school for all?" "What is an equitable school?" and What is an engaged school?" My research is a follow-up to the project, and examines how these protocols might impact the "adaptive capacity" of a school. The focus discussion groups brought together participants to talk about how equity and student engagement in their school, Jasper Place. The data used for secondary analysis has been **anonymized**.

The original study was designed to build a process and protocols for schools to build rich accountability frameworks into their measures of success. The results of the study were a values framework for the

school. This secondary data analysis examines how the study itself and the process of data production affected the adaptive capacity of the institution in which it was implemented.

As an academic study of school accountability in an innovative school project, this research could provide new knowledge of how leadership, student development, and programming for rich accountabilities affect school adaptive capacity, and how this changes accountability dialogues at the local level.

This thesis explores how enhancing the adaptive capacity of a school serves as an equitable and effective way to measure a school's success rather than the accountability practices that currently exist in Alberta. This thesis further explores the question: "How can a commitment to equity as a path to student engagement contribute to the adaptive capacity of a school?"

This is an application to conduct a secondary analysis of already collected data, and I will be analyzing the data collected from the staff meeting activities and the focus group sessions with students, staff, and parent and community members.

4.0 *** Provide a description of your research proposal including study objectives, background, scope, methods, procedures, etc.). Footnotes and references are not required and best not included here. Research methods questions in Section 5 will prompt additional questions and information.**

Research Aims

1. Identify gaps in existing information about students and schools;
2. Seek richer information that provides more complex and balanced pictures of schooling   and its multiple 'achievements';
3. Support schools, communities, and government to develop methods for sharing knowledge   and information during the design, practice and reporting of teaching and learning;
4. Better understand factors that impede schools making a difference for their students and communities; and,
5. Develop the concept of adaptive capacity and response-ability at Jasper Place High School and, perhaps, learn how to share what we had learned with other schools.

Action Research Projected Outcomes

As a group, we saw our work as action research, and decided that our project outcomes would be to (both specifically within our own work and within the work of schools in general):

• Develop and pilot an effective process for defining and measuring broader measures of school success;

• Use the process to build a values' framework and strategic plan for engagement and equity at

pilot school;

• Share results with key collaborators and build a conversation with other schools and education networks;

• Measure and track the ways in which engagement with this process affects the school's adaptive capacity;

• Create a map of ways in which school initiatives support outcomes in strategic plan and affect broader measures of success; and,

• Collect data the might be used to adapt, reflect, revise, and update school practice.

Background and Scope

The predominant focus on grades, graduation rates, and other instrumental indicators of school performance can prevent educators from focusing on excellence through equity, particularly as this refocus relates to reconsidering assumed indicators of student engagement. This thesis explores how enhancing the adaptive capacity of a school serves as an equitable and effective way to measure a school's success rather than the accountability practices that currently exist in Alberta. This thesis further explores the question: "How can a commitment to equity as a path to student engagement contribute to the adaptive capacity of a school?"

This study will use data produced during a study of how the value of education is "measured" for students and staff at one school – Jasper Place High School – in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada – as it worked to address a more fulsome education for its school community, including students, parents, and teachers. To do this work, the study offered the idea of a 'ResponseAbility Lab' as a set of protocols and a vehicle for schools to test the belief that they can and should evaluate how they nurture students' abilities to learn and thrive in the context of the growing complexity and volatility of their lives, communities and global context.

The original study was designed to build a process and protocols for schools to build rich accountability frameworks into their measures of success. The results of the study were a values framework for the school. This secondary data analysis examines how the study itself and the process of data production affected the adaptive capacity of the institution in which it was implemented.

Secondary analysis explores how enhancing the adaptive capacity of a school serves as a more equitable and effective way to measure a school's success than the accountability practices that currently exist in Alberta. This thesis further explores the question: "How can a commitment to equity as a path to student engagement contribute to the adaptive capacity of a school?" Rather than focusing on the values framework produced by the original study, this work describes how three key engaged commitments reflected in the study's process can be transformative in ways that help a school community reflect more deeply on its values; gather and critically examine information about varied perceptions about the experience of learning and life in the school; and act in responsive ways to create an entire community of more engaged learning. Moving through and past the inertia of *not knowing* and *not wanting to know* offers hope and possibility for creating 'rich accountabilities' that sustain the work of schools committed to equity as a path to student engagement.

Understanding the adaptive capacity of a school can be a difficult undertaking, which is complicated by the complex ecosystems in which schools are nested in a VACU (volatile, ambiguous, complex and uncertain) world (Berliner, 2009). An ecological view of schools and school systems allows school

leaders to take a non-linear approach that has interaction as its main principle (Keny, 2002) and allows for better study of adaptivity. Viewed through this lens, each eco-system has a distinct culture that has a unique set of rules of operation and rules of engagement.

Schools function between these systems and are also eco-systems in and of themselves. Those designed with an industrial model of operation function from top down and bottom up; and, these linear thinking approaches imply cause and effect and power and control. Through networks of relationships, schools navigate and facilitate adaptability and resilience.

Schools that demonstrate high levels of adaptive capacity are responsive to what is happening inside and outside their organizational boundaries, and have a culture where feedback is imperative, where learning is stimulated in all aspects of the system (Davidson-Hunt & Berkes, 2003). Principals in such schools must distribute leadership and learning, thereby increasing diversity and flexibility within each community of the school and allowing those communities to find their own best ways of working through problems they might face while aligning broadly with the values and parameters of the school ecosystem (Folke et al, 2002). This approach to problem-solving allows both staff and students to develop areas of expertise and address changing contexts while still working toward a common goal. For this reason, adaptive leadership has trust as the central tenet. Leadership and trust in leadership ability at all levels within the school determines both the extent and depth of response to externally imposed requirements (Murgatroyd, 2013).

Methods

Through research, collaboration, and practical application, the Jasper Place Response-Ability Lab, a team of action researchers, intended to build an evidence-based case for broader measures of school success. The process design allowed work with school stakeholders (staff, students, and community) to determine what an equitable and engaged learning environment should look, feel, and sound like. An overall goal was that this process be scalable to other schools hoping to broaden their definitions of success, and that other schools will emerge with their own values' frameworks and strategic plans for equity and engagement based on local conditions. This thesis was an analysis of secondary data that was public and had been previously collected by the Response-Ability lab team. Data from the focus discussion groups and staff meetings was analyzed for this thesis.

Original data was collected from 31 focus groups with a total of approximately 425 participants. Participants included secondary school students from Grades 10, 11, and 12, parents, teachers and other school staff, and community members. Data was collected between September 2014 and June 2015. Please see Appendices for focus group outlines and full lists of the questions discussed.

Procedures

This data was collected during typical staff professional learning activities and focus discussion groups held with participants who agreed to participate through invitation or as a classroom activity. Data was analyzed using a mixture of narrative inquiry techniques and traditional qualitative coding methods. Once data had been coded, themes were determined.

5.0 Describe procedures, treatment, or activities that are above or in addition to standard practices in this study area *(e.g. extra medical or health-related procedures, curriculum enhancements, extra follow-up, etc.)***:**
N/A

6.0 **If the proposed research is above minimal risk and is not funded via a competitive peer review grant or industry-sponsored clinical trial, the REB will require evidence of scientific review. Provide information about the review process and its results if appropriate.**
Research is not above minimum risk.

7.0 **For clinical research only, describe any sub-studies associated with this application.**

3.1 Risk Assessment

1.0 ***** **Provide your assessment of the risks that may be associated with this research:**
Minimal Risk - research in which the probability and magnitude of possible harms implied by participation is no greater than those encountered by participants in those aspects of their everyday life that relate to the research (TCPS2)

2.0 ***** **Select all that might apply:**

Description of Potential Physical Risks and Discomforts
No Participants might feel physical fatigue, e.g. sleep deprivation
No Participants might feel physical stress, e.g. cardiovascular stress tests
No Participants might sustain injury, infection, and intervention side-effects or complications
No The physical risks will be greater than those encountered by the participants in everyday life

Potential Psychological, Emotional, Social and Other Risks and Discomforts
No Participants might feel psychologically or emotionally stressed, demeaned, embarrassed, worried, anxious, scared or distressed, e.g. description of painful or traumatic events
No Participants might feel psychological or mental fatigue, e.g. intense concentration required
No Participants might experience cultural or social risk, e.g. loss of privacy or status or damage to reputation
No Participants might be exposed to economic or legal risk, for instance non-anonymized workplace surveys
No The risks will be greater than those encountered by the participants in everyday life

3.0 ***** **Provide details of the risks and discomforts associated with the research, for instance, health cognitive or emotional factors, socio-economic status or physiological or health conditions:**
N/A - Secondary data analysis

4.0 ***** **Describe how you will manage and minimize risks and discomforts, as well as**

mitigate harm:
N/A - Secondary data analysis

5.0 *** If your study has the potential to identify individuals that are upset, distressed, or disturbed, or individuals warranting medical attention, describe the arrangements made to try to assist these individuals. Explain if no arrangements have been made:**
N/A - Secondary data analysis

3.2 Benefits Analysis

1.0 *** Describe any potential benefits of the proposed research to the participants. If there are no benefits, state this explicitly:**
No direct benefits.

2.0 *** Describe the scientific and/or scholarly benefits of the proposed research:**
This research will contribute to a body of work around effective ways to measure school success as determined by the adaptive capacity of a school. It will provide data on the effects of leadership opportunities and collaboration on student development and school community health. This is an area that has been studied extensively in scientific and business domains but there is little evidence of academic work on adaptive capacity in the educational sector. Academic study in this area can provide insight into the relative value of these kinds of projects that may be relevant to studies of leadership development, community building, teacher education, school accountability and school transformation.

3.0 **Benefits/Risks Analysis: Describe the relationship of benefits to risk of participation in the research:**
Potential benefits to students and community stakeholders far outweigh the minimal risks involved in reviewing data from the focus group scenarios.

4.1 Participant Information

1.0 *** Who are you studying? Describe the population that will be included in this study.**
Study Participants
Study participants of the original data included 150 Jasper Place staff members; including all the school's teachers, all support staff, and some custodial staff. Six classes of students were participants in focus group discussions. Each class had approximately 35 students; thus, 210 students participated in initial focus group sessions. Classes were chosen to represent grades 10, 11, and 12 and also

represented all academic levels within the school community. Student classes were chosen to represent programming from International Baccalaureate, Advanced Placement, academic and vocational streams, Career and technology, Special Needs and Fine Arts programs. An additional focus group included participants that represented our First Nations, Metis, and Inuit (FNMI) student, staff and community population.

A final student group was comprised of students who had recently graduated from our school and are JP alumni. This group included approximately 24 students who participated in an evening focus group session. Overall, over 240 students participated in these discussions and this represents approximately 10% of the school Jasper Place High School student body.

The Response-Ability team facilitated three community focus group discussion sessions and 30 community members joined in the discussions. Although we made many attempts to host parent focus discussion groups, this was an area we did not experience great success. Overall, parent participation was extremely low and parents were included as participants in the community group discussions. One parent meeting dedicated to this process was scheduled with the Jasper Place School Parent Council; but, less than 10 participants came to the focus group and it was impossible to follow focus group discussion protocol with fidelity.

*Please note that the focus groups asked "typical" questions of students who were reviewing their own "regular" school work. Focus groups resembled regular class discussions about how to evaluate the classroom teaching/learning environments and the school climate in general.

2.0   *** Describe the inclusion criteria for participants (e.g. age range, health status, gender, etc.). Justify the inclusion criteria (e.g. safety, uniformity, research methodology, statistical requirement, etc.)**

Secondary analysis used data from all Jasper Place staff members, 6 randomly chosen classes comprising of 240 students, 3 parent and community focus groups comprising of 30 participants, 1 Jasper Place student alumni focus group of 24 students and 1 First Nations Metis Inuit (FNMI) focus group of 12 participants, and one 11th Grade IB focus group.

3.0   **Describe and justify the exclusion criteria for participants:**

Staff took part in the activities as a part of their regular school professional learning activities. Classes were chosen to represent a broad spectrum of the school student population. Invitations were made to community and parent groups to participate in focus discussion groups and everyone who responded was included in a session. No exclusion criteria was necessary and all participant data was included.

4.0   **Does the research specifically target aboriginal groups or communities?**

      🔵 **Yes** ⭕ No

5.0   *** Will you be interacting with human subjects, will there be direct contact with human participants, for this study?**

    ◯ Yes 🔘 **No**

Will you be obtaining data from human participants (ie. Internet survey responses from human participants)?

    🔘 **Yes** ◯ No

* Does this project SOLELY involve a review of health data (ie. Chart review, analysis of health data held in an electronic chart/database/repository, review of administrative health data)?

    ◯ Yes 🔘 **No**

6.0   **Participants**

How many participants do you hope to recruit *(including controls, if applicable)*
425
Of these how many are controls, if applicable *(Possible answer: Half, Random, Unknown, or an estimate in numbers, etc).*
N/A
If this is a multi-site study, for instance a clinical trial, how many participants *(including controls, if applicable)* **are expected to be enrolled by all investigators at all sites in the entire study?**

7.0   **Justification for sample size:**
The staff sample was the entire staff population as this was regular professional learning activity. The student sample constituted 10% of the school student population. The parent, community and student alumni samples included all participants who wished to participate.

4.3 Recruit Potential Participants

1.0   **Recruitment**

* 1.1 Describe how you will identify potential participants (please be specific as to how you will find potentially eligible participants i.e. will you be screening AHS paper or electronic records, will you be looking at e-clinician, will you be asking staff from a particular area to let you know when a patient fits criteria, will you be sitting in the emergency department waiting room, etc.)
N/A (Secondary data)

1.2 Once you have identified a list of potentially eligible participants, indicate how the potential participants' names will be passed on to the researchers AND how will the potential participants be approached about the research.
N/A

1.3 How will people obtain details about the research in order to make a decision about participating? Select all that apply:

183

There are no items to display

1.4 If appropriate, provide the locations where recruitment will occur*(e.g schools, shopping malls, clinics, etc.)*

2.0   **Pre-Existing Relationships**

2.1 Will potential participants be recruited through pre-existing relationships with researchers *(e.g. Will an instructor recruit students from his classes, or a physician recruit patients from her practice? Other examples may be employees, acquaintances, own children or family members, etc)***?**

⦿ **Yes** ◯ No

2.2 If YES, identify the relationship between the researchers and participants that could compromise the freedom to decline *(e.g. professor-student)***. How will you ensure that there is no undue pressure on the potential participants to agree to the study?**
N/A

3.0   **Outline any other means by which participants could be identified, should additional participants be needed** *(e.g. response to advertising such as flyers, posters, ads in newspapers, websites, email, listservs; pre-existing records or existing registries; physician or community organization referrals; longitudinal study, etc)*
N/A

4.0   **Will your study involve any of the following** *(select all that apply)***?**
None of the above

4.5 Informed Consent Determination

1.0   *** Describe who will provide informed consent for this study (select all that apply). Additional information on the informed consent process is available at: http://www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/eng/policy-politique/initiatives/tcps2-eptc2/chapter3-chapitre3/#toc03-intro**

Nobody will give consent; Waiver of Consent requested

Provide justification for requesting a Waiver of Consent (Minimal risk only, additional guidance available at:http://www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/eng/policy-politique/initiatives/tcps2-eptc2/chapter3-chapitre3/#toc03-1b
This data is being used for secondary analysis.

2.0   **How is participant consent to be indicated and documented? Select all that apply:**

There are no items to display

Except for "Signed consent form" use only, explain how the study information will be communicated and participant consent will be documented. Provide details for EACH of the option selected above:
N/A

3.0   Authorized Representative, Third Party Consent, Assent

3.1 Explain why participants lack capacity to give informed consent*(e.g. age, mental or physical condition, etc.).*
N/A

3.2 Will participants who lack capacity to give full informed consent be asked to give assent?
◯ Yes ◯ No

Provide details. IF applicable, attach a copy of assent form(s) in the Documentation section.
N/A

3.3 In cases where participants (re)gain capacity to give informed consent during the study, how will they be asked to provide consent on their own behalf?
N/A

4.0   What assistance will be provided to participants, or those consenting on their behalf, who have special needs? *(E.g. non-English speakers, visually impaired, etc)***:**
N/A

5.0   * If at any time a <u>participant wishes to withdraw, end, or modify their participation in the research</u> or certain aspects of the research, describe how their participation would be ended or changed.
N/A

6.0   Describe the circumstances and limitations of <u>data withdrawal</u> from the study, including the last point at which it can be done:
N/A

7.0   Will this study involve any group(s) where non-participants are present? For example, classroom research might involve groups which include participants and non-participants.
◯ Yes ⦿ **No**

4.8 Aboriginal People

1.0   * If you will be obtaining consent from Elders, leaders, or other community representatives, provide details:

No

2.0   If leaders of the group will be involved in the identification of potential participants, provide details:
N/A

3.0   Provide details if:
• property or private information belonging to the group as a whole is studied or used;
• the research is designed to analyze or describe characteristics of the group, or
• individuals are selected to speak on behalf of, or otherwise represent the group

No

4.0   * Provide information regarding consent, agreements regarding access, ownership and sharing of research data with communities:
This data was public and was used for secondary research analysis.

5.0   Provide information how final results of the study will be shared with the participating community *(eg. via band office, special presentation, deposit in community school, etc)***?**
N/A

6.0   Is there a research agreement with the community?
   ◯ Yes 🔵 **No**

Provide details about the agreement or why an agreement is not in place, not required, etc.

5.1 Research Methods and Procedures
Some research methods prompt specific ethic issues. The methods listed below have additional questions associated with them in this application. If your research does not involve any of the methods listed below, ensure that your proposed research is adequately described in Section 2.0: Study Objectives and Design or attach documents in Section 7.0 if necessary.

1.0   * This study will involve the following *(select all that apply)*
The list only includes categories that trigger additional page(s) for an online application. For any other methods or procedures, please indicate and describe in your research proposal in the Study Summary, or provide in an attachment:
None of the above

2.0   * Is this study a Clinical trial? (Any investigation involving participants that evaluates the effects of one or more health-related interventions on health outcomes?
   ◯ Yes 🔵 **No**

3.0 **If you are using any tests in this study diagnostically, indicate the member(s) of the study team who will administer the measures/instruments:**

Test Name	Test Administrator	Organization	Administrator's Qualification

There are no items to display

4.0 **If any test results could be interpreted diagnostically, how will these be reported back to the participants?**

6.1 Data Collection

1.0 *** Will the researcher or study team be able to identify any of the participants at any stage of the study?**

🔘 **Yes** ⚪ No

2.0 **Will participants be recruited or their data be collected from Alberta Health Services or Covenant Health or data custodian as defined in the Alberta Health Information Act?**

⚪ Yes 🔘 **No**

Important: Research involving health information must be reviewed by the Health Research Ethics Board.

3.0 **Primary/raw data collected will be** *(check all that apply)***:**
Directly identifying information - the information identifies a specific individual through direct identifiers (e.g. name, social insurance number, personal health number, etc.)
Made Public and cited (including cases where participants have elected to be identified and/or allowed use of images, photos, etc.)

4.0 **If this study involves secondary use of data, list all original sources:**
Thirty one focus groups were held with a total of approximately 425 student, community, staff, and parent participants between September 2014 and June 2015. Data included only these focus group discussions, notes from group discussions, charts used with groups where discussions were recorded, spreadsheets of raw data inputed and coded for students from these discussions, and fillable sheets that were established to measure progress in each value area, Values Framework. See appendices for full copies of questions used and fillable data sheets provided to focus groups. Anonymized versions of this data are available to the public from Edmonton Public School Board in report form as ResponseAbility Lab reports from Jasper Place High School from 2015/2016. Original data has also been presented by Jasper Place School employees at American Educational Research Association Conference 2016.

5.0 **In research where total anonymity and confidentiality is sought but cannot be**

guaranteed *(eg. where participants talk in a group)* **how will confidentiality be achieved?**

Not relevant as this data was used for secondary data analysis.

6.2 Data Identifiers

1.0   *** Personal Identifiers:** will you be collecting - at any time during the study, including recruitment - any of the following *(check all that apply)***:**

Other

If OTHER, please describe:
Group names of teacher teams and class names. Names of parent, community members that participated in the group focus group discussions. These identifiers were removed once the data was coded, themed and put into the spread sheets marked Equity, Engagement and Purpose of School.

2.0   **Will you be collecting - at any time of the study, including recruitment of participants - any of the following** *(check all that apply)***:**

There are no items to display

If OTHER, please describe:
No

3.0   *** If you are collecting any of the above, provide a comprehensive rationale to explain why it is necessary to collect this information:**
N/A

4.0   **If identifying information will be removed at some point, when and how will this be done?**
Group names of teacher teams and class names. Names of parent, community members that participated in the group focus group discussions. These identifiers were removed once the data was coded, themed and put into the spread sheets marked Equity, Engagement and Purpose of School.

5.0   *** Specify what <u>identifiable</u> information will be RETAINED once data collection is complete, and explain why retention is necessary. Include the retention of master lists that link participant identifiers with de-identified data:**
Identifiable information will not be retained once the initial data collection was complete. The data used for this study was for secondary analysis.

6.0   **If applicable, describe your plans to link the data in this study with data associated with other studies (e.g within a data repository) or with data**

belongong to another organization:
N/A

6.3 Data Confidentiality and Privacy

1.0 *** How will confidentiality of the data be maintained? Describe how the identity of participants will be protected both during and after research.**

The data that was collected from staff was public throughout the process and once it was coded into the whole school data bank it was anonymized and all team names and names of participants were removed. Student data collected was collected by class and class names were removed when the data was coded and entered into the whole school spread sheets. Focus group data from parents and community members had the number of the focus group removed when data was entered into the whole school databank. The data will be stored on a password protected computer for 5 years. All shared data will be on encrypted drives and will be reclaimed and deleted after 5 years time.

2.0 **How will the principal investigator ensure that all study personnel are aware of their responsibilities concerning participants' privacy and the confidentiality of their information?**

Everyone who was involved in the collection and/or coding of the initial sources of data had training to keep the data confidential. Study personnel using secondary data will anonymize all data and store original files on encrypted and password protected drives.

3.0 **External Data Access**

* 3.1 Will <u>identifiable</u> data be transferred or made available to persons or agencies outside the research team?

◯ Yes 🔵 **No**

3.2 If YES, describe in detail what identifiable information will be released, to whom, why they need access, and under what conditions? What safeguards will be used to protect the identity of subjects and the privacy of their data.

3.3 Provide details if identifiable data will be leaving the institution, province, or country *(eg. member of research team is located in another institution or country, etc.)*

6.4 Data Storage, Retention, and Disposal

1.0 *** Describe how research data will be stored, e.g. digital files, hard copies, audio recordings, other. Specify the physical location and how it will be secured to**

protect confidentiality and privacy. *(For example, study documents must be kept in a locked filing cabinet and computer files are encrypted, etc. Write N/A if not applicable to your research)*
Data is stored on digital files on encrypted devices belonging to Auralia Brooke and P. Jean Stiles. Much of the data is available on the staff P Drive and on dropbox as it is a collection of work done by school members intended to be public. Hard copies of the data: charts, reflections and worksheets will be stored in a locked cabinet.

2.0   * **University policy requires that you keep your data for a minimum of 5 years following completion of the study but there is no limit on data retention. Specify any plans for future use of the data. <u>If the data will become part of a data repository or if this study involves the creation of a research database or registry for future research use, please provide details.</u>** *(Write N/A if not applicable to your research)*
I plan to use the data for secondary analysis the completion of my thesis work, potentially resulting in conference presentations and published articles. The data will remain public for as long as is deemed pertinent by the school administration. It will be kept for at least 5 years to meet University requirements.

3.0   **If you plan to destroy your data, describe when and how this will be done? Indicate your plans for the destruction of the identifiers at the earliest opportunity consistent with the conduct of the research and/or clinical needs:**
Secondary data analysis included anonymization of information. Original files with identifiers were deleted from hard drives and files once analysis was completed.

7.1 Documentation

Add documents in this section according to the headers. Use Item 11.0 "Other Documents" for any material not specifically mentioned below.

Sample templates are available in the REMO Home Page in the **Forms and Templates**, or by clicking HERE.

1.0   Recruitment Materials:

Document Name	Version	Date	Description
There are no items to display			

2.0   Letter of Initial Contact:

Document Name	Version	Date	Description
There are no items to display			

3.0   Informed Consent / Information Document(s):

3.1 What is the reading level of the Informed Consent Form(s):

3.2 Informed Consent Form(s)/Information Document(s):

Document Name	Version	Date	Description
There are no items to display			

4.0 **Assent Forms:**

Document Name	Version	Date	Description
There are no items to display			

5.0 **Questionnaires, Cover Letters, Surveys, Tests, Interview Scripts, etc.:**

Document Name	Version	Date	Description
There are no items to display			

6.0 **Protocol:**

Document Name	Version	Date	Description
Appendices	History	0.03	6/14/2016 2:23 PM	

7.0 **Investigator Brochures/Product Monographs** *(Clinical Applications only)***:**

Document Name	Version	Date	Description
There are no items to display			

8.0 **Health Canada No Objection Letter** *(NOL)***:**

Document Name	Version	Date	Description
There are no items to display			

9.0 **Confidentiality Agreement:**

Document Name	Version	Date	Description
There are no items to display			

10.0 **Conflict of Interest:**

Document Name	Version	Date	Description
There are no items to display			

Other Documents:

11.0 *For example, Study Budget, Course Outline, or other documents not mentioned above*

Document Name	Version	Date	Description

Appendix S: Ethics Appendices

Appendix 1

Focus Group Facilitator Guide

Staff Focus Group, Friday January 30, 8:30am

Intro to the day (staff grouped by team with DH (Department Head) as table facilitators) (18 teams)

- Why broader measures of success? (What we've been working on as a school, the things we've already been doing, where we're going, etc.)

- What does "A Great School For All" mean? It means engagement and equity - 'great' and 'all'.

- We want to work with you to define what we mean by engagement and equity at JP. In our first hour we will identify what these things mean to us for our school.

- In our second hour we'll look **what we see in the school** that tells us these things are happening.

- At the end of this morning, we hope to have two things. One - a clear picture of what it would mean for JP to be equitable and to be engaged. And two - some ways that we could measure those things in our environment.

Icebreaker: JP In the News
In your groups, take a minute to picture opening the newspaper to a front-page story about our school that would make you proud. What does the headline say?

We Want To:
1. Start a conversation about how we celebrate an equitable and engaged school. Learn from staff what we already do, and figure out some signs of success.
2. Emerge with priority areas that tell us about equitability and engagement. Get some ideas on how to measure progress.
3. Figure out how to share the story and own the story of our school.
Activity 1: World Cafe on Big Picture Questions
In this activity, groups will have a general conversation based on the two questions below (Ten groups for each topic)

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Question A: What is an equitable school?
Question B: What is an "engaged" school?
1. Facilitate group conversation around the question at your table (30 min)
2. Groups trade charts, give feedback on another group's sheet (10 min)
3. Groups take back their original sheets and come up with key points/answers to the original question (20 min)
4. Write each of the key points on its own post-it, stick it on the wall and mark your group's favorite with a star.

        BREAK: 10 Minutes

When you come back, find your star. As a group, find other things that fit with your star. If another group also needs the same post-it for their star cluster, copy it out and add it to yours.

Activity 2:
Brainstorm some ways that the things in your cluster are visible in school. For example, if there is a post-it that says, "Students feel safe in the hallways", what does this look like? Some answers could be:

- Laughter
- People smiling
- Students and staff greeting new people in the school
- Students being verbally supportive of each other
- Fewer passive bystanders when there is negative behaviour
- Students and staff chatting comfortably
- Students engaged in activities with one another in the halls or outside
- Students make eye contact

Write down as many as you can on a new piece of chart paper, with the cluster name at the top.

Activity 3: Reflection
Ask your group for "Aha!" moments or things that resonated for them during the morning. Take some time for each person to say something that they might do in their work as a result of the morning's conversation. Please give each staff their own post-it note to leave behind on the table with their reflection. No names necessary.

Final Activity: JP In the News
In your groups, take a minute to once again picture opening the newspaper to a front-page story about our school that would make you proud. What does the headline say? Has it changed since this morning?

Talking Points for Activity 1, if you need them:
A) What is an equitable school? Some talking points might include….

- What does equity inside the classroom look like?

- What kinds of success does our school celebrate?

- How do we celebrate student success?

- What does every student need in order to succeed in his or her day?

- What things do we provide as a school that set every student up for success?

- What programs do we currently offer that make our school equitable? How do they do this?

B) What is an "engaged" school? Some talking points might include….

- What does an "engaged" student look like?

- What does an "engaged" teacher/staff member look like?

1. Which initiatives for staff have helped you feel engaged?

Appendix 2

Staff Survey Questions:

a. Are our Grade 12's adequately prepared to leave high school and move on with life? (10 min written response)

b. What communities do you belong to within the school? How do you contribute to those communities? Do you feel like you belong to a JP community? (10 min – 5 for individual written response, 5 for group discussion)

c. What does a successful JP community look like? (3 min - individual written response. Do we want discussion here? Small group or full group?)

d. What could we be doing to help students:

a. Get through the day?
b. Get the most out of classes?
c. Pass all their subjects?
d. Leave high school and move on with life?

e. What could we be doing to help students:
- Connect better with resources at school?
- Connect better with peers?
- Feel safe in classes and in the hallways/common spaces.
- Learn how to have healthy relationships?

f. What does success for you as a teacher mean, if you could define it as broadly as you like?

g. What does a positive teaching and learning environment look like on a school-wide level for you?

h. Please check the top 10 most important indicators of a successful student (**add in top indicators from focus group**)

Q1: Are the chosen indicators relevant to all students in our school?
Q2: What student voices may not be represented within this group