

**University of Alberta**

Building Effective Relationships with Industry and Post Secondary Institutions:  
Rural and Remote High School Student Off Campus Experiences  
by

Tracy Demeester

A capping exercise submitted to the Faculty of Education  
In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Education  
in  
Educational Administration and Leadership

Faculty of Education

Edmonton, Alberta

11 August 2022

### **Abstract**

The purpose of off-campus experiences for high school students is to develop their skills and create opportunities for contextualized learning opportunities. Oftentimes rural remote school leaders do not have the time to create relationships with industry or post-secondary institutions to provide experiential learning endeavors. This study is to gain a better understanding of how leaders in rural and remote high schools build effective partnerships with industry and post-secondary institutions for the purpose of facilitating career and internship experiences for their students. A thematic review of the literature and limited qualitative research study was conducted through interviews. Three principals from Peace River School Division (PRSD) were selected for interviews. My results demonstrate a need for collaboration, resource sharing, advocacy and modeling of off-campus coordinators in PRSD. A conceptual framework was used as a guide to make recommendations from the findings.

**Table of Contents**

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Building Effective Relationships with Industry and Post-Secondary Institutions | 4  |
| Significance of Research   | 5  |
| Research Problem   | 6  |
| Research Beliefs and Assumptions   | 7  |
| Literature Review  | 7  |
| Importance of Off-Campus Education   | 8  |
| Relationship Building  | 9  |
| Supportive Policies  | 9  |
| Summary  | 10 |
| Methods  | 11 |
| Data Collection  | 12 |
| Data Analysis  | 12 |
| Trustworthiness  | 13 |
| Limitations  | 13 |
| Research Findings  | 13 |
| Time   | 13 |
| Cost   | 14 |
| Principal Values and Beliefs   | 15 |
| Teacher Accountability   | 16 |
| Research Conclusions   | 17 |
| Recommendations  | 19 |
| Collaboration  | 19 |
| Resources  | 21 |
| Advocacy   | 21 |
| Modeling   | 22 |
| Concluding Remarks   | 24 |
| References   | 25 |
| Appendix A Interview Questions   | 29 |
| Appendix B Letter of Introduction  | 30 |
| Appendix C Consent Form  | 32 |

## **Building Effective Relationships with Industry and Post-Secondary Institutions**

Building and sustaining partnerships with industry and post-secondary institutions should be a priority for rural remote school administrators, however difficult and time-consuming this may be. Ensuring high school students are offered experiences to build their skills for future careers requires community connections and partnerships beyond classroom walls. Providing opportunities for students to create relationships with industry is part of educational leadership obligations. This highlights the importance of building and sustaining relationships with industries to motivate student pursuance of post-secondary education.

Industry relationships help students prepare for real world applications and when engaged with industry students “took the assignments more seriously, invested greater effort, and were more motivated” (Marcketti & Karpova, 2014, p. 28). Building relationships with industry has employers investing in training the youth in their community rather than competing globally (Rogers, 1996, p. 43). Partnerships have already been created with industry through the Registered Apprenticeship Program (RAP) and leaders within education need to ensure students are exposed to these opportunities. Creating relationships with industry is important to foster labor market growth and industry retention.

Post-secondary institutions working with students while in high school can ensure credentials are being met to enter programs they offer. Dual-credit programs were designed to have students make meaningful connections to labor markets and to allow students to prepare for jobs within their communities (Alberta Education, 2017). Early off-campus experiences can be an indicator of student success in later college years (Wang, Chan, Phelps, & Washbon, 2015).

## **Significance of Research**

The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of how leaders in rural remote high schools are building effective partnerships with industry and post-secondary institutions for the purpose of facilitating career and internship experiences for students. This study is limited to Peace River School Division (PRSD) located in northern Alberta. For the basis of this study the term “rural” refers to a community of less than 5 000 people located a minimum of 100 kilometers or more from a major urban center. Remote is defined as a rural community with limited resources lacking amenities such as a hospital, police station, retail businesses, recreational facilities and job market. A literature review and a limited qualitative research study exposed barriers faced by rural remote leaders and highlighted school successes. Using a conceptual framework as a guide, recommendations were developed to ensure the off-campus experience potential within a school division.

Dewey's Experiential Learning Theory from 1938 creates the foundation for off-campus experiences for students. “Everything occurs within a social environment” and “all human experience is social and involves contact and communication” (Roberts, 2003, p. 2). Off-campus experiences for students create the social context needed for learning anything new. Contact with industry professionals and post-secondary institutions lead to relationship building and creates communication related to the experiences that build skills and knowledge. Content organization tends to isolate learning and not allow learners to fully embrace the “relationship between content and real life situations (p. 4). Teacher’s role in experiential learning opportunities is to “facilitate appropriate experiences that engage students” (p. 5).

Defining teacher leadership: A framework (Cheung et al., 2018) discussed how subject specific teachers lead instructional change within schools. This includes collaborating, providing

resources, advocating, and modeling the stated framework. Leaders of off-campus experiences can effectively build relationships and bridge supports for rural remote schools. This framework is also aligned with the Leadership Quality Standard, as set out by Alberta Education (2020). It will help sustain and maintain partnerships with industry and post-secondary institutions and it will work cohesively with the collaborative work PRSD is already engaged in with Jigsaw Learning. (Hewson & Hewson, 2022).

### **Research Problem**

Building relationships as a rural and remote school leader has many challenges including professional loneliness and isolation (Ashton & Duncan, 2012, p. 1). Creating opportunities for off-campus coordinators to build relationships with other coordinators, industry, post-secondary institutions and students in the district, supports the mental health and wellbeing of our teachers. Understanding “that we are social creatures, we understand that flourishing is tied to relationships and our abilities to connect and make a difference with each other” (Cherkowski & Walker, 2018, p. 94). This concept helps us embrace the importance of collaboration. Relationship building is defined for the purpose of this study as creating connections between industry and post-secondary institutions and high school students.

There are gaps in the literature supporting collaboration between rural and remote communities and my research aims to address this. To gain a clearer understanding of how leaders in rural and remote high schools are building effective relationships with industry and post-secondary institutions I sought to answer the following questions: (a) how are rural and remote school leaders building relationships with industry and post-secondary institutions to ensure career and internship experiences are offered to students? (b) how can rural and remote

communities use collaboration to build industry and post-secondary connections throughout an entire school division?

### **Research Beliefs and Assumptions**

Prior to conducting research and interviews I assumed as a researcher, all high school students have access to all off-campus experiences offered through Alberta Education and existing partnerships throughout the school division. Many opportunities for students have been published through local media and site based social media outlets such as partnerships with colleges for dual credit courses and how the registered apprenticeship program is flourishing and I assumed all students were privy to access. I assumed money for resources, professional development, tuition and travel would be available to schools in an equal capacity.

I believe all students should gain a variety of skills and experiences to find what they are interested in for further career development. With the cost of post-secondary education, off-campus experience for students is a way to gain skills and work in the context of chosen career paths. Off-campus coordinators are the bridge between students and building relationships with post-secondary and industry.

### **Literature Review**

Building relationships is an important and time consuming task as an educator. In my thematic review of the literature, I found building, maintaining and sustaining relationships with all stakeholders in education is crucial to the success of off-campus experiences. Research in specific industries such as health care and the clothing and textile industry share commonalities in their desire to collaborate to ensure students have hands-on experiences to think creatively and solve real world problems (Marcketti & Karpova, 2014). Much of the literature can be broken into three themes: (a) the importance of off-campus experiences for students, (b) building

relationships with industry and post-secondary institutions, and (c) policies and guidelines to provide structure to building partnerships with industry and post-secondary institutions.

### **Importance of Off-Campus Education**

Career and off-campus experiences are supported by schools as part of high school participation. As the Off-campus Education Handbook states experiences are to allow for students to “investigate a variety of occupation-based opportunities in context that assists them in making informed decisions concerning education, training, and employment upon completion of high school” (2019, p. 6). This handbook is based on the underpinnings of Dewey and the experiential learning theory supporting incontext learning opportunities.

Using the study from the Alberta Teachers Association, *Off-Campus Education in Alberta: Current Realities and Future Prospects* (2017), findings were aligned with rural remote schools in the PRSD. They found leaders in charge of off campus experiences for students would need more time and flexibility to do their jobs and professional learning would be beneficial in doing the job well (p. 43). The need for off-campus coordinators was stressed and with flexible scheduling and professional development they could provide what students need to connect with industry professionals (p. 46).

Off-campus education for skill development of high school students provides the in-context learning environment needed for transference of knowledge and the learning of new knowledge. Off-campus coordinators are the connection between students and both industry and post-secondary institutions. Professional development and time to create relationships are benefits to students off-campus experiences.



## **Relationship Building**

Post-secondary institutions play an important role in advocating for students to engage in post-secondary opportunities. The connections they make with high schools throughout the school division can impact their future enrollment. Current partnerships with post-secondary institutions include dual credit programs, Try A Trade Camp and various on campus open houses within the region and throughout Alberta. To engage students outside school institutions “optional career-based high school programming, such as dual credit, Alberta’s students engage in post-secondary learning experiences that can assist them in completing their high school education and in making meaningful transitions from high school to postsecondary and/or the workplace (Alberta Education, 2017, p. 2). This relationship between post-secondary and high school students has students attempting more credits, entices students to enroll in post-secondary once graduated and have greater academic success once in post-secondary programs (Wang, et al. 2015).

The *Business and Industry Report: Employers of High School Graduates* (2016), surveys employers throughout Alberta about their employment of high school graduates and found 23% of students lacked life skills such as professionalism, financial and social skills. Another 9% of respondents reported graduates relying on too much technology. These findings can help bridge relationships and collaboration with industry creating career and internship experiences for students.

## **Supportive Policies**

Policies or administrative procedures set the focus for off-campus coordinators to build relationships and create partnerships. Reviewing current policies there shows supportive efforts to create relationships with industries and highlights foundations of support. PRSD’s

administrative procedure on off-campus education, encourages connection with industry to make certain students are offered “practical experience related to life skills and career opportunities” (Peace River School Division, 2021, p. 1). It also supports “school/community partnerships to help students acquire knowledge, skills and attitudes and gain practical experiences related to life skills and career opportunities” (Peace River School Division, 2021a, p. 1). The Alberta Government's objective for building the skills of students is to “reduce the skills gap by fostering the strongest employer, industry and post-secondary partnership environment in Canada” (Government of Alberta, 2021, p. 7).

Career and personal counseling is another administrative procedure published by PRSD which stresses the importance of career development and growth within all schools (Peace River School Division, 2021b, p. 1). The school leader in charge of career counseling has the responsibility to coordinate “programs and activities that assist students in the development of personal, social, educational and career growth (goals)” (Peace River School Division, 2021b, p. 1). PRSD policies clearly support “empowering learners to make informed decisions on post-secondary pathways” as the first goal of the Alberta 2030: Building skills for jobs initiative (Alberta Government, 2021, p. 21).

## **Summary**

This review of the literature reveals a gap in how to address building relationships with industry and post-secondary institutions for the purpose of creating off-campus experiences for high school students. Because PRSD covers such a large geographical area and the population sizes of our schools and school communities are declining, further research through this study will help in developing understanding of how to better support student off-campus experiences.

## **Methods**

Performing a limited qualitative study and aligned with grounded theory, I used interviews to collect data and “analyzed using the constant comparative method of data analysis” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015, p. 32). The overall goal was to identify patterns after comparing the data to determine the similarities and differences in how principals create and build relationships with industry in their communities and collaborate with post-secondary institutions outside their communities (p. 32). Open-ended interview questions were asked to stimulate responses through a variety of questioning types (p. 118).

### **Respondent Group**

Four participants were invited through purposeful convenience sampling and three agreed to participate. All participants were from PRSD and were principals. Participants were recorded to ensure the accuracy of the scribe tool. Pseudonyms were used when referring to each participant.

Tammy was a principal of a rural and remote kindergarten to grade twelve school and her school population had 67 students. She taught half day and was principal the other half. Her role included creating relationships with industry and post-secondary institutions. She resided in the community in which she worked and the population of her community was under 150 residents. Tammy was married and did not have children. She has been teaching for 16 years of which 5 years were spent as a principal and one year as a vice-principal.

Marcy was a teacher principal in a kindergarten to grade twelve school. She had a full time teaching assignment and fulfilled her administrative duties after school hours and her role included off-campus coordinator. She was married with children and resided in the community where she worked. Marcy has taught for 15 years and 2 of those years as a principal.

Bob was the principal of a junior senior high school, grades seven to twelve, where he taught part time and was the principal part time. He delegated the responsibility of off-campus experiences and industry relations to another teacher who was referred to as the career counselor. Bob lived in the community where he worked with his wife and children. Bob has taught for 18 years, of those years 2 were spent as vice-principal and 9 as principal.

### **Data Collection**

Once participation in the interview was confirmed, a letter of invitation (see Appendix B) was sent to each participant which described the parameters of the study and signed consent was collected (see Appendix C). Participants were not given the questions prior to the interview. At the beginning of each interview verbal consent was obtained to record. Data was collected by interviews in a non-structured setting through a digital platform using Google Meet. They were asked a series of questions (see Appendix A). Once interviews were complete, a digital scribe, *Scibbl*, and field notes were used to review the data.

### **Data Analysis**

After the data were collected each transcript and set of field notes were reviewed and open coding began (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015, p. 204). After coding the data categories were assigned and codes were put into appropriate themes. The themes chosen were “exhaustive, mutually exclusive, sensitive to the data, and conceptually congruent” following the criteria for categories, themes and findings by Merriam and Tisdell (p. 213). Participants were asked about their knowledge of industry relationships and what they currently provide as off-campus experiences for their students. Four main themes were identified in the research.

**Trustworthiness**

Principals were offered the opportunity to speak frankly on the subject with the assurance of anonymity. Each participant was required to give their consent to use the data collected in my research. Member checks were derived as participants were interviewed and interpretations were continually tested (Guba, 1981, p. 85). Gaining clarification by way of reiterating statements made, was important to build trust. Triangulation was obtained gaining three perspectives on the topic but could be fully saturated if other school divisions participated in the study.

**Limitations**

Reliability, validity, and trustworthiness were a priority when conducting research yet there were still limitations. Participants could not be students within PRSD, limiting the research on first-hand experiences and the needs of the students. The lack of diversity in various school divisions limits transferability. Further research is needed to gain insight from industry, students, and post-secondary institutions to give “maximum variation to allow for a greater range of application of the findings by consumers of the research (p. 259).

**Research Findings**

Each participant was asked the same interview questions (see Appendix A). After coding, analyzing and re-analyzing the data, common themes were found among the responses. Time, cost, principal values and beliefs and teacher accountability were common themes among the findings.

**Time**

Tammy stated “building relationships with industry is time consuming but a benefit to the students' experiences.” Marcy expressed “building relationships is an ongoing process even in the evenings and throughout the summer.” When discussing the responsibility of creating

relationships with post-secondary institutions, Bob thought, “because it is a direct benefit to the post-secondary institution and not the high school, it should be the responsibility of that institution to build relationships with the school at their cost.”

All participants have over half their day allotted to teacher time and the rest spent completing administrator duties. Because of principal demands it was difficult for Marcy to spend the time building relationships yet she reiterated the importance of doing so. Tammy mentioned how it was just an expectation to create, maintain and sustain industry and post secondary partnerships with no time allotted to ensure sustainability. This finding is very similar to the finding from the Alberta Teachers Association (ATA) in 2017 where they suggested their “participants requested more time and more flexibility to perform their role” (2017, p. 42).

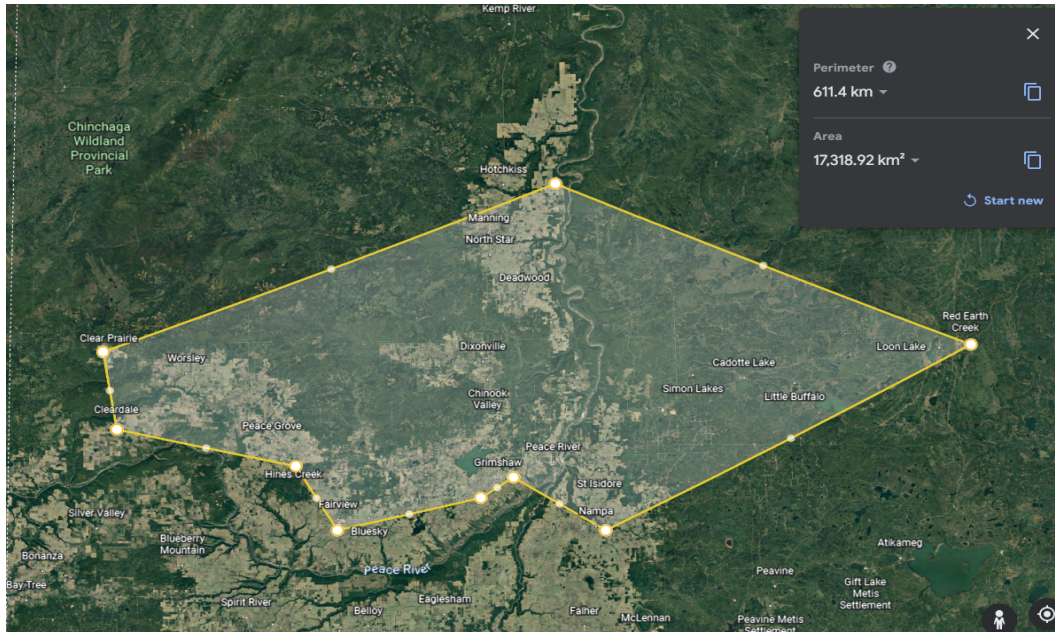
Tammy reported students participating in a partnership with the local college. She also reported how pleased students, parents and staff were to accommodate the learning experiences of those students participating. Providing exposure to off-campus experience for students gives the head start needed to continue their progress in college (Wang, et al., 2015, p. 167).

### **Cost**

Cost of travel for students to off-campus training or skill development, cost to pay teachers, industry specialists or provide facility improvements was found to be a common thread from the participants. Finding money in the budget to send a small number of students to have an off campus experience was found to be frustrating by one participant. The demographics of PRSD encompasses over 17 000 square kilometers therefore travel costs to students, staff, industry professionals and post-secondary institutions are inevitable.

Figure 1

## Geographic area of the Peace River School Division



Source: <https://earth.google.com/web/@56.53140287,-118.89101426,654.22365261a,396966.13966037d,35y,0h,0t,0r>

Cost to hire qualified instructors was found to be a concern and Tammy found “offering one or two students the opportunity to have a qualified instructor in front of them would take away from the other six or seven students who didn’t participate in the experience.” Budget constraints were based on enrollment hindering opportunities in rural remote locations. Marcy reiterated budget constraints when she mentioned the use of trailers where students had exposure to trades such as carpentry and mechanics but no funds to hire qualified staff to work with students.

### Principal Values and Beliefs

Participants discussed their values and beliefs pertaining to off-campus experiences for the students in their schools and the communities they reside in. Tammy and Bob stressed the

importance of needed agricultural off-campus experiences and the lack of qualified instructors to deliver such programs. Both however stated the Green Certificate was utilized by their students. In Alberta, off-campus experiences tend to be undervalued by many and believe “work-based occupations and skilled trades are low on the occupational hierarchy” and are geared for students who are “at risk of leaving” (Alberta Teachers’ Association, 2017, p. 6). The ATA stresses “strong school administrative and collegial buy-in and professional development to expose pedagogical strategies that bridge learning off-campus to in class and vice-versa, will reduce existing systematic prejudices and enhance equality for all students” (Alberta Teachers’ Association, 2017, p. 6). Bob reiterated this stigma when they mentioned, “we don’t currently have students enrolled in the RAP Program because the students we have right now are all academic students.” Changing the culture of leadership in rural and remote schools to promote all off-campus experiences will increase their “access to post-secondary information that facilitates their transition to post-secondary education” (Peace River School Division, 2020, p. 12).

While all participants found off-campus experience beneficial to their students, values and beliefs of principals play a role in how much time they invest in pursuing them. Passion from the off-campus coordinators drive the time invested in relationship building.

### **Teacher Accountability**

With increased responsibility comes increased accountability of school leaders. Off-campus experiences require a comprehensive understanding of Alberta labor relation codes, the Workers Compensation Act, the Canadian Association Standards, Apprenticeship and Industry Training Act, to name a few. The Off-Campus Education Handbook (2019) published by Alberta Education offers an overview of the numerous off-campus experiences for high



school students with links to further professional development opportunities. Marcy stated that as a leader they are teaching CTS classes they are not qualified to do. The demands and pressures to provide opportunities for our students come at a high risk to the school division.

During the interview process, all participants noted RAP (Registered Apprenticeship Program) Program, Green Certificate, work-experience as part of off-campus experiences for their students. Bob mentioned the dual credit opportunities for students. None of the participants mentioned their students participating in a work study or career internship program. Teacher accountability is supported in the PRSD in their administrative procedures stating the “Division shall conduct an annual review of all off-campus education courses. 28.1. As part of the program evaluation, work sites used are to be evaluated annually” (Peace River School Division, 2021b, p. 1).

### **Research Conclusions**

The purpose of the present research firstly was to gain an understanding of how schools in rural remote areas, specifically PRSD, build relationships with industry and post-secondary institutions. Secondly, to understand how collaboration is working throughout a vast region for off-campus experiences. The demands of principals and off-campus coordinators are increasing because of the diverse needs of students.

Relationship building takes time. Creating opportunities for students throughout the community requires site visits, evaluations and inspections. While delegation of the role of off-campus coordinator is an option it leads to further supervision. The participants in the research valued off-campus experiences but admitted with copious amounts of responsibilities, building relationships with stakeholders outside school is not top priority. Rural remote communities having limited resources is a reality and at times off-campus opportunities are just

not feasible. While some industries are willing participants, there may not be the student interest. And while there may be student interest there may be no industry to support the experience. While we may or may not have the facilities within our buildings to support gaining skills for career development, there may or may not be qualified instructors. Building relationships within rural remote communities is complex and there is not a one size fits all solution to ensure they can happen. Educational leaders are doing the best with what they have in rural remote settings and all participants want what is best for all students in their schools.

Collaboration between schools in PRSD have led to partnerships with post-secondary and industry to ensure skill development of students who do not have access within their own community. This partnership generated excitement not only for the students but for the school and community. Collaborative response has been a focus at PRSD with goals in literacy, numeracy, and inclusive education. The division policies support off-campus education and career and personal counseling, yet other contributing factors create barriers. One principal mentioned PRSD having a mechanics trailer to offer skill development to students who were enrolled in CTS courses for automotives but could not secure a certified instructor for those students to receive their credits. Because of the diverse needs of students in rural remote locations, the financial resources needed for options of off-campus experiences makes it difficult for schools to sustain. Collaboration highlights accountability and breaks down silos often “characterized by negative attitudes that resist change and improvement” (Duignan, 2020, p. 15). We can better serve the needs of our students and the barriers to off-campus experiences if we work together.

## **Recommendations**

With a growth mindset and policies to support them, the career counselors, off-campus coordinators or school leaders who fulfill this role throughout PRSD would find the framework from Cheung et al. (2018) supportive and focused. This framework can address the cost savings of working collaboratively and time savings which in turn will provide a broader range of off-campus experiences for students. With a focus on collaboration, a commitment to providing resources, advocating and modeling for and of off-campus experiences, creating, maintaining and sustaining relationships with industry and post-secondary institutions will provide a multitude of experiences for students.

### **Collaboration**

Alberta 2030 objectives include improved support for foundational learning and creating integrated pathways for learners yet participants noted that timetables are hard to fill with a variety of options for students to build foundational job skills because there is no room in the timetable (Government of Alberta, 2021, p. 7). It is difficult to convince school leaders to find time with a limited number of teachers and add to their workload. Non-traditional timetables need to be considered in rural remote communities. Schools throughout PRSD dedicate time to collaboration surrounding literacy and numeracy; we also need to start creating collaborative partnerships for off-campus coordinators.

Current practices have individual schools within PRSD working separately to create off-campus experiences for their students. Future practices must include what we have learned by making connections through virtual means, a reality for rural remote schools. In these schools educational leaders “must share a responsibility and take collaborative actions that build

community and strengthen positive results for all students to be successful” (Harmon & Schafft, 2009, p. 8).

Collaboration for the purpose of building off-campus relationships will have leaders participating in professional development, develop productive meeting protocols, mentor other teachers and contribute to PRSD’s off-campus coordinator team. Together all off-campus coordinators can collaborate, learn together and coach others to improve best practices. This collaboration will build “positive working relationships with members of the school community and local community” (Alberta Education, 2020, p. 3). Creating a teacher team can help define the role of the off-campus coordinator and help them to “grow professionally in ways that ultimately lead to improved student learning” (Cheung, et al., 2018, p. 44).

Collaborative response, professional learning communities and team-teaching are ways teachers can learn from one another and best support students. One core belief of the collaborative response model which PRSD already follows tells us “schools cannot achieve high levels of success when adults work in isolation” (Hewson et al., 2015, p. 8). With a focus on rural remote schools it was difficult to find a consistent definition in the literature and often was omitted. The Rural and Small Town Canada Analysis Bulletin defines rural as “individuals in towns or municipalities outside the commuting zone of larger urban centres (with 10,000 or more population)” (Statistics Canada, 2001, p. 6). All schools in PRSD are considered to be rural according to this definition. With an inconsistent definition of the role and responsibilities of the off-campus coordinator throughout Alberta high schools (Alberta Teachers’ Association, 2017, p. 5), teacher accountability and student off-campus experiences falter. Working collaboratively with other off-campus coordinators would help provide off-campus experiences to students who may not have the opportunity within their own communities.

Post-secondary institutions can offer professional development to our leadership team to ensure current information is being shared to students and parents. Business and industry satisfaction surveys reported 19% of recent high school graduates were not hired for positions because of lack of experience in the related field (Alberta Government, 2016, p. 20).

Collaborating with schools, industries could build partnerships to ensure students are introduced to the skills they are looking for. As a rural school leader, context-responsive leadership is effective when the school, curriculum and community influence each other simultaneously (Preston & Barnes, 2017).

### **Resources**

Providing shared resources will improve the off-campus coordinators ability to access experiences for students and ease of accessible materials will combat time each school spends seeking the same information. Working together will help off-campus coordinators stay current with labor standards, industry and post-secondary updates and provide cost sharing opportunities for rural remote schools. “Creating and implementing a shared vision for student success, engagement, learning, and well-being” can broaden the off-campus experiences for all students (Alberta Education, 2020, p. 3). Relationships built on resource sharing will in turn make it easier for leaders in education to provide off campus experiences for their students. Offering a place for post-secondary institutions and industry to get their message out to all schools in our region has the potential for relationships to build into long term partnerships.

### **Advocacy**

Advocating for student off-campus experiences within schools provides opportunities for teachers to enrich lesson plans. Ensuring off-campus opportunities are represented sends the message to parents about the importance of building community. The leaders within PRSD can

develop common off-campus experiences and build a regional repertoire of industry connections. While leading a learning community within PRSD leaders can “create meaningful, collaborative learning opportunities for teachers” and students (Alberta Education, 2020, p. 4). Listening to the needs of industry through the Business and Industry Report (Alberta Government, 2016) and creating strong relationships validates PRSD’s commitment to skill development of our students. Further research needs to be done to ensure safety of students while engaged in off-campus experiences are being evaluated.

### **Modeling**

Modeling effective off-campus experiences within our schools and throughout the region will show a commitment to experiential learning, learning from reflective practices and our willingness to improve student experiences. Collaboration provides professional learning by “engaging with others such as teachers, principals, and other leaders to build personal and collective professional capacities and expertise” (Alberta Education, 2020, p. 3). Off-campus experiences for students and relationship building with industry and post-secondary institutions can provide the foundations to model success in future entrepreneurialship or secondary education goals. We need to make the shift from off-campus managers to off-campus leaders and influence others to achieve goals and make change (Connolly, James, & Fertig, 2019, p. 505).

To ensure all students have time in academic schedules for off-campus experiences our school division could lead the province in creating a timetable allowing for skill development and career exploration. If time allowed in our calendars to take six days, three in the middle of each semester, and dedicated it to off-campus experiences for all students in the PRSD we would alleviate the time and cost of individual schools doing it on their own. Post-secondary institutions could work with students to ensure testing of Green Certificate Programs, counsel

students to seek information about transitioning into college or university programs, try a trade at Northwest Polytechnic, have certified instructors test CTS outcomes, and possibly stay overnight on campus to alleviate students' fears. Industry could partner with schools to create work study and career internship programs for students to engage in mentorship, job investigation, and job shadowing. Consideration of non-traditional timetables for all students in rural remote schools provide the staff, administration and students the time to connect with industry and post-secondary institutions within the region would be beneficial for all stakeholders in education.

### **Future Research**

Further research needs to be done to ensure safety of students while engaged in off-campus experiences are being evaluated. Studies should also concentrate on how collaboration works in other rural remote communities to promote relationships with industry and post-secondary institutions. As a leader in a small community, we need to ensure we are promoting an improved quality of life for that community (Harmon & Schafft, 2009). We need to remain focused on the community we work in yet we need to be able to provide opportunities for students to grow their skill development.

Questions for further study may include:

1. What are other school divisions in Alberta in rural remote locations doing to collaborate on a divisional or regional level for off-campus experiences and skill development for high school students?
2. What specific engagement, professional development and bridging will be done at the high school level with the Alberta 2030 initiative?

### **Concluding Remarks**

It is imperative to include relationship building into our collaborative response focus within our school division and ensure we have the budget to support policies for off-campus education, career and personal counseling, and career and technology foundations/studies. Prioritizing off-campus experiences for students and creating relationships with industry and post-secondary institutions can benefit graduation completion for high schools, generate momentum for students to attend post-secondary institutions and offer relationships with industry for student career and life skill development. When off-campus coordinators believe and value experiential learning they promote opportunities to all students not just those who are non-academic or those who only have time in their schedules.

Our job as teachers and leaders is to create a culture where the end of high school is not the end of their learning journey. Covid-19 has taught us how versatile we are as leaders. Furthermore, collaboration, resource sharing, advocating and modeling can be done virtually saving both time and money. It has also taught us how to broaden our virtual possibilities and strengthen our learning through a digital lens. We need to be excited about the opportunities for our students and model those learning opportunities by collaborating to ensure the success of our students. Together we can make the biggest impact in a student's learning.



## References

- Alberta Government. (2016). *Business & industry report: Employers of Alberta high school graduates*. Alberta Queen's Printer. <https://open.alberta.ca/publications/9781460130933>
- Alberta Education. (2017). Alberta dual credit framework. Alberta Queen's Printer. <https://open.alberta.ca/publications/9781460136188>
- Alberta Education. (2020). *Leadership quality standard*. Alberta Queen's Printer. <https://www.alberta.ca/assets/documents/ed-leadership-quality-standard-english.pdf>
- Alberta Government. (2021). *Alberta 2030: building skills for jobs what we heard - engagement summary*. Alberta Queen's Printer. <https://bit.ly/3z6WdaJ>
- Ashton, B., & Duncan, H.E. (2012). A beginning rural principal's toolkit: A guide for success. *Rural Educator*, 34(1). <https://login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ1000100&site=eds-live&scope=site>
- Cherkowski, S., & Walker, K.D. (2018). *Teacher wellbeing: Noticing, nurturing, sustaining, and flourishing in schools*. Word & Deed Publishing. ISBN 978-0-9959782-2-5
- Cheung, R., Reinhardt, T., Stone, E., & Little, J.W. (2018). Defining teacher leadership: A framework. *The Phi Delta Kappan*, 100(3), 38-44. <https://www-jstor-org.login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/stable/26552463>
- Connolly, M., James, C., & Fertig, M. (2019). The difference between educational management and educational leadership and the importance of educational responsibility. *Educational management, administration & leadership*, 47(4), 504-519  
doi:10.1177/1741143217745880

Duignan, P.A. (2020). *Leading educational systems and schools in times of disruption and exponential change: A call for courage, commitment and collaboration*. Emerald Publishing.

[https://login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=e000xna&AN=2272890&site=ehost-live&scope=site&ebv=EB&ppid=pp\\_1](https://login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=e000xna&AN=2272890&site=ehost-live&scope=site&ebv=EB&ppid=pp_1)

Guba, E. G. (1981). ERIC/ECTJ annual review paper: Criteria for assessing the trustworthiness of naturalistic inquiries. *Educational Communication and Technology*, 29(2), 75–91.  
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/30219811>

Harmon, H., & Scaffit, K. (2009). Rural school leadership for collaborative community development. *The Rural Educator*, 30(3), 4-9.  
<https://doi-org.login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/10.35608/ruraled.v30i3.443>

Hewson, K., Parsons, J., & Hewson, L. (2015). *Envisioning a collaborative response model: beliefs, structures, and processes to transform how we respond to the needs of students*. Jigsaw Learning. ISBN 9780994907608

Hewson, K., & Hewson, L. (2022). *Collaborative response*. Jigsaw Learning.  
<https://www.jigsawlearning.ca/what-we-do/collaborative-response>

- Marcketti, S. B., & Karpova, E. (2014). Getting ready for the real world: Student perspectives on bringing industry collaboration into the classroom. *Journal of Family and Consumer Sciences, 106*(1), 27-31. <https://login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/login>
- Merian, S.B., & Tisdell, E.J. (2015). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated.  
<https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ualberta/detail.action?docID=2089475>
- Mombourquette, C. (2017). The role of vision in effective school leadership. *International Studies in Educational Leadership, 45*(1), 19-36.  
<https://search-ebshost-com.login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/login.aspx?direct=true&db=ejh&AN=126378979&site=eds-live&scope=site>
- Peace River School Division (2021a) *Administrative procedure 216: Off-campus education*. Author. Retrieved July 10, 2022 from  
<https://drive.google.com/drive/u/0/folders/1OUC4iyCIABaZ1GOfBGXow1qJ0w1wrqX>
- Peace River School Division (2021b) *Administrative procedure 240: Career and personal counseling*. Author. Retrieved July 10, 2022 from  
<https://drive.google.com/drive/u/0/folders/1OUC4iyCIABaZ1GOfBGXow1qJ0w1wrqX>
- Peace River School Division (2020). *Annual education results report 2019-20: Three-year education plan 2020-23*. Author. Retrieved July 27, 2022 from  
<https://drive.google.com/drive/u/0/search?q=accountability%20pillar%20results>

Preston, J., & Barnes, K. (2018). Successful leadership in rural schools: Cultivating collaboration. *The Rural Educator*, 38.

<https://doi-org.login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/10.35608/ruraled.v38i1.231>

Rogers, Z. (1996). School and workplace collaboration: The fourth c - collaboration. *Journal of Career Development*. 23(1). 43-50.

Statistics Canada (2001). *Rural and small town Canada analysis bulletin*.

<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/21-006-x/21-006-x2001003-eng.pdf?st=8ffVQFnF>

Wang, X., Chan, H., Phelps, L.A., & Washbon, J.I. (2015). Fuel for success: Academic momentum as a mediator between dual enrolment and educational outcomes for two-year technical college students. *Community College Review*, 43(2) 165-190.

<https://login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=ehh&AN=101620293&site=eds-live&scope=site>

## Appendix A Interview Questions

### Problem

How can rural and remote school leaders build effective partnerships with industry and post-secondary institutions for the purpose of facilitating career and internship experiences for high school students?

### Sub questions –

How broad can career opportunities and experiences be in a rural and remote setting in the face of funding and teacher shortages?

Are career and internship experiences limited to the community you reside in or can partnerships be built with neighboring communities?

### SCHOOL LEADER

#### Can I record this conversation for the purpose of transcribing it for my paper?

What is the population and demographics of your school? (*background/demographics question*)

What do off-campus and internship experiences look like at your school? (*knowledge question*)

Eg. Work Experience, RAP, other career development and skills exposure.

Do you partner with any other school in the division to provide off-campus or internship experience for your students? (*knowledge question*)

Do you feel your students have the same opportunity for off campus experiences as other students in the school division? (*experience or behavior question*)

What are the benefits to building a relationship with industry? What are the downfalls? (*opinion/value question*)

In a rural setting, do you feel relationships with students are critical to the sustainability of the community? (*opinion/value question*)

Have you connected with industry leaders to provide new opportunities for the diversity of learners in your school? (*knowledge question*)

What would the ideal partnership look like for your school, for students to connect with industry? (*opinion/value question*)

(*Question types as described by Merriam and Tisdell (pp. 118-124, 2016)*)

## Appendix B Letter of Introduction



UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

### Letter of Introduction - Individual Interview - Adult Participant

Tracy Demeester  
University of Alberta MEd  
Edmonton, AB T6G 2R3

780-836-5362  
demeeste@ualberta.ca

February 7, 2022

Dear [REDACTED]

I am a graduate student in the Master of Education in Educational Policy Studies program at the University of Alberta. The purpose of this letter is to you to take part in a research assignment for my EDPS 509 Research Design and Data Analysis course. My assignment is intended to answer how rural and remote schools can build effective partnerships with industry and post-secondary institutions for the purpose of facilitating career and internship experiences. Your participation would involve one thirty-minute interview. Your participation is voluntary; there will be no consequence to you should you decline to participate or decide to withdraw from participating.

In order to gather data for my research assignment, I will be conducting qualitative research by analyzing a series of interviews. The interview will be audio recorded and transcribed. Please note:

- You may choose not to answer any question.
- You may opt out of this research assignment once responses have been submitted. To do so, please submit your request by email by February 17, 2022, and I will destroy all data.
- I will send you a transcription of the interview as well as a summary of the main points I understood you to make by email; you will have the opportunity to verify the accuracy of the transcription and my interpretation of it.

Should any concerns, complaints, or questions arise from your participation, you may contact me or my instructor, Dr. Jose da Costa (jdacosta@ualberta.ca).

**Educational Policy Studies**

---

7-104 Education North • University of Alberta • Edmonton • Canada • T6G 2G5  
Telephone: (780) 492-7625 • Fax: (780) 492-2024

All data will be handled in compliance with the University of Alberta Standards for the Protection of Human Research Participants:

- Participant names will not be revealed. To protect confidentiality, pseudonyms or numerical coding will be used in all written representations of the data.
- Hard copy data will be kept in a locked location and will be destroyed on my completion of my graduate program.
- Digital data will be stored on my computer under a secure password-protected system and will be destroyed on my completion of my graduate program.
- Data will be used to complete my EDPS 509 course, my graduate program, and may be used in future presentations and publications in educational contexts.

Thank you for considering this invitation to participate in my research. If you wish to participate, please sign the attached consent form and return it to my email at [demeeste@ualberta.ca](mailto:demeeste@ualberta.ca) by February 11, 2022. I have included two copies of the consent form: one is to be signed by you and the other is for your own records.

The plan for this research has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines and approved by Research Ethics Board 1 at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, you can contact the Research Ethics Office at (780) 492-2615.

Should you wish a copy of my research findings, I would be pleased to provide one on your request.

Sincerely,

Tracy Demeester  
Graduate student in the Master of Educational Leadership  
Faculty of Education, University of Alberta  
780-836-5362  
[demeeste@ualberta.ca](mailto:demeeste@ualberta.ca)

University of Alberta Ethics ID# Pro00096710

**Educational Policy Studies**

---

7-104 Education North • University of Alberta • Edmonton • Canada • T6G 2G5  
Telephone: (780) 492-5868 • Fax: (780) 492-2024  
E-mail: [Jose.da.Costa@ualberta.ca](mailto:Jose.da.Costa@ualberta.ca)

## Appendix C Consent Form



UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

### Adult Participant Consent Form

**EDPS 509 Research Assignment:** How rural and remote schools build effective partnerships with industry and post-secondary institutions for the purpose of facilitating career and internship experiences.

**Researcher:** Tracy Demeester

**Date Range of Research:** February 8, 2022, to February 14, 2022

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (name of participant), hereby consent to participate in the research, how rural and remote schools build effective partnerships with industry and post-secondary institutions for the purpose of facilitating career and internship experiences.

I understand that my participation includes:

- an interview for thirty minutes with Tracy Demeester.
- audio and video recording of the interview.

As per the Letter of Information, I understand that:

- My participation in this research is voluntary.
- I may withdraw from the research without penalty until February 17, 2022.
- All information gathered will be treated confidentially.
- No identifying information will appear on written representations of the data: pseudonyms or numerical coding will be used to convey the data.
- The data will be used for the purposes of completion of the Master of Education in Educational Studies (MES) program and may be used in future presentations and publications in the educational context.
- The plan for this research has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines and approved by Research Ethics Board 1 at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, I can contact the Research Ethics Office at (780) 492-2615.

|                          |      |
|--------------------------|------|
| Signature of Participant | Date |
|--------------------------|------|

University of Alberta Ethics ID# Pro00096710

Educational Policy Studies