

## Questions and Answers about AISI Cycle 5 from October 28, 2011 Workshop

The questions below were gathered from the participants at the AISI Coordinators Workshop in October. The responses are intended to help school authorities as they begin planning for AISI Cycle 5. More detailed information can be found in the draft AISI Cycle 5 Handbook that was recently circulated for feedback.

### Cycle 5 Project Flexibility

**Q. Are we allowed to do a school authority project and a cross-school authority project?**

A. Yes. A school authority may submit one or more individual projects and/or one or more collaborative cross-school authority projects. However, the total funding requested cannot exceed the total school authority AISI funding entitlement (*AISI Cycle 5 Handbook*, p. 25).

**Q. Can a school authority involve university partners rather than other school authorities in a cross-school authority project?**

A. No. Collaborative cross-school authority projects are intended to include two or more school authorities (*AISI Cycle 5 Handbook*, p. 3). However, AISI University Partners are pleased to work and support school authorities in their projects.

**Q. Do our Cycle 5 projects need to involve all students? Can we target selected groups?**

A. No. Cycle 5 projects do not need to involve all students. Yes. School authorities determine the students they wish to identify for AISI projects.

### AISI Projects from Cycle 4 to Cycle 5

**Q. Will there be extension of focus from Cycle 4 to Cycle 5? Can we continue from Cycle 4?**

A. Cycle 5 AISI projects are developed locally and will be based on any of the following:

- Innovative projects focusing on themes that are brand new to a school authority
- Innovative projects that go into greater depth on previous themes with new research, strategies, and measures.
- Innovative projects that are collaborative, across school authorities focusing on a common goal.

(*AISI Handbook for Cycle 4*, p. 3 – this continues for Cycle 5 and will be included in the final copy of the *AISI Handbook for Cycle 5*)

**Q. How can we make sure this project looks new, but also builds on what we've learned?**

A. When a school authority developed a Cycle 4 project in 2008-2009, it was based on the research and the context within the school authority at that time. Since that time, there has been a great deal learned as a result of the Cycle 4 AISI projects, and now there are new questions to be answered, new research, strategies and measures. Therefore, while the previous theme may continue, the new Cycle 5 project needs to demonstrate these new directions and research design.

**Q. How does this align with our previous work? Teachers are more engaged when they see the alignment.**

A. It is essential that the teachers who are involved in AISI be part of the discussions, planning, implementation, evaluation and celebration of AISI projects. When this work is done collaboratively, it will be clear to all involved how the Cycle 5 AISI projects build on previous work and take the innovation and learning further.

**Q. Will we be able to carry forward any unspent funds from Cycle 4 to Cycle 5?**

A. Yes. A memo was sent on November 7, 2011 to all Superintendents and AISI Coordinators from School Research and Improvement Branch indicating that:

*We assume that there will not be large amounts of unexpended funds remaining at the end of August 31, 2012. However, if you anticipate that you will have funds left at the end of Cycle 4, please communicate with us with a request for carry forward – letting us know approximately how much you expect to have left, why, and what you plan to do with it in Cycle 5. Please use the attached Form B – Request for Carry Forward of AISI Cycle 4 Funds to Cycle 5. (Please contact the School Research and Improvement Branch if you need further information or assistance.)*

## **Relationship between AISI Research and Annual Education Results Report (AERR) Priorities**

**Q. How much does AISI need to be a separate initiative or be part of what we are already doing?**

A. AISI funding is targeted for innovative projects and provides school authorities with opportunities to try new things in different contexts to improve student engagement, learning and performance. A school authority's three-year planning and reporting process will be very helpful to inform the development of AISI project statements of student learning goal(s). (*AISI Handbook for Cycle 5*, p. 13) and AISI informs three-year planning and reporting. AISI projects need to be distinctive from ongoing work.

**Q. How does research methodology from AISI inform the AERR?**

A. As stated in the Alberta Education document, *Policy and Requirements for School Board Planning and Results Reporting*, (p. 3-3) <http://education.alberta.ca/admin/resources/planning/reporting2011.aspx> school authority AERRs are required to include "Web links to jurisdiction AISI project annual report(s). . ." As well, school authorities often directly reference AISI work in their Three-Year Education Plans and their AERRs.

AISI project research and resulting findings are intended to inform educational practices within a school authority. School authorities plan for the sustainability and integration of promising practices learned through AISI. Sustainability involves transference and integration of practices as part of the culture of a school or school authority. AISI projects have a lasting impact on educational practices when what is learned through research and

project implementation has been systematically incorporated into schools and authority-wide practices. There is transferability of effective educational practices to other classrooms and school settings beyond those of project participants (*AISI Handbook for Cycle 5*, p. 7).

**Q. How do we expand the research design to extend into data use in AERR and harmonize data with AISI and AERR?**

- A. *Framework for AISI Cycle 5, Principle 4:*  
The school authority project(s) is/are part of the three-year planning and reporting process for purposes of the school authority's annual planning, reporting and accountability processes. (*AISI Handbook for Cycle 5*, p. 1)

It is expected that what is learned through AISI projects will inform directions for school authority planning, policy and practices.

## Cross-School Authority Connections

**Q. How might we find others with similar interests before we start our planning for Cycle 5?**

- A. An AISI SharePoint site is under development by Alberta Education and will provide opportunities for connecting and networking among school authorities. School authorities will be able to indicate what areas they are considering for Cycle 5 and this information may be accessed by other school authorities. School Research and Improvement Branch will notify school authorities as soon as this site is operational. In the meantime, the School Research and Improvement Branch will be gathering preliminary information on possible Cycle 5 projects to share. The upcoming AISI Coordinators Workshops (January 19<sup>th</sup> in Calgary; January 23<sup>rd</sup> in Edmonton) will provide opportunities for discussing sharing processes.

**Q. Cross-networking. Can we build opportunities to network early in development? Can AISI help set up connections?**

- A. The School Research and Improvement Managers will be sharing this information together and liaising with their Zone School Authorities regarding networking opportunities. Opportunities to network with other authorities will be provided at the January workshops.

## AISI University Partners Capacity

### **Q. Do our universities have the capacity to provide research support for all projects?**

A. Over the past several months, the AISI University Partners (University of Alberta, University of Calgary, and University of Lethbridge) have been preparing to support school authorities in their Cycle 5 AISI projects, particularly in the area of research. They are pleased to offer assistance, leadership and support in the concluding year of Cycle 4 and in the development of projects for Cycle 5. The consultative services that could be provided include:

- in-service, professional development and knowledge sharing
- action research processes, research literature reviews and synopses
- assistance with research problems and issues that might arise
- connections to specific researchers from the university and their research networks
- access to resources (including people resources)
- support in planning and development of research projects
- support in documentation and writing of research agendas
- hosting network opportunities

The AISI University Partners will offer various courses and workshops that will support AISI Research Leaders, AISI Coordinators, Teachers, and Administrators. Two initial workshops are being planned: one on January 19, 2012, in Calgary and one for January 23, 2012, in Edmonton. Information will be forthcoming.

As well, AISI University Partners will be actively involved and will provide support through the AISI Research Network that is being established. However, they will NOT be conducting research as part of this support. If a school authority wishes to have direct research conducted and/or direct ongoing consultation, it would acquire these services through contracts with researchers.

In addition, other teacher preparation universities will be approached to explore possible research support.

### **Q. Where do AISI University Partners fit in? Might the universities be more involved with school authorities to a greater degree? How can we tap into more of their expertise?**

A. The AISI University Partners expect to be highly engaged in supporting the research priority for Cycle 5 and are very excited about the possibilities for collaborative work. As well as the areas indicated in the previous question/answer, the AISI University Partners are open to ideas for further supporting school authorities.

### **Q. How do we get equitable university support/guidance to smaller/rural districts?**

A. AISI University Partners are very willing to work with smaller/rural school authorities and are pleased to confer with school authorities upon request. As well, the AISI Research Network will provide opportunities to identify needs and possibilities.

## Developing Research Capacity/Internal and External Researchers

### **Q. How realistic is it for every project to have a research leader?**

- A. As research capacity is a priority for Cycle 5, it is important that there be research leadership within each school authority. The Research Leader will be responsible for the research component that is required in each project. The Research Leader will be the key contact for the provincial AISI Research Network. The same person may have the responsibilities of both the AISI Coordinator and the Research Leader, or the responsibilities may be shared between two different people (*AISI Cycle 5 Handbook*, p.12).

### **Q. Do school jurisdictions have the capacity for the research...or do we need to hire it out?**

- A. In order to fulfill the responsibilities of the role, the Research Leader may have the required research training and skill or may work with others who do. In many cases, the research services may be found within the school authority. However, services may be acquired in other ways, such as from another school authority, a research institution, a university faculty, a contracted researcher and/or graduate students. (*AISI Cycle 5 Handbook*, p. 12)

### **Q. What are the qualifications of a researcher inside a school division?**

- A. Ideally, a Research Leader will have experience conducting research and will be knowledgeable about research, including research questions, literature review, ethics, methodologies, data collection, analysis and reporting. If a Research Leader does not have direct experience in these areas, he/she should have an interest in research and be willing to spend some time learning about research in preparation for this leadership role. The Research Leaders will be supported by the AISI Research Network, as well as AISI University Partners, and others.

### **Q. Can we hire someone to do in-depth research?**

- A. Yes, the school authority can hire researcher(s) to do in-depth research and may use part of their funding designated for research. Ideally, the Research Leader will be responsible for coordinating externally conducted research associated with an AISI project.

### **Q. In the third year of Cycle 4, will school authorities have the capacity to devote time/energy/expertise to project design process?**

- A. This has always been a challenge in the transition from one cycle to the next. For Cycle 5, we have the opportunity for earlier planning due to the September announcement of the new cycle. In addition, it has been communicated that, with the additional funding for Year 3 of Cycle 4 in October, some of the funds that may not have been used for the last year of Cycle 4 can be used for the planning and preliminary work for Cycle 5. The amount used for Cycle 5 will be indicated as Unexpended Funds in the Cycle 4 AISI Project Final Report budget. Details included in Section B:4b Budget Comments of the AISI Project Final Report will clarify how funds have been used for Cycle 5 planning and preliminary work.

**Q. What could the role of the Research Leader look like?**

- A. Research Leaders are responsible for providing leadership (collaboratively with AISI teams and others) in the following areas:
- building strong connections with teachers and administrators related to research
  - serving as the school authority representative on the provincial AISI Research Network
  - building strong connections with universities
  - examining current research to inform their AISI projects
  - coordinating the research design for AISI projects including literature review, research questions, methodology, developing measurement instruments, analyzing findings and deriving conclusions, and so forth
  - sharing findings/lessons with the education community
  - networking with AISI Research Leaders from other school authorities
  - keeping current on related research and published education research findings
  - working with external researchers, as appropriate for research components and studies related to AISI projects

(This role description will be added to Final Copy of the *AISI Cycle 5 Handbook*)

**Q. Do we have to think about the research component differently? Universities say that our research is not rigorous but there may be a “mismatch” of the type of projects/data.**

- A. The research priority of Cycle 5 builds upon what has been learned and applied in previous cycles of AISI. We are well positioned in Alberta to enhance the research capacity and application to AISI projects. In the *Learning Mosaic Summary Report* (Hargreaves et al., 2009), the seven international researchers recommended that we make “more efficient and effective use of data to better measure AISI’s impact” (p. 16).

**Q. How can we build research capacity effectively? How do we help teachers see themselves as researchers – as part of the process?**

- A. Through working on the research priority for Cycle 5, those involved in AISI projects will be talking about research and will be sharing knowledge, and expertise, and furthering their learning. They will be networking through both formal and informal networks and working with researchers from within the school authority and externally. The school authority can organize learning opportunities to build research capacity (e.g., workshops, seminars, communities of practice). As well, there will be other learning opportunities provided by the AISI PD Working Group, the universities, and others.

## Research Expectation

### **Q. What does research collaboration look like?**

- A. A network to build and support research capacity across the province will be developed, coordinated and resourced by the School Research and Improvement Branch. The AISI University Partners will also participate in this network. In addition to this formal collaboration, Research Leaders will be encouraged to work together and to share with one another at workshops, conferences, and other professional learning events.

### **Q. What does the “research” piece really mean? Is it “real” research (publishable, peer-reviewed)?**

- A. AISI research may take the form of various research methodologies (e.g., applied, action, experimental, design) and needs to adhere to the basic characteristics of the methodology chosen. Research Leaders and AISI teams are encouraged to share findings/lessons at conferences, workshops, and other networking events. In addition, they may choose to publish findings in peer-reviewed educational journals and other publications. Support for such work will be available through the AISI Research Network coordinated and resourced by Alberta Education.

### **Q. What constitutes rigor for an AISI Research and Improvement Project?**

- A. Rigor refers to the quality or credibility of the research. In qualitative research, rigor is judged by trustworthiness (e.g., how congruent the findings are with reality) and transferability (e.g., how detailed the context is described to allow others to apply the findings in another setting). In quantitative research, rigor can be judged by reliability (e.g., how replicable the results are) and validity (e.g., the accuracy of the measurement). In qualitative research, the quality of the study is largely dependent on knowledge, skills and dispositions of the researcher. It is often said the most important instrument in a qualitative study is the researcher. In quantitative work, the quality of the study depends on the strength of the data-gathering instruments and the objectivity of the researcher. In both types of study, congruency between the research question and the methodology is crucial (*AISI Cycle 5 Handbook*, p. 39).

## Research Methodology, Data Collection and Measures

### **Q. Do we need to separate the different agendas? (e.g., stories vs. numbers). Some AISI work needs the stories, other work needs the numbers.**

- A. Research studies adopt a quantitative or a qualitative approach based on a number of factors including the nature of the inquiry or the guiding question, the purpose of the study and the orientation of the researcher(s). One approach is not better (i.e., more rigorous or valid) than the other. Both approaches can produce findings to inform our work in education. Occasionally, one approach is simply better suited to a specific inquiry over another. Often a combination of approaches can yield beneficial findings (*AISI Cycle 5 Handbook*, p. 39).

**Q. Will there be more flexibility in the measures based on the research goals?**

A. As noted in the *AISI Cycle 5 Handbook*, “The measures, success indicators and strategies selected and designed for the project will align with these goals” (p. 15). Regardless of the type of study and data collection (qualitative, quantitative, mixed), congruency between the research question and the methodology is crucial. That is, the data gathered should speak to the question guiding the study. In most cases a variety of data is needed to fully address the question(s) (*AISI Cycle 5 Handbook*, p. 39).

**Q. How do we contextualize the data? Qualitative?**

A. Ensuring the context is described with enough detail to allow others to apply the findings in another setting contributes to the trustworthiness or “rigor” of the study. Context may include the background of the study, a brief description of the community, supports in place, and other unique characteristics or elements inherent in the study site.

**Q. Measuring outcomes is a problem. How do we “quantify” some of our outcomes?**

A. Both quantitative and qualitative data are valuable for determining project results. In most AISI projects, there will be a combination of quantitative and qualitative data. This approach provides rich information. Thus, it is important to decide at the outset of the study what type of data will best inform the research questions. In qualitative research, data is in the form of words, pictures or objects. It is “A research method that uses descriptive data including interviews, observations, diaries, blogs, portfolios, and journals” (*AISI Cycle 5 Handbook*, p. 39).

**Q. How is there alignment between qualitative and quantitative? And implementation?**

A. As noted in the *AISI Cycle 5 Handbook* “There should also be a balance, where appropriate, of qualitative and quantitative measures” (p. 20). Thus, the qualitative and quantitative data collected work in a complementary manner and together inform the question.

**Q. Will there be a bank of measurement tools?**

A. Given the need for the measurement tools to align well with the research question and methodology, it is important that the Research Leader works with the AISI Coordinator and school community to determine which measures are best suited for the project directions/goals (see *AISI Cycle 5 Handbook*, p. 12 for more details regarding the role/responsibilities of the Research Leader). The Research Leader will be able to tap into the knowledge and expertise of the newly formed AISI Research Network, the AISI University Partners and the School Research and Improvement Branch. Although a central “bank of measurement tools” will likely not be created, school authorities will have access to numerous resources and guidance as they design and select measurement tools.

**Q. We need to see really good models of how to collect good student achievement data. How do we collect this data?**

- A. The Research Leader in each school authority has a key role in determining how best to collect data in a manner best suited to the context and elements of the study. In Cycle 5, the data collection focus is sharpened to ensure the impact on student learning is more accurately assessed. “Retaining data at the individual student level throughout a project will strengthen the validity of the research and allow for varied and detailed analysis. For example, it will allow school authorities to analyze results for identified students rather than only analyze aggregated totals that may include students who were not involved in the project. Having the capacity to analyze data for selected students will strengthen the validity of the research, making the findings more credible, useful and transferable” (*AISI Cycle 5 Handbook*, p. 24).

**Q. We need to figure out how to truly measure our impact - would following a specific cohort through the years work better? What measurements could be used? How do we measure achievement in each grade? Measuring impacts.**

- A. Collecting data at the individual student level and following a cohort through the years is advisable wherever possible. The Research Leader will work with the AISI Coordinator and school community to identify how to best document student engagement, learning and performance relative to the research question (*AISI Cycle 5 Handbook*, p. 34).

**Q. What kind of training in data collection, research methods, data instruments might be provided?**

- A. The Research Leader in consultation with the AISI Coordinator will assess the professional learning needs of those involved in the creation of measurement instruments, data collection and analysis. School authorities will be supported by members of the AISI Research Network, the AISI University Partners and the School Research and Improvement Branch. The universities are developing workshops and courses to support the Cycle 5 research capacity priority.

## Cycle 5 Reporting Differences

**Q. What is the progress report? How is it different from the APAR? Will the APAR document format be the same as the AISI Annual Progress Report for Cycle 5?**

- A. The AISI Annual Progress Report (AAPR) for Cycle 5 will require fewer sections to be completed than has the AISI Project Annual Report (APAR) for Cycle 4. In *Section A: Preliminary Research Findings and Progress towards Student Goals*, the report will include a results table for data collected on measures to date, and two text fields for discussions about key learnings and future actions/directions. A financial report with budget and comments will also be required.

**Q. Improving online reporting – Can we receive more information/training on this?**

- A. Work on improving online reporting is ongoing. Updates will be provided as well as the opportunity for input from the field to make reporting as meaningful, simple and user friendly as possible. Ongoing support and training will be available through the School Research and Improvement Branch.

## Knowledge Mobilization/Use of Results

### Q. How can the data be shared at the different levels? Where are the results of AISI Research and Improvement Projects to be shared?

A. Each school authority needs to develop a means of sharing AISI project information and results. Ways to disseminate research findings and key findings from an AISI project include:

- school/school authority newsletters
- school/school authority websites
- displays (e.g., school bulletin boards, community boards)
- publications (e.g., fact sheets, brochures, videos)
- presentations (e.g., AISI Conferences, workshops, board meetings)
- events (e.g., open houses, celebrations)
- media releases
- articles (e.g., *School Research and Improvement SCOOP*, the *ATA News*)
- Promising Practices for the AISI website
- scholarly journals (e.g., *AISI Journal*)

(*AISI Cycle 5 Handbook*, p. 26)

Research findings and key learnings from an AISI project need to be shared with the school community which includes teachers, administrators, other school staff, students, parents, elected officials, businesses, organizations and institutions.

## AISI Connections with Alberta Education Initiatives

### Q. How do Cycle 5 priorities align or connect with other initiatives/directions within the Ministry? (e.g., Action on Curriculum, Inclusion, Research)

A. The goal of AISI Cycle 5 is to improve student learning through initiatives that enhance student engagement and performance and reflect the unique needs and circumstances of each school authority (*AISI Cycle 5 Handbook*, p. 1). AISI projects may focus on any of the provincial priorities that relate to the school authority's needs and circumstances.

AISI Cycle 5 relates very well, and has been informed by, the key initiatives and directions identified in *Inspiring Action on Education* (2010) and the *Alberta Education Action Agenda* (2011-14). As well, AISI Cycle 5 has been informed by *The Learning Mosaic* (2009), which was a review of AISI commissioned by Alberta Education. The following table presents quotes from these important sources as they relate to the three priorities identified for Cycle 5.

## Research Capacity

### Directions from *Inspiring Action on Education*

*...all stakeholders will need to collaborate to conduct, interpret and apply research findings. Research partnerships will identify and expand our existing knowledge base... (p. 17).*

*Research that informs policy and practice is critical to the success of our students and to ensuring a bright future for all Albertans (p. 17).*

*Leadership to champion research and development is foundational to innovation, growth and change (p. 17).*

*The professional teacher is a learning leader, a collaborative partner, a researcher, a reflective practitioner, and a change agent... (p. 22).*

### Directions from *Alberta Education Action Agenda 2011-14*

*Alberta's education community needs to harness the power of research to continue to be on the leading edge of educational practice and benefit from innovation in other parts of the world (p. 8).*

### Directions from *The Learning Mosaic*

*...there is significantly greater opportunity to access the research and inquiry resources and capacity of universities by forming structured research partnerships... (p. 116).*

*A student level data base is needed, which includes baseline and outcome data on individual students, as well as background information on these same individuals, and linking this data base to existing provincial data bases (p. 32).*

*Create leadership and support systems for teachers and administrators involved in AISI projects to access existing data bases, request and receive data analysis services, and design their own instruments and indicators of accountability that are appropriate to their project goals (p. 106).*

*Provide a centralized resource for data collection and management and reallocate some AISI funding for this from individual site proposals... (p. 119).*

### AISI Cycle 5 Alignment

Research and practice are interconnected. Research informs practice and practice informs research. The foundational work of action-oriented and site-based research in schools across the province in the previous cycles of AISI needs to be further developed and taken to the next level to enable greater innovation and to develop the capacity of teachers as researchers.

There will be enhanced opportunities in Cycle 5 for teachers and the school community to build research capacity through provincial support and strong connections with universities.

### New Requirements for Cycle 5

- Cycle 5 AISI projects will focus on research and improvement.
- There will be a research component for all AISI projects. School authorities will conduct research to address specific questions and report on their findings as part of their AISI research and improvement project.
- A minimum expenditure of 10% on research leadership and related support will be required.
- School authorities will submit progress reports annually in place of an AISI Project Annual Report (APAR).

### **Supports for Research Capacity**

- A network to build and support research capacity across the province will be developed, coordinated and resourced.
- EPSC will undertake work on behalf of all projects to address questions of province-wide interest. This will be based on needs identified by AISI projects.
- New technology to support the development and administration of student assessments and surveys, and other data collection instruments will be in place for Cycle 5.

## **Collaborative Cross-School Authority Projects**

### **Directions from *Inspiring Action on Education***

*In order to further strengthen evidence-based decision making, Alberta Education will continue to participate in collaborative research arrangements with partners throughout and beyond the province. ...Knowledge sharing and collaboration with Kindergarten – Grade 12 stakeholders and our post-secondary institutions will also be strengthened (p. 4).*

### **Directions from *The Learning Mosaic***

*Given the pockets of remarkable innovation in the province and deep commonalities in interest, expertise, and activity across jurisdictions, the time seems right for some inter-district networking activity... (p. 50).*

*The further development and continued success of AISI depends ...on extending and deepening collaboration and partnership in three ways: widening the range of collaborative partnerships; forging stronger connections and networks among schools across districts; giving collaborative work a more explicitly critical edge and instigating collaborative relationships of support and assistance between sites ... (p. 115).*

*Parent and community engagement, stronger connections to universities and the business community, and sponsorship of cross-district networking are three areas in which connectivity can be significantly improved (p. 104).*

*Target funding allocations within the overall AISI budget for cross-district collaborative projects. ...Designate funding for a leader of cross-district networks and other partnerships (p. 117).*

### **AISI Cycle 5 Alignment**

AISI Cycle 5 represents a move from disconnected or loosely connected projects to a province-wide network of research, improvement and innovation. School authorities will be encouraged to work together to plan, propose and orchestrate their shared project(s).

### **New for Cycle 5:**

- Two or more school authorities will be able to submit one AISI Proposal for a Collaborative AISI Research and Improvement Project.

### **Supports for Collaborative Cross-School Authority Projects:**

- Collaborative cross-school authority AISI research and improvement projects may be eligible for additional funding from a newly created funding pool for cross-school authority coordination. Provincial coordination will be in place to promote and support lateral networks, collaboration and knowledge mobilization.

## School Community Engagement

### Directions from *Inspiring Action on Education*

*Parental engagement plays a significant role in a child's future success. Through the active and committed support of parents, children embrace learning with enthusiasm, confidence and energy (p. 24).*

*Community resources should be more fully engaged to support learners... Community resources - whether local, provincial, national or global – should actively participate in the education of learners (p. 8).*

### Directions from *Alberta Education Action Agenda 2011-14*

*Communities and parents need to have more opportunities and be encouraged to become more involved with their local schools and in what's happening with their children's education (p. 8).*

*New approaches need to be developed to further strengthen school-community relationships (p. 8).*

### Directions from *The Learning Mosaic*

*It is ... necessary that AISI pays attention to expanding current partnerships at the district level by engaging more individuals, associations and business organizations in AISI activities. This is important, as international experiences suggest, because the drivers of renewal of education often are outside of school (p. 83).*

*Dialogue in communities can become an act of enriching interaction where people help each other to be their best and rise further than anyone could go alone... An enriching community, therefore, emerges in trust, security, and togetherness – all core values of education in Alberta and beyond (p.84).*

*There is scope for more explicit attention to the development of stronger relationships with parents and other community members (p. 92).*

### AISI Cycle 5 Alignment

AISI Cycle 5 will require greater engagement of teachers, students, parents, community members, businesses, universities and other partners during the planning and implementation of AISI research and improvement projects.

#### New Requirements for Cycle 5:

- All projects will be required to demonstrate active and meaningful engagement of key stakeholders (administrators, teachers, students, parents, elected officials, community, businesses, organizations, institutions, etc.)

#### Supports for School Community Engagement:

- A rubric will be developed for schools/school authorities to assess the level of community engagement in AISI and to communicate this to stakeholders.
- A virtual learning community will be established to support sharing of best practices for community engagement.

**Q. How are the ministries working together on this?**

- A. Although AISI is not directly connected with other ministries, specific work and themes in AISI projects may connect with cross-ministry work. Alberta Education works collaboratively with many ministries in the Government of Alberta in a number of areas (e.g., Early Learning, Early Brain and Biological Development, Child and Youth Data Lab, High School Completion). There may be further opportunities to develop connections with other ministries in Cycle 5 AISI projects.

## Community Engagement

**Q. What does community engagement mean? What does community engagement look like?**

- A. An engaged community offers an inclusive culture and values diverse membership and input. It has supportive structures and processes that enable success for student engagement, learning and performance through collaborative input and support by administrators, principals, teachers, other school staff, students, school councils, parents, elected officials, businesses, organizations and institutions.

A School Community Engagement Rubric is being developed to help school authorities reflect on the levels of community engagement in their AISI project. This will be included as an Appendix in the *AISI Handbook for Cycle 5*.

**Q. How much should community engagement be part of the proposal?**

- A. It is expected that all AISI Cycle 5 projects include and report on how the school community will be engaged throughout the life of the project. This includes project development, implementation, communication, evaluation and celebration (*AISI Cycle 5 Handbook*, p. 23).

**Q. What strategies can be taken to address the challenge of community engagement? How will the rubric support and guide us (mobilize us to meet this challenge)?**

- A. A strategic focus involving consultation that is well organized and intentional, that includes diverse community members, and that invites them to participate in a variety of forums is a good start. This may include advisory committees, workshops, focus groups, school meetings, and jurisdictional and public meetings.

There will be ongoing sharing of successful school authority community engagement practices through AISI networks, on the AISI website, and through various learning opportunities.

The School Community Engagement Rubric will support and help guide school authorities to:

- describe community engagement
- establish expectations for community engagement
- identify ways in which stakeholders can be engaged
- communicate with stakeholders about engagement

(*AISI Cycle 5 Handbook*, p. 23)

**Q. Can we somehow capitalize on AISI's focus on community engagement to support/inform/involve community to create synergy and show comprehensive, unified support?**

A. Wow, yes we can! This supports the rationale for more extensive community engagement.

**Q. Can we hear more about the overarching philosophical reason for increased community engagement?**

A. See above for the **Directions from *Inspiring Action on Education, Alberta Education Action Agenda 2011-14, and The Learning Mosaic***

For further information on community engagement, see [Parent and Community Engagement](#) on the AISI Website.

## Cycle 5 Funding Model

**Q. What will Cycle 5 funding look like? Is it going to remain the same?**

A. The budget announcement that is anticipated to occur in February 2012 will determine the funding for Year 1 of AISI Cycle 5.

**Q. What is the timeline? Funding model?**

A. A timeline is available in *AISI Cycle 5 Handbook, Appendix 3*, (pp. 40-41).

The funding model for AISI Cycle 5 will consist of the following components from the total provincial AISI funding:

- School authorities will receive a per student allocation based upon the previous September 30<sup>th</sup> count.
- School authorities that are part of a Collaborative Cross-School Authority Project are eligible to apply for additional funding from the Collaborative Cross-School Authority Funding Pool.
- There will be funded provincial coordination for establishing and implementing networks, providing data collection and analysis support, and conducting province-wide research/work.

The amounts will be determined in the 2012 budget process.