

Saskatchewan Reading Conference

The Saskatchewan Reading Conference was both exciting and educational. Their Keynote speakers were able to give teachers tools that could be used in the classroom immediately. Steen Layne explained Four Literacy Lessons that should be followed; one, know your books; two, read aloud a lot; three, expose them (the students) to powerful writing; and four, write with them. Lori Jamison and Paul Kropp discussed the four parts to a Writing Workshop; first teach a mini lesson on the parts of writing; two, there is always time and something to write about; three, conference with classmates and teachers; and finally, share and celebrate the students work. I learned a great deal and recommend this conference to any teacher.

Brent Campbell
LLCS Ducharme

Saskatchewan Reading Conference

My name is Elizabeth Cassell and I recently attended the SRC conference in Regina. I am applying for the PD assistance.

As usual the conference was excellent. The keynote speakers were fantastic and gave their listeners lots to laugh about, but also a lot to think about. Many of them gave practical ideas that we could take back and use in our classrooms.

Dr. Steven Layne was really entertaining. Many of his stories and poems are based on his true life experiences. I really enjoyed his stories. Also Faye Brownle gave me a new idea about literature circles and how to use them in the classroom, without having students focus on jobs that they don't need in order to enjoy and discuss their book.

Also just mixing and talking to teachers in the various areas were also very insightful.

Thank you.

Elizabeth Cassell
LLCS Ducharme

Saskatchewan Reading Council

In the five years that I have been teaching, this was the first time I took the opportunity to attend the Saskatchewan Reading Council's annual conference. It is not a large conference attendance wise but the best professional development experience that I have had - outside the classroom, that is! The speakers for the most part were eloquent, insightful and very practical. Steven Layne was highly entertaining while bringing forth the importance of reading. Most of the sessions were lead by people who have taught in the classroom or worked directly with children and because of their experiences, they were able to disseminate strategies and approaches that have worked for them. Direct teaching of writing traits, the writing process and sequence organizers were only some of the useful ideas that I learned about that I will implement in my own classroom.

Tiawni Croteau
LLCS Ducharme

Saskatchewan Cochlear Implant Workshop
October, 12, 2007

On October 12, 2007, The Saskatchewan Cochlear Implant Team organized a workshop in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan where Pat Chute gave a presentation on working with hearing impaired students. Dr. Chute is a professor and chair of the Division of Health Professions at Mercy College in Dobbs Ferry, New York, USA.

The workshops target audience included Special Education Coordinators, Classroom Teachers, Resource Teachers, Speech-Language Pathologists, Audiologists and Parents. The workshops role was specifically addressing the needs of children with cochlear implants and the role of speech and hearing professionals that are working with children that are deaf or hard of hearing.

According to the agenda, the Learning Outcomes for this information session are as follows:

1. Determine the factors that contribute to implant success.
2. Know the variety of habilitative strategies that can be used with children from infancy to adulthood.
3. Understand the issues with regard to bilateral implantation.
4. Identify the need for mapping.
5. Know the complexities of coupling FM systems to the cochlear implant.
6. Comprehend the differences that will contribute to performance differences in children with cochlear implants.

As a teacher who teaches two students who have hearing impairments and wear hearing aids, I found this workshop to be very helpful. Dr. Chute provided information about performance outcomes regarding the range of communication a child can use, the educational environment and usages of available support services, auditory skill development, and setting the “listening window” within the environment. Also, Dr. Chute provided teaching tips regarding pattern perception, student comprehension recognition, and appropriate teaching strategies and methods.

Prior to attending, my competency of teaching children with cochlear implants and hearing aids was limited. This workshop informed me with important information with how to teach effectively to children who use cochlear implants and/or hearing aids.

Dayna Dewling
LLCS Dene

Assumptions about Bullying Conference

I took a lot away from this conference- a lot I can use in my classroom (grade 6) and school (La Loche Community School). One of those things was that I can view bullying as a human rights issue and use this within the social studies curriculum. I learned that one of the biggest bullies in history was Adolf Hitler and this can really impact my students.

Another important thing that I extracted from the conference was that bullies are in many cases victims as well. Some of the students who bully in my school can attribute their bullying to their home life. They bully because they are bullied . I need to keep this in mind and try to react to it appropriately- in a different manner- from a different angle. These are just two of the many things I took away from the conference. I would recommend this conference to any teacher, parent or anyone else.

Derek Dyck
LLCS Ducharme
La Loche

STF Renewal Workshop

I attended the STF Renewal Seminar from April 18-23rd. The whole seminar is based on the concept of self care for teachers. I learned a great deal from this seminar about how to really take care of myself so that I can be a more balanced person and teacher. We worked on specific issues if we chose to, and we also worked on learning basic things that can help us take care of ourselves and our families more effectively; massage and reflexology were two fantastic seminars I took that were immensely helpful. The seminar was an amazing experience and I would recommend it to other teachers who are looking to make a change in their lives and need some help and support to do so.

Jennifer Green
LLCS Dene
La Loche

AWASIS Conference

I recently attended Awasis 2008 in Saskatoon. The conference started with motivational speaker, Wayne Hulley. His presentation, "Harbours of Hope" was humourous and inspirational. He enlightened the audience and myself when he talked about the changes we need to make in education. He spoke about worldview affects how we make our descions and choices in and out of the classroom. He emphasized that failure is not an option and encouraged teachers to save one student a year from failing. I later went to another session with Wayne Hulley called Hope for Teachers. This session furthered the information and philosophy shared in the keynote address. Another beneficial session was facilitated by Mary Lee, a cultural consultant, from a very special Aboriginal highschool in Saskatoon. She focused on teaching the virtues of the tipi. She shared her knowledge and in doing so modeled great respect for the tipi and its sacred role in ceremony. The most beneficial session talked about FASD (fetal alchol spectrum disorder). The presenter was very well educated and made it easy to ask questions. Though this was the longest session it did not seem that way. I left the session feeling well informed and with useful strategies to try. This is my second time going to Awasis and just like the first time I throughly enjoyed myself and was able to take ideas back to my students.

Stacey Langford
LLCS Ducharme

Early Childhood Education Council

When attending the Early Childhood Education Council conference in the fall, I focused my professional development on learning new ideas and techniques for Arts Education. While I attended on informative session that centered on early writing, the remainder of the sessions I participated in focused on the arts. I learned that I need to teach the basic techniques of art to children so they have a strong basis for creating art that is reflective of their thoughts and inspirations.

As a result, I have been focusing my energy during Arts Education experiences on teaching my students the basic elements of art and how to use simple techniques to incorporate them. I feel this is giving them the knowledge of how to use these tools so that as they grow and mature, they will be able to express their ideas to their fullest potential.

Brianna Panchuk, B. Ed.
LLCS Ducharme

Life Space Crisis Intervention: Five Day Advanced Instruction and Certification programme was held March 3-7, 2008 at the Prince Albert Inn. This training was an intensive, worthwhile experience. It provided affirmation for strategies already in use. It also gave participants new tools and perspectives to use not only in an educational setting but in dealing with life/people relationships. It was an honour to sit with colleagues from many Prince Albert Grand Council (PAGC) schools throughout the north. The participants included not only teachers but guidance counsellors, tutors, special education staff and school administrators as well. One goal of PAGC is to train all staff in Life Space Crisis Intervention. It was noted that staff trained as a team would be very effective.

I found the title LSCI to be a misnomer. Life Space refers to all the relationships around you. The title also includes the words 'crisis intervention' but the skills taught can apply to the many different situations that happen daily, not just the crises. Some of the youth that LSCI target are students who carry in home problems, who distort reality, who are self abusive, who are resistant to change and who have dysfunctional social skills. LSCI is not for extreme behaviour types only.

Understanding why people do what they do has always been an interest. As I have grown, understanding of why I do what I do has helped me along my path of self development. I would like to stress that this training can also provide awareness about oneself in order to understand why we become engaged the way we do in the different responses that students/others provide. I believe that conflict is a part of life; it is how one goes about resolving conflict that is important.

There are six stages of LSCI. Within this participants are taught six reclaiming interventions to use after the central issue and the person's motivation to change has been identified. Each intervention has a corresponding goal, focus and new insight as objectives (learning outcomes). Instruction was thorough, including lectures, role plays and video taped interventions. Upon completion of the programme, a certificate was awarded to the participants who successfully passed the exam and practicum. In addition, it is possible to write a 6-10 page paper and receive credit for a graduate level university class.

In summary, I am very grateful to have been allowed to participate in this training which is one part of the Circle of Courage-Reclaiming Youth International organisation. Professional development that is relevant, useful, builds upon prior knowledge and worldview along with certification

and a university credit, is valuable. I believe that our entire school staff would benefit from this training.

AWASIS Conference

I recently attended the AWASIS Conference in Saskatoon. One of the most enjoyable speakers was the Key Note Address on Thursday morning. Wayne Hulley spoke to the group about student success in schools. In a small group session that followed he further explained his ideas and the importance of students feeling successful. He was very entertaining and motivational. During a session about CBC archives the group was shown how to access t.v. and radio clips on the website. This could be a valuable resource for classroom teachers. The site appears to be fairly easy to navigate and contains many clips on a variety of topics. Friday afternoon I attended the most informational session entitled Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD): Changing Brain Structure Changes Behaviour. The speaker was very knowledgeable and passionate about the topic and shared with us many stories, videos, statistics and strategies about FASD. Holly Graham was the woman leading the session and I recommend going to listen to her speak to anyone who has the chance. These are a few of the highlights from this years AWASIS conference, it was very enjoyable.

Kimberlee Schlageter
LLCS Ducharme

Professional Development Report: Penny Settee Charlebois Community School

I attended a two day seminar in Regina on January 28th and 29th. The well renowned Dr. Barry Prizant, pioneer of research in Autism presented the SCERTS model in an introductory manner. It can be followed with further intensive training ranging from four days to two weeks. The model offers a framework which directly addresses social communication and emotional regulation, the core challenges presented within the Autism Spectrum Disorders. Transactional supports are designed and implemented across multiple settings to encourage more interpersonal interactions and relationships.

The model enhances spontaneous language and communication through its emphasis on productive learning experiences across multiple environments. Emotional regulation prevents problem behaviours therefore individual cases are examined to ascertain importance. Parent and professional collaboration is essential in the development of functional and meaningful educational programs.

Saskatchewan Reading Conference
April 10 – 12, 2008
“Unlock the Mystery Find the Treasure”

Thursday evening was the Saskatchewan Author’s Night of prose, poetry, storytelling and song. The authors participating were Sheena Koops, Robert Currie, Paul Spasoff, Wilfred Burton & Anne Patton, Marny Duncan-Cary & Megan Mansbridge.

Friday’s keynote speakers were Dr. Steven Layne, Les Asselstine, Bill Slavin, Faye Brownlie, and Lori Jamison & Paul Kropp. “*Literacy Lessons for a Lifetime*” by Dr. Steven Layne focused on the role literacy plays in our lives. Les Asselstine’s keynote address “*The Most Important Thing!*” explored how to make our students be attentive and say “I can do it.” He did this by shared his thoughts on having fun teaching reading and writing. “*Visual Storytelling*” by Bill Slavin focused on the visual aspects involved in writing a picture book and the partnership that develops between the writer and illustrator. “*Grand Conversations, Thoughtful Responses*” by Faye Brownlie focused on how to use literature circles. “*Happiness is a Compound word – and other Lessons Learned from Children’s Writing*” by Lori Jamison & Paul Kropp focused on the importance of writing in literacy development.

The breakout sessions I attended on Friday were by Sheryl Kuchera and Les Asselstine. Sheryl Kuchera’s session, “*Giving Students the Strategic Edge*” focused on reading strategies for intermediate students by using National Geographic Explorer Collections to help students become critical thinkers. We received samples of the booklets. “*Keeping it Real*” by Les Asselstine was very informative and entertaining. Through his activities with the group he showed how teachers can use practical ideas for linking language instruction to science and social studies.

The keynote speakers for Saturday were Dr. Maureen McLaughlin, and Paulette Bourgeois. “*Comprehension Strategies*” by Dr. Maureen McLaughlin focused on practical ideas for teaching reading comprehension strategies by using the guided comprehension model of reading. “*The Writing Life*” by Paulette Bourgeois focused on her journey of writing and how she created the character Franklin the Turtle who appears in picture books illustrated by Brenda Clark.

Saturday’s breakout session I attended was “*Engaging our Boys in Reading and Writing*” by Paul Kropp. Paul focused on what we can do to engage our boys in reading and writing by using some practical ideas in choosing books and learning activities to meet the needs of all students.

Judy Shire
Churchill Community High School
April 25, 2008

The SCERTS Model Introductory Workshop: Next Generation Practices for Children with Autism and Their Families

Barry Prizant, one of the collaborators of the SCERTS model, presented at this workshop in Regina on January 28 and 29th, 2008.

On the first day, Barry gave us an overall picture about SCERTS, what it stands for, how it can be used in the school, the philosophy and principles behind the model and detailed information about Social Communication and Emotional Regulation. On the second day, he spoke about Transactional Supports and the assessment process.

What is SCERTS? The “SC” stands for Social Communication, “ER” for emotional regulation, and “TS” for transactional support. This model focuses on supporting these three areas or domains when working with children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). The SCERTS model can be used in conjunction with other educational approaches and strategies so that educators do not feel that they had to abandon other strategies if they were to adopt this model in their schools. This model is child centered, activity based, developmentally grounded, family centered, culturally sensitive and relationship based.

SCERTS values the development of spontaneous and functional communication and promotes and values opportunities to practice communication in functional social situations as much as possible. Goals and activities are developmentally appropriate and functional. All domains of a child’s development are viewed as interrelated and interdependent. All behaviors are viewed as purposeful and supports are needed to help with emotional regulation when children display problem behaviors. Each child is valued for his uniqueness and all children and their families are treated with dignity and respect. Team is very much a part of the SCERTS model. Families are considered the experts on their child and collaboration with families is an integral part of this model. What struck me most was that this model is very much dependant on our attitude – on how we view children and their behaviors.

Social Communication

Social Communication in the SCERTS model values many forms of communication – gestures, pictures and picture symbols, sign language, speech and written language. Communication is a key factor in all social situations with peers and adults and is critical for success in school activities – especially academics. Communication is also important in helping students be understood, therefore supporting the student and reducing or preventing problem behavior.

Emotional Regulation

There are many factors which can influence emotional regulation or the “availability” for learning and social engagement. These can include physiological factors such as sleep, sensory issues, cognitive and language ability. The SCERTS model asks us to consider what kinds of supports are needed to help the child stay regulated or recover from dysregulation because if a child is dysregulated, they are not “available” for learning.

Transactional Support

A quote from Barry really stood out in this section of his presentation. He said we need to look carefully at our behavior, that “if we don’t model what we are trying to teach, then we are really teaching something else.” As educators, I think that this really fits in with everything we do in the classroom.

In education, we set out goals and objectives for our students. It was interesting that in this model, there are goals and objectives for parents, teachers and tutors or partners that work with the students. For example, the partner needs to be responsive to the child, foster initiation, respect the child’s independence, provide developmental support, adjust language input when working with the child and model appropriate behaviors. In one school he spoke about that had adopted the SCERTS model, they call their educational assistants, Independence Facilitators. I really like that term – it really describes what we want educational assistants or tutors to do. Definitely, it’s something to think about.

I gained a lot of information about working with children with autism from attending this workshop. It also has made me reflect on children with other disabilities and how some of the principles from the SCERTS model may be beneficial to them as well. It was well worth driving to Regina – even in -40 degree weather!!

Faye Tam
Gordon Denny Community School

I attended the “Learning through Practice” conference put on by the Dr. Stirling McDowell Foundation for Research into Teaching, in Saskatoon Nov 23-24, 2007. The focus of the conference was Action Research – looking at exchanging teacher knowledge and research.

The McDowell Foundation gives grants for different research projects and the first speaker on Friday evening was presenting a summary of the program they developed in Saskatoon called “Ecoquest” - (<http://www.ecoquest.ca/>) this environmental science program for selected grade 8 students had a unique approach to evaluation and assessment. The students had to apply to the program and were cross-curricular approach included 9 major projects for the students that ranged from studying certain neighbourhoods in Saskatoon to participating in a canoe trip on the Churchill River. Students kept journals, participated in self evaluation and were responsible for documenting and presenting the knowledge they had gained through participation in each project. Teachers were facilitators, which is a word that is easily thrown around but rarely put into practice.

On Saturday morning I attended two workshops. The first was a summary of how teachers could and should become researchers. The workshop was titled “Getting to know the research process” and presented a quick overview of different methods of doing research (action research is only one approach). She briefly touched on data collection instruments.

The second session was called “Using Professional Learning Communities to refocus a school” – specifically the North Park Wilson school in Saskatoon looked at establishing Professional Learning Communities in Arts Education to expedite instructional change in a school. This workshop outlined the three year process of revitalizing this “run-down” building into a vibrant community school by having Fine Arts programming as the focus of every subject in every grade.

Saturday afternoon started with a energetic workshop called “Continuing the Journey: How to engage Schools in ongoing Action Research” - Facilitated by Ian Krips... Action research is way more than just a project for grad studies...it is an ongoing process of improving our practice as teacher. He presented a variety of techniques and case studies where Action Research has improved the practice of many teachers in the province.

Over all, it was interesting to see how teachers from University professors to Kindergarten teachers are using Action Research to improve practice.

Bonnie Werner
Churchill Community High School
La Ronge