

Fast Forward Flourishing CommUNITY



PROBLEM OF
PRACTICE

The world reflects increasing complexity, volatility, ambiguity, uncertainty, and divisiveness. Our core purpose remains teaching and learning. We aim to surface the systems and drive local community change by focusing on two central questions:

- How do we create the conditions for teaching and learning?
- How do we leverage emerging technology to create space for humanity to emerge and thrive?

The work of the Foothills School Division is largely informed and inspired by the following books and their Canadian scholars, practitioners and authors; including Michael Ungar, [The Limits of Resilience](#), Jessica Riddell, [Hope Circuits](#), and Adam Kahane, [Everyday Habits for Transforming Systems](#), among others. Their respective field of expertise include systems change, community resilience, higher education, and education at large.

Our conceptual framework focuses on change leadership through systems change and building community, in direct collaboration with our school division community.



Organization: **Foothills School Division**

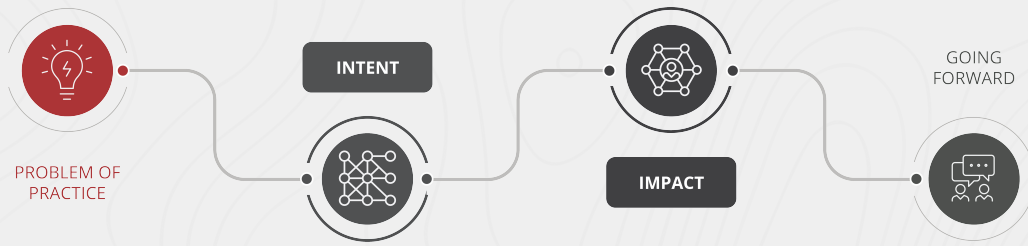
Province: Alberta

Date: **2026**

Lead: Christopher Fuzessy,
Superintendent

Fast Forward Flourishing CommUNITY. Foothills School Division

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Problem of Practice

Our guiding principles include:

- **Flourishing for All:** Inspired by contemporary research, our work's foundation is a commitment to human flourishing—prioritizing belonging, well-being, and lifelong learning.
- **Systemic Resilience:** The initiative recognizes that strong, coordinated systems are needed to help families and youth access resources, navigate challenges, and overcome barriers.
- **Intentional Partnerships:** Schools, municipalities and local governments, and local business, leaders, and service organizations must intentionally align goals, share knowledge, and coordinate services to create the conditions for thriving.

In January of 2026, we gathered a group of 22 employees, representing a variety of roles across the organization who volunteered to offer their perspectives, recommendations, and insights into the following topics and themes over four working group sessions:

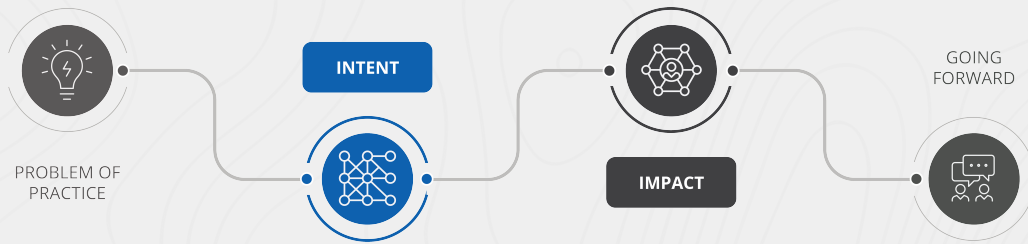
Student supports	Belonging and well-being	Emerging technology and AI	Advocacy	Community
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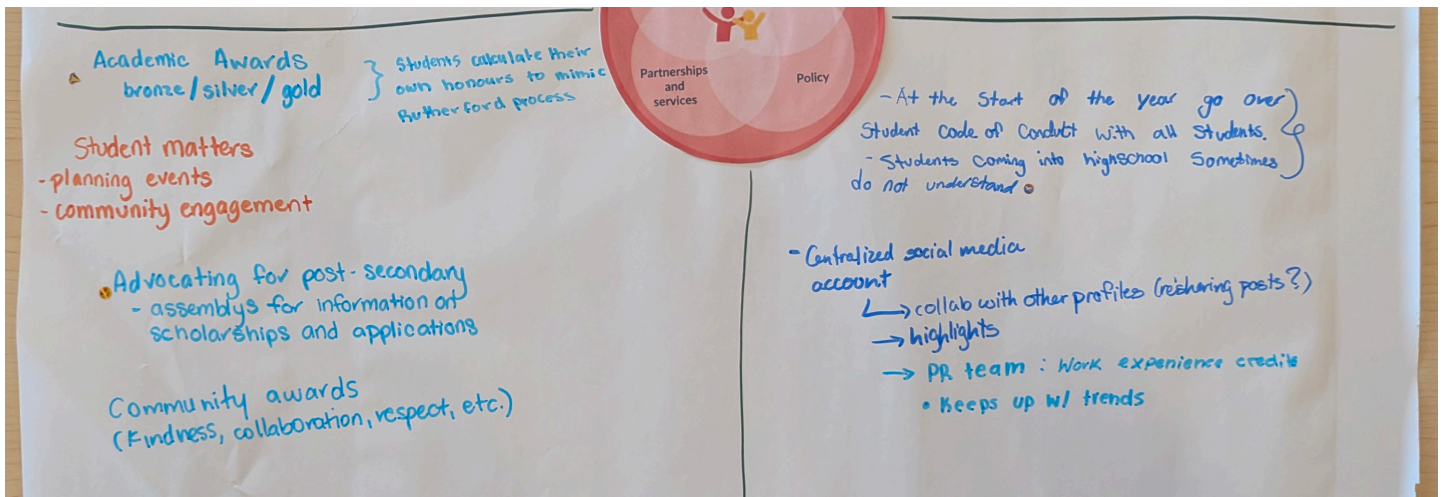
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Intent

Our intention was to design generative conversations situated in “How might we?” questions, compelling quotes, and open-ended questions. Our facilitation included generative, facilitated dialogue, and the development of a series of recommendations for system change through world café style activities.

Our goal was to surface and rethink the systems we work within and to create new ways of being and doing in our local community; leveraging or refining the structures that already exist to promote a more responsive and resilient society. For example, that might mean automating processes to create time and space for human interaction, leveraging existing global expertise and research as a starting point for discussion, and sharing knowledge with team and community. And woven throughout was a need to determine and act on how to embed this moving forward. This was not a one-off engagement opportunity that checks off a box. Rather, we envisioned a continuing feedback loop embedded in the organizational culture and ethos, built by and with our team.



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Impact

Nurturing Diffusion and Coherence

We are learning that diffusion and coherence happen when we put intentional structures in place that create the time and space for dialogue to happen and mindsets to shift. We have been thinking about this in several ways.

At the organizational level, our inquiry is **embedded directly into our strategic planning**. This operationalization is important because it signals that the work is not a one-time engagement but a living commitment, revisited and refined on a yearly basis. A subcommittee focused on identifying emerging trends ensures that what we are learning continuously informs what we are doing, creating the conditions for coherent, adaptive action over time.

We have developed what we call a **“virtuous loop” of community engagement**, which looks like an ongoing cycle of invitation, engagement, and reciprocity with community leaders. Rather than positioning the school division as the sole driver of change, we share what we are doing, ask for help explicitly, and then ask how we can help that organization. This shift in orientation from delivering information to cultivating genuine partnership and reciprocal relationships has changed the nature of those relationships in a meaningful way. What began, for some, as skepticism (“Why are we doing this work?”) has evolved into a deeper understanding of how and why this work matters.

Within schools, diffusion takes the form of **intentional ripples**. By inviting school leaders, teachers, and support staff who have been part of the working groups to bring that learning back into their local school communities, we are building a network of practitioners who carry coherent understanding into diverse contexts. Structuring and personalizing leadership support acknowledges that systemic change only leads to transformation when people own and are supported to carry it.

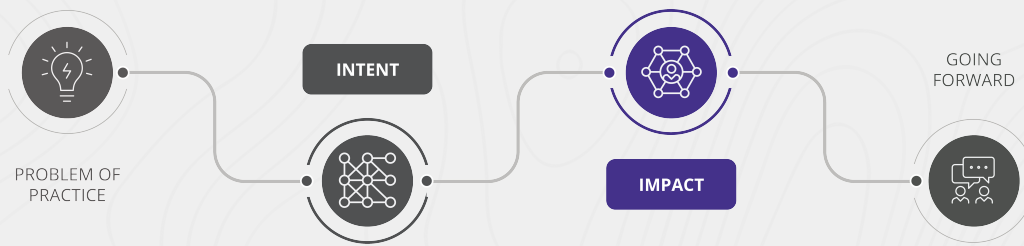
Structures like our **school and community safety committee** offer a different kind of coherence: a shared vocabulary and durable understanding of the terms and values that anchor our work. As that shared language deepens, so too does the committee's capacity to hold complexity and sustain focus across time.

This work also requires an **honest evaluation of our current structures** and the courage to surface and retire structures that no longer serve us. That willingness to let go is itself an act of conscious coherence and helps us ensure that what remains is genuinely aligned with where we are headed rather than where we have been.

Perhaps most fundamentally, we hold the belief that the system exists **within the people in the room**. Each one of us, through the words we choose, the questions we ask, and the culture we model, is both evidence of and an agent for the change we wish to realize. This framing invites vulnerability and accountability in equal measure, and underscores that to create systemic change, we must be willing to put ourselves into it.

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AI Literacy and Scaling

There is genuine consensus from students and parents around the need to equip students to understand and navigate emerging technology. It consistently surfaces as a prominent theme in the feedback from these stakeholders. Students articulate a deep desire to develop the skills, knowledge, and awareness they need to set themselves up for success in a world being reshaped by AI and parents echo this. At the same time, as a school division, we recognize that we are not yet fully meeting that need. **Naming that gap** is the entry point for a more intentional response.

Our work to develop a **Vision for AI**, including what meaningful and ethical AI use looks like in the classroom, represents an early but significant indicator of scaling. It moves AI literacy from an individual teacher initiative to shared organizational commitment. We also hold this work in creative tension with broader cultural anxieties like the concerns raised in works like *The Anxious Generation* by Jonathan Haidt about screen time and digital exposure, which remind us that there is no simple, uncritical path forward. The question is not whether to engage with emerging technology, but how to do so wisely.

Our conceptual grounding for this work is also deepening. OECD research on adaptive learning, flourishing, and ethical decision-making has become part of our shared language around AI literacy, situating it not as a technical addition but as an integral dimension of our broader instructional framework for **learning that transfers**. Learning that transfers is oriented toward learner agency, conceptual understanding, and the ability to live with complex problems over time. This is not new work for us. It is the operationalized evolution of reflection that began coming out of COVID, anchored in a foundational question: What would have to be true for this problem to never have existed?

Going Forward

GOING
FORWARD



When reflecting on impact and scaling, we are paying attention to several concrete indicators of success. We continue to engage with organizations and learning communities to **benchmark our progress** and **stay connected to emerging practice**. Survey instruments, including a provincial Alberta survey and our own school board survey, with questions added specifically around confidence in preparing students for emerging technology, are giving us data on where we stand and where we need to grow. Schools are developing and adjusting plans, and we are **building evaluation tools** for curriculum design that track feedback, use, and adoption. Our **train-the-trainer** model offers a mechanism for rippling learning outward with coherence.

Evidence also surfaces in less formal but equally illuminating ways: through the **stories shared on our podcast**, the ease with which people across the system can now speak to what flourishing means in their context, and through the distinct ways individual school communities are expressing shared values in their own cultures.

What we are building toward is a middle road...one that is neither a retreat from technology nor uncritical adoption. Instead, we are pursuing a community that equips students and the adults alike with the adaptive capacity and ethical grounding to engage with whatever comes next...**we are pursuing a community that is flourishing.**

Resources

- [Book List](#)
- [Foundational Documents](#)
- [Elemental Educator Podcast](#)
- [Learning That Transfers](#) - Outlines the learning model used within the Foothills School Division and showcases how educators design learning experiences and environments that support learning transfer for students.
- [Placing Education at the Centre of a Flourishing Community](#) - This blog post captures the survey process and how the division acted on its results. It also details the readings that inspired this work across the school division.
- [Foothills School Division Website Resources: A Flourishing Community](#) - This landing page contains work and resources associated with A Flourishing Community in Foothills School Division.

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