

Agents of Change: A Systems Approach to AI, Data Governance, and Educator Well-Being



PROBLEM OF PRACTICE

Manitoba educators are expected to produce report card comments that are personalized, curriculum-aligned, strength-based, and focused on student growth- in accordance with provincial reporting policies and Manitoba's commitment to outcome-based assessment. At the same time, teachers are responsible for designing and delivering differentiated instruction and meaningful learning experiences that address the diverse needs of every student in their classroom.

Both responsibilities are time-intensive and cognitively demanding. Teachers must synthesize assessment results, learning behaviours, and anecdotal observations into clear, actionable communication for families- often under significant time pressure. Writing comments that are genuinely outcome-based, parent-friendly, strength-framed, and individually tailored is not a small task. For high school teachers, multiply it across four classes and thirty students each, and it becomes one of the most stressful periods in the school year.

A division-wide survey conducted at the outset of this project revealed the scale of the challenge: only 3.5% of staff reported feeling very confident using AI appropriately at work, only 14% were familiar with the term "data stewardship," and just 15% reported using AI daily or almost daily. These figures pointed not only to a workload problem, but to a readiness and capacity gap – one requiring a thoughtful, system-led response rather than a patchwork of individual tool adoption.

Louis Riel School Division set out to address this by asking: **How might we design our own AI agents that improve staff well-being by making essential work more manageable, strengthen staff understanding of data governance and responsible AI use, and support consistent, high-quality, system-aligned best practices?**



DIVISION SCOLAIRE

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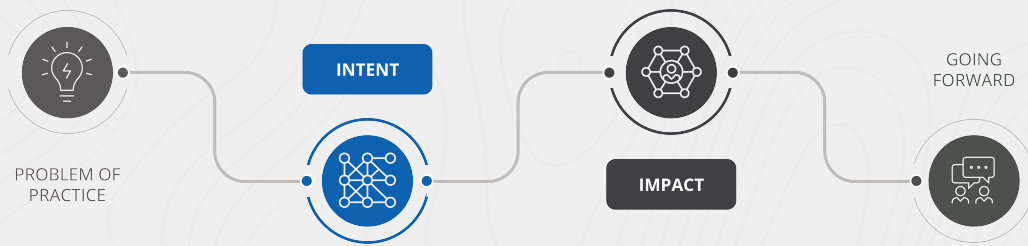
SCHOOL DIVISION

Organization: **Louis Riel School Division**
Province: Manitoba
Date: **2026**
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Intent

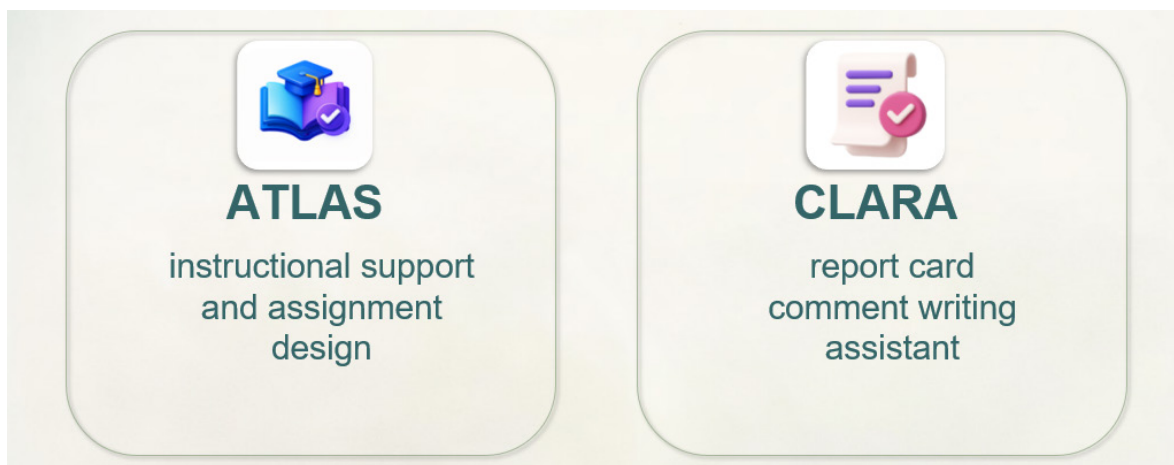
The starting point for this work was a deliberate decision to focus on teacher well-being by addressing some of the most demanding and consequential work educators do. Differentiating instruction for increasingly diverse classrooms and writing high-quality, outcome-based report card comments require sustained professional judgment, deep curricular knowledge, and significant emotional and cognitive energy. These are not routine tasks; they are high-stakes responsibilities that directly affect students, families, and teachers' own sense of professional integrity.

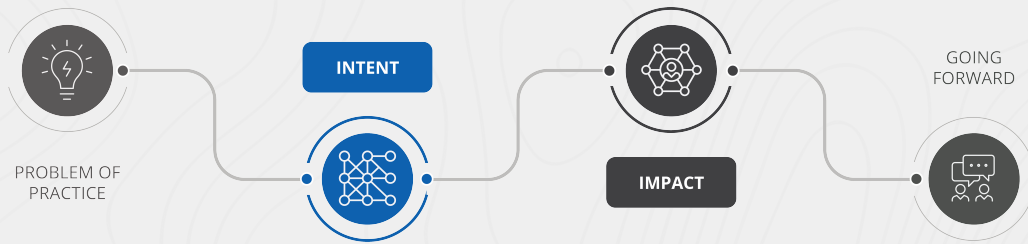
For many educators, this work lands on top of already full days and concentrates into intense periods of the school year. The cumulative effect is felt not just as lost time, but as stress, exhaustion, and diminished capacity to focus on the parts of teaching that are most energizing and relational. Over time, this strain has real implications for morale, workload sustainability, and retention.

Rather than beginning with low-impact or convenience uses of AI, Louis Riel School Division chose to start where the pressure was greatest and the human impact most pronounced- exploring whether purpose-built AI agents, designed within a clear governance framework and grounded in Manitoba policy, could meaningfully reduce cognitive load, support professional judgment, and make essential work more manageable without compromising quality.

From this intent emerged a vision to build agents deeply embedded in LRSD's own policies, curriculum, and professional culture- not generic tools borrowed from elsewhere, but agents that reflect the division's values and respond directly to the lived realities of teachers' work.

Two agents were developed and deployed during the 2025-2026 school year, built in Microsoft Agent Builder with agent instructions supported through Claude.





Intent

ATLAS (an instructional support and assessment design agent) is an AI teaching assistant designed for LRSD classrooms. It supports planning, drafting, and adapting without replacing the professional judgement at the heart of a teacher’s work.

It takes on the role of a knowledgeable, patient colleague who knows the Manitoba curriculum and helps teachers move from outcomes to classroom-ready materials more efficiently. Teachers retain control over professional judgment and decision making.

CLARA-HS (a report card comment writing assistant) supports teachers in grades 9–12 through the process of writing Manitoba-aligned report card comments. CLARA guides educators through a structured, step-by-step workflow: uploading gradebook data, mapping assessments to specific curricular outcomes, reviewing student profiles, and receiving a draft comment accompanied by a rationale that explains the agent’s reasoning in plain language. CLARA encodes Manitoba’s reporting expectations directly: strength-based structure, tiered performance language calibrated to grade ranges, pronoun accuracy for gender-diverse students, and parent-friendly communication free of jargon or outcome codes. Every generated comment is a starting point. The teacher reviews, edits, and approves before any comment is used so professional judgment remains central throughout.

Both agents were **designed around three commitments**:

1. AI should reduce workload without reducing professional quality;
2. Educators must remain in full control of every output; and
3. Data governance and responsible AI use must be embedded in the design of the tools themselves, not treated as an afterthought.

This third commitment shaped not only the agents themselves, but the governance infrastructure the division built alongside them.

Diffusion of the agents was deliberately multi-layered. A division-wide communication campaign simultaneously built awareness of the agents and reinforced a core message: **We are all data stewards**. AI became a standing item on monthly Leadership Team meeting agendas, ensuring sustained system-level attention. School-specific professional development sessions supported contextual adoption.

We are all Data Stewards

...and I'm Data Stewart. Wait, why are you growning?

01 Safe data use is everyone's responsibility
 You, and all LRSD staff, are responsible for:

- maintaining accurate data.
- keeping data private & secure.
- using data appropriately & ethically.

 That's why using it safely matters. That's **data governance in action**.

02 Microsoft Copilot is LRSD's only approved AI tool
 Enterprise AI means protection and security—unlike public AI tools.
 Copilot is our approved sandbox. The walls are built in—the sand stays in the box.

03 LRSD-created Copilot agents help keep data safe.
 An agent is Copilot, set up to do one specific job.
 LRSD builds its own Copilot agents, with values, permissions, and safeguards built right in.
 That's governance in action—not just policy on paper.

04 You're not on your own — LRSD has a Data Governance Working Group
 You're supported by a group that keeps this work clear and safe.
 They handle frameworks, guidelines, and security, so you don't have to guess what's OK and what isn't.
 They also work to help everyone learn how to use data and AI well.

05 Your expertise leads. These tools support it.
 You can use Copilot for work that's already part of your role. It can help lighten the load so you can focus on your community.
 The thinking, decisions, and responsibility stay with you—always.

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Impact

Perhaps most significantly, school leaders began introducing ATLAS to their staff independently, which was an early and meaningful indicator that the tools had earned enough trust to spread organically, beyond formal rollout channels.

Underpinning all of this is a data governance structure built to last. LRSD has established an executive committee, a network of data advisors, and a data champion network to provide leadership, coordination, and school-level support across the division. AI guidelines have been finalized, and the division is in the process of adopting a formal data governance charter while updating and aligning existing policies to reflect these guidelines.

Adoption and Reach

CLARA was piloted at a secondary school during its first week of deployment, reaching 52 distinct users and generating approximately 200 interactions per day. ATLAS reached 341 distinct users across the division within its first two months and 45% of those users became regular, heavy, or super-users, signaling sustained adoption rather than one-time curiosity.

School and System Leader Survey (n=92)

A survey of school and system leaders indicated broad confidence in LRSD's AI direction and governance framework. Leaders agreed strongly that AI should support but never replace professional judgment, and reported relief that AI use is allowed but not mandated. Enterprise Copilot was trusted more than public AI tools for data protection, and there was strong support for shifting professional conversations from cheating detection toward better assessment design.

"This helped move the conversation from fear to understanding."

"The guidelines gave me language I can actually use with staff."



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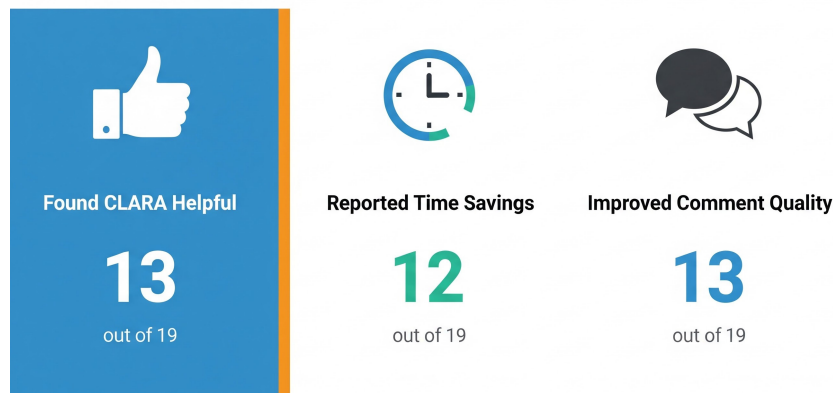
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CLARA Pilot Teacher Survey (n=30)

A pilot survey of approximately 30 teachers who had access to CLARA during the reporting period – administered two weeks after a one-hour demo – provided rich qualitative and quantitative feedback.

Of the 19 who engaged with CLARA, most used it as an editing and refining tool rather than a full comment generator, preserving their own professional voice throughout.

CLARA User Feedback (N=19 Teachers)



Teachers found their own ways in. One teacher in a specialized program developed a creative workaround, building a custom spreadsheet that mapped learning behaviours and outcomes for each student, adding context to student understanding the traditional gradebook didn't cover. Others used CLARA specifically to vary the language across a large set of comments, or to check tone and pronoun accuracy before submission.

"CLARA didn't generate comments from scratch; it just helped refine what I'd already written. I was able to have all my report card comments for four classes reviewed in about an hour, which felt like a small miracle."

"Great start! Took a bit longer overall, but the quality and personalization of the comments were much better."

"I would say that CLARA was an excellent assistant and editing tool."



Impact

Professional Learning Insights

What Worked Well

- **Purpose-built design built immediate trust:** Agents grounded in Manitoba policy and LRSD's own frameworks felt relevant and safe to educators from the start.
- **Workflow Design Meant Deeper Insights:** The structured CLARA workflow prompted teachers to think more deliberately about outcome-level student data. Several noted this analytical step had value independent of the output.
- **Rationale Invited Professional Judgment:** The rationale accompanying every generated comment reinforced teacher professional judgment, making the tool feel collaborative rather than prescriptive
- **Experience Drove Advocacy:** School leaders who experienced ATLAS themselves became its most effective advocates.

What Can Be Improved

- **Under the Hood Understanding:** Teachers needed context on what the tool is doing and why, not just how to use it
- **Technical Precision:** Minor technical issues were reported, including inconsistent document-recognition behaviour and a formatting anomaly with accented characters.
- **Matching Learning with Ongoing Hopes and Fears:** Meaningful concerns surfaced around environmental impact, ethics, and equity, requiring dedicated space both in technical onboarding and professional learning.

What We Learned About Leading an AI Strategy

- **Lead with Purpose, Possibility, and Pain Points:** It's not about the tool, it's about the purpose, so approach your strategy from a place of possibility and frame the rollout around staff pain points which directly support wellbeing.
- **Leaders Need Practical Guidance & Learning to Lead:** FAQs and worked examples equip leaders more effectively than tighter rules. While they must lead the work, they need their own experience in order to do so.
- **Governance requires all of us:** Data governance and AI go hand in hand and staff need to understand their role in keeping data clean and reliable for agents and people alike.
- **Guidelines Can't Just Be Documents:** People need embedded, lived experiences with AI so they can speak from experience, not theory.

Going Forward

GOING
FORWARD



The work at Louis Riel School Division represents a **systems-level approach to AI integration** and is grounded in the belief that the most responsible and effective use of AI in education **requires institutions to design their own tools, aligned to their own values, policies, and professional context**. An AI strategy and a data governance strategy must grow together; one cannot succeed without the other. As the division's agent ecosystem expands, the governance structure- led by an executive committee, supported by data advisors, and connected to schools through a data champion network- will turn its attention to data cataloguing and security, while overseeing data literacy and AI literacy professional learning activities across the division.

Building on the foundation established this year, the division is advancing on several fronts simultaneously.

- **A French Immersion version of ATLAS** has been developed, extending instructional support to educators in the division's French Immersion program with curriculum-aligned tools adapted to that context.
- **Middle school and early years versions of CLARA** are currently in development, expanding the report card support model for grade 1 through 8 teachers.
- **The division is migrating both agents to Microsoft Copilot Studio**, bringing CLARA and ATLAS into a more robust, enterprise-grade environment that strengthens security, scalability, and integration with existing LRSD infrastructure.

Looking further ahead, LRSD is actively **exploring how its agents can work together as part of a connected ecosystem** rather than as isolated tools. As the division transitions to the Microsoft Fabric data environment, there is significant potential to link agents directly to divisional data on student achievement, attendance, and learning behaviours, allowing agents to work from live data, reducing manual steps, and creating the possibility of agents that share context and hand off work to one another seamlessly. From instructional design through assessment to reporting, a teacher's workflow could ultimately be supported by a connected set of agents that each know their role and work in concert.

As this work evolves, the division is also committed to intentionally monitoring the human impact of these tools on teacher workload and well-being. Alongside adoption and usage data, LRSD will explore ways to better understand how AI-supported workflows affect educator stress, time pressure, and sustainability of practice. Throughout this journey, the division remains committed to the conditions that make AI adoption responsible and sustainable: clear data governance, transparent communication about how tools work and what they cannot do, and ongoing professional learning that addresses not only technical skills but the ethical, environmental, and equity dimensions of AI use in public education. LRSD recognizes that realizing the full benefit of these tools requires continued investment in building staff confidence, addressing legitimate concerns openly, and ensuring that every educator has the support needed to engage with AI on their own terms.

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