

FACTS ABOUT THE ALBERTA INITIATIVE FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT (AISI)

I. What is AISI?

AISI is a bold approach to supporting the improvement of student learning by encouraging teachers, parents, and the community to work collaboratively to introduce innovative and creative initiatives based upon local needs and circumstances. AISI is characterized by the following 12 attributes.

1. **Partnership** – AISI is a partnership among teachers, superintendents, trustees, business officials, universities, parents, and government. By working together, the partners continue to develop new relationships, strategies, and practices that provide long-term benefits to teaching and learning in our province.
2. **Catalyst** – AISI is a catalyst for change. The common goal targeted funding, partnership, positive climate, and supportive infrastructure act in concert to achieve significant change in teaching and learning.
3. **Student focused** – AISI communicates a compelling commitment to school improvement that aligns with the long-term vision of Alberta Education. AISI projects continue to strengthen the focus on student learning and accommodate the diverse learning needs of individual students and special populations.
4. **Flexibility** – School authorities choose strategies that enhance learning in the local context.
5. **Collaboration** – Projects are developed and implemented with meaningful involvement of the school community. The active engagement of staff, students, parents, and partners is critical to project success.
6. **Culture of Continuous Improvement** – AISI promotes a culture of continuous improvement that is evident in schools and jurisdictions that clearly align school improvement goals, classroom practices, and performance.
7. **Evidence-based Practice** – Evidence that educational practices benefit student learning and performance, through the collection, analysis and interpretation of data, is foundational to AISI. The use of multiple methods and data sources gives Albertans confidence in the results.
8. **Research-based Interventions** – Solid research provides a reasonable expectation that improvement will occur. Implementation of effective instructional strategies is core to AISI projects. AISI is a vehicle for testing the efficacy of these interventions in the Alberta context.
9. **Inquiry and Reflection** – A clear focus on student learning is the foundation for inquiry and reflection. Analyzing strategies that worked and building on them lead to continuous improvement. Strategies that did not work as expected can provide important information about what needs to change and what might be successful.
10. **Building Capacity and Sustainability** – Effective PD is planned, systemic, and sustained. Promising practices, tools, products, and processes developed and/or acquired through AISI will benefit Alberta's students in the future.
11. **Knowledge** – AISI contributes to the body of knowledge about teaching, learning, and instructional improvement. The AISI family shares this knowledge widely through conferences, reports, the Clearinghouse, and provincial networking sessions.
12. **Networks** – AISI networks contribute to the exchange of information, ideas, and resources as well as communication and knowledge dissemination. Networks include face-to-face and digital interactions and may be local, provincial, national, and/or international.

II. AISI Cycle 4 (2009-2012) Framework

Goal

To improve student learning through initiatives that enhance student engagement and performance and reflect the unique needs and circumstances of each school authority.

Principles

1. AISI projects will focus on student engagement, learning, and performance.
2. Collaboration, shared leadership, support of those who will implement the projects, and meaningful involvement of the school community are essential elements for school improvement.
3. AISI reflects the complexity of innovation and change processes.
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.
5. AISI projects will have a balance of local and provincial measures that include approved quantitative and/or qualitative measures, appropriate to the project.
6. AISI project plans will reflect insights from research, literature, and related AISI projects.
7. The knowledge generated through AISI will be widely disseminated.
8. Networks that contribute to the goal of AISI will be created and/or enhanced for knowledge dissemination and the exchange of information, ideas, and resources.
9. Alberta Education will provide targeted AISI funding to school authorities.

III. Funding

- AISI funding is targeted, which means it is provided to school authorities for specific local initiatives that are focused on improving student learning. This funding is in addition to basic instruction funding.
- Annual funding is provided to all provincially funded school authorities in Alberta (ECS to Grade 12) eligible to receive AISI funding at the current (2011-2012) base amount of \$69.70 per registered student in Grades 1 to 12 in public school authorities, and \$34.85 for Early Childhood Services (kindergarten) students. Private school authorities receive 60% or 70% of public school funding based on the provincial funding accountability agreement.
- The funding entitlement to each school authority for any given school year is based upon the previous September 30th registered student count.

IV. Project Requirements

Project Application

Each AISI project plan/proposal requires the following:

1. Project description
2. School community involvement
3. Support of implementers
4. Literature and research (citation and application)
5. Improvement goal(s) aligned with strategies and measures
6. Measures (quantitative, surveys and qualitative), baseline(s) and improvement targets
7. Key strategies and processes (instructional strategies, student assessment, project management and coordination, professional development, parental and community involvement)
8. Evaluation process
9. Integration and sustainability

10. Knowledge dissemination and sharing
11. Networking
12. Ongoing administrative support
13. Staffing requirement
14. Budget projections and comments
15. Certification by AISI Coordinator and Superintendent/CEO

Measures

- Every project plan requires a set of performance measures to evaluate success.
- Quantitative measures with numeric data fall under two broad categories:
 - Student learning measures directly related to student achievement.
 - Survey measures such as satisfaction and attitudes of students, parents or teachers.
- Qualitative measures and data provide rich descriptions with a focus on process, meaning and human behaviours as they occur in context. Sources of evidence might include interview/focus group transcripts, written reports, observations, video/audio recordings, artifacts, documents/portfolios, etc.
- Student learning measures include Provincial Achievement Tests (PAT) and Diploma Examinations (DE), high school completion and drop out rates, commercially available standardized tests, and various locally developed tests/assessments.
- Survey measures include Provincial Accountability Pillar survey results as well as locally determined satisfaction and attitudinal surveys.

Annual Reports

AISI projects require an annual report. The final annual report includes a summative evaluation for all the years that the project was funded. The annual report includes:

- Results achieved in relation to baseline and targets for quantitative and qualitative measures;
- Description of evidence of success achieved or description of quality measures;
- Actual expenditures and expense percentages in relation to the original budget estimates; and
- Responses to open-ended questions. The open-ended questions for the final (summative) report focused on the following areas:
 - Student learning outcomes achieved
 - Other project goals achieved
 - Lessons learned
 - Effective practices (instructional strategies, assessment, professional development, project management, parental involvement) that demonstrated the greatest impact on student learning and educational practices
 - Sustainability and integration
 - Summary statement of project results including conclusions and implications for continued improvement in student learning

Data Analysis

Four analyses are performed on project data to determine success:

1. Results that met or exceeded annual **targets**.
2. Results that improved over the **baseline**.
3. Magnitude of improvement through **effect size analysis**.
4. Relative effects of various project categories through **meta-analysis** (refer to the [Provincial Reports](#) (using the AISI Publications Search) on the AISI website for detailed information on effect sizes and meta-analysis).

V. Support for Implementation

School Research and Improvement Branch (SRIB): The School Research and Improvement Branch are responsible for AISI and provide the main support to school authorities. Staff members work directly with local AISI Coordinators assisting school authorities to meet project requirements and to continually improve their projects. The branch generates a variety of reports including the annual provincial AISI reports. **For more information about AISI please contact the School Research and Improvement Branch at: (780) 427-3160.**

- **AISI Website** <http://www.education.alberta.ca/aisi>
The AISI website is a one-stop shop for all information about AISI. The contents include:
 - Background information on AISI
 - A Clearinghouse of AISI projects and promising practices
 - Supporting documents for planning and implementing AISI projects
 - Literature synopses, research reports, and other publications related to school improvement
 - Workshop and conference information and registration tool
- **University Support:** Funding is provided to the three Faculties of Education (University of Alberta, University of Calgary, and University of Lethbridge) to provide direct assistance and information to school authorities requesting advice on related AISI literature, improvement strategies, measures and evaluation, and other areas of local need.
- **Independent Schools Support:** Funding is provided to the Association of Independent Schools and Colleges in Alberta (AISCA) to provide direct assistance to the private school authorities related to their AISI projects. For more information contact AISCA at (780) 469-9868.
- **Ongoing Professional Development:** Annual AISI conferences, visitations, and regional and provincial professional development workshops are examples of the formal support provided.
- **Electronic Management System:** The online AISI management system is used for the submission, review, and approval of project proposals and reports. The system enables school authorities to review and update their project plans and share information.
- **Technical Assistance:** Alberta Education's Client Services Help Desk Team assists AISI project coordinators in accessing the Extranet (a secure site for school authority data). SRIB staff provides ongoing assistance to school authorities in working through the AISI online application and report forms.
- **AISI Provincial Reports:** AISI provincial reports summarize AISI outcomes and lessons learned and are available on the AISI website.

VI. The AISI Education Partners Steering Committee (EPSC)

The AISI partnership has resulted in the building of trust, collaboration, and teamwork among the seven education partners who represent diverse interests in providing education for children. This partnership was a major contributing factor in the successful design and development of an exemplary school improvement model. We can take pride in the fact that Albertans developed AISI in the Alberta context. AISI represents the collective wisdom of the partners and other stakeholders, whose strong commitment contributes to meaningful improvement in student learning and performance. EPSC consists of:

- Alberta Education (AE)
- Alberta School Boards Association (ASBA)
- Alberta School Councils' Association (ASCA)
- Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA)
- Association of School Business Officials of Alberta (ASBOA)
- College of Alberta School Superintendents (CASS)
- University Faculties of Education (University of Alberta, University of Calgary, and University of Lethbridge)

