The Action on High School Success project officially started in March 2011 at J. A. Williams High School in Lac La Biche, Alberta. The goal of the project was to improve and increase high school completion at the school. Over the past three years, staff have been delving into the ways that assessment, coaching and building relationships are essential components in creating new teaching and learning culture in the school.

Key elements that re-energized the school centred around deepening staff understanding of the following; the use of data to inform practice, the role of student engagement in learning, the implementation of effective assessment practices, the value of effective teaching practices, and the importance of building positive relationships—student with teacher and teacher with teacher.

As you view this video, consider the shifts in culture you hope to achieve in support of improving teaching and learning in your school. What success stories would you like your students to share?

**KEY UNDERSTANDINGS**

Peer coaching among teachers is instrumental to changing classrooms from places of teaching to places of learning with teachers themselves being learners. The biggest change has been the opening up of teacher practice in the school.

When teachers build relationships with students, students know they are supported and they are show up and put in the effort required.

At J. A. Williams High School, conversations with students have shifted away from talking about failing tests and quizzes to conversations about mastery learning and helping students identify when they know they have learned the content.

At J. A. Williams High School, teachers are taking increased ownership for ensuring more students experience success and students, in turn, are taking on more ownership for their learning.

**CONVERSATION STARTERS**

1. How are you creating a culture in your school where classrooms are seen as places of learning for both students and teachers? Teachers see themselves as the chief learners who strive to deepen their understanding of sound pedagogy and practice in order to better support student success?

2. Discuss the statement “You certainly get resistance to change and that’s something we faced a lot of, but they needed, in essence, to reignite their [teachers’] passion for learning.” To what extent is your school focused on igniting or reigniting teachers’ passion for learning? How are you supporting this change process?

3. To what extent do teachers in your school engage in peer coaching? What impact has that had on teachers’ willingness to engage in open dialogue and to openly accept other people into their rooms?

4. Discuss the statement, “We talk about teaching now, we never used to talk about teaching.”

5. What role do students play in their assessment in your school? How does this practice lead to improved student learning and achievement?

6. Discuss the statement, “We are no longer talking about failing tests anymore or failing quizzes, we’re talking about when will you know you’ve learned this?” In what ways are you shifting the language of the teachers in your school? How are students responding to these changes?