



Framework for AISI Cycle 5 2012 – 2015

AISI Education Partners

October 2011



Framework for AISI Cycle 5 (2012–2015)

“AISI is an impressive change strategy that is perhaps without parallel in the world today.” (The Learning Mosaic Summary Report, Page 17)¹

AISI is one of the two initiatives under Action on Research, “Alberta Initiative for School Improvement (AISI): Transform teacher practice through innovative AISI projects.” (Alberta Education Action Agenda 2011-14, page 13). AISI Cycle 5 will strategically position the ministry to facilitate the education transformation agenda in collaboration with school authorities and other stakeholders.

AISI is one of Alberta’s success stories. It has been talked about and written about by international researchers as an example of exceptional work in the field of education. The AISI Education Partners Steering Committee (EPSC)² recognizes the fact that we have an exceptionally strong base to develop the next cycle of AISI but the committee also acknowledges that education is changing and so AISI must be kept vibrant and relevant.

The first four cycles of AISI provided a solid foundation for innovation, enhanced professional practice, an emerging culture of inquiry, collaboration and continuous improvement. The next AISI cycle must build on this foundation and expand into new areas to address the emerging and future needs of education. To this end, EPSC has worked to design AISI Cycle 5 with emphasis on the following priority areas that will leverage education transformation through AISI research and improvement projects while keeping the focus on student learning and engagement and maintaining the grassroots bottom-up focus:

- Research Capacity
- Collaborative Cross-School Authority AISI Projects and Networks
- Community Engagement

In *The Learning Mosaic* recommendations, the researchers indicated the value of creating leadership and support systems related to research and province-wide network architectures that have clear, positive impacts on system-wide outcomes for students. EPSC recognizes that provincial support for the new areas of emphasis is critical for school authorities to implement successful AISI projects to improve student learning and engagement. This support will be achieved by earmarking some AISI funds for province-wide coordination and leadership in a way that will maximize the benefits of AISI funds for all school authorities.

¹ Hargreaves, A., et al. (2009). *The Learning Mosaic: A multiple perspectives review of the Alberta Initiative for School Improvement (AISI)*. Edmonton, AB: Alberta Education.

² The AISI partnership has resulted in the building of trust, collaboration and teamwork among the following seven education partners who represent diverse interests in providing education for students:

- 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

Framework for AISI Cycle 5³

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 research, 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 funding to school authorities.

³ The AISI Partners established the goal, principles, and key considerations in 1999. They are included in the *Framework for the Alberta Initiative for School Improvement* (AISI Education Partners Steering Committee, 1999). These have been updated and revised to reflect the evolving nature of AISI in Alberta. The framework and related documents are available on the website at <http://education.alberta.ca/aisi>

Priorities for Cycle 5

The following priorities were identified by the AISI Education Partners Steering Committee (EPSC) for AISI Cycle 5.

1. Research Capacity

Research and practice are interconnected. Research informs practice and practice informs research. The previous cycles of AISI have enabled action-oriented and site-based research in schools across the province. This foundational work needs to be further developed and taken to the next level to enable greater innovation and to develop the capacity of teachers as researchers. Teachers and school systems will need to continue to engage in research to improve their practice and to create and apply new knowledge to address the changing needs of education.

There will be enhanced opportunities in Cycle 5 for teachers and the school community to:

- build strong connections with universities;
- examine current research to inform their projects;
- articulate research questions;
- gather and analyze relevant data;
- analyze findings and derive conclusions;
- incorporate findings into their practice;
- share findings/lessons with the education community;
- read and evaluate published education research findings;
- experiment with new strategies/findings from current educational research; and
- go beyond knowledge sharing to the development of robust models for the transfer of knowledge from the AISI projects.

New Requirements for Research:

- Cycle 5 AISI projects will focus on research and improvement.
- There will be a research component for all AISI projects. School authorities will conduct research to address specific questions and report on their findings as part of their AISI research and improvement project.
- A minimum expenditure of 10% on research leadership and related support will be required.
- School authorities will submit progress reports annually in place of an AISI Project Annual Report (APAR).

Supports for Research:

- A network to build and support research capacity across the province will be developed, coordinated and resourced.
- EPSC will undertake work on behalf of all projects to address questions of province-wide interest. This will be based on needs identified by AISI projects.
- New technology to support the development and administration of student assessments and surveys, and other data collection instruments will be in place for Cycle 5.

2. Collaborative Cross-School Authority AISI Projects and Networks

AISI Cycle 5 represents a move from disconnected or loosely connected projects to a province-wide network of research, improvement and innovation. School authorities will be encouraged to work together to plan, propose and orchestrate their shared project. The renewed emphasis on networks is the Education Partners Steering Committee's response to *The Learning Mosaic's* recommendation in the Summary Report, "to invest in province-wide networks that cut across districts, that reach beyond annual conferences and that incorporate proven design principles of effective network architectures that have clear, positive impacts on system-wide outcomes for students."

New Requirement for Collaborative Cross-School Authority Projects:

- Two or more school authorities will be able to submit one Collaborative Cross-School Authority Project proposal. This will contribute to building lateral capacity by supporting teacher networking, collaboration among schools and across the province, and enhance knowledge mobilization.

Supports for Collaborative Cross-School Authority Projects:

- Collaborative cross-school authority AISI research and improvement projects may be eligible for additional funding from a newly created funding pool for cross-school authority coordination.
- Provincial coordination will be in place to promote and support lateral networks, collaboration and knowledge mobilization.

3. Community Engagement

Collaboration, shared leadership, support of those who will implement the projects, and meaningful involvement of the school community are essential elements for school improvement. Effective school improvement results when principals, teachers, school councils, parents and other community members work as a team to establish priorities, set goals for improvement, implement strategies to achieve those goals and evaluate progress.

In the previous cycles of AISI, where formal and informal leaders, teachers, students, parents, and the broader community contributed to the AISI project through shared responsibilities, there was greater success in the AISI project (University Research Reviews⁴). These strong partnerships and trust established in the previous cycles of AISI will form the foundation to strengthen school community engagement.

AISI Cycle 5 will require greater engagement of teachers, students, parents, community members, businesses, universities and other partners during the planning and implementation of AISI research and improvement projects.

New Requirement for School Community Engagement:

- All projects will be required to demonstrate active and meaningful engagement of key stakeholders (administrators, teachers, students, parents, elected officials, businesses, organizations, institutions, etc.)

Supports for School Community Engagement:

- A rubric will be developed for schools/school authorities to determine the level of community engagement in AISI and to communicate this to stakeholders.
- A virtual learning community will be established to support sharing of best practices for community engagement.

⁴ Overall findings from University AISI Research Reviews summarized in AISI Cycle 3 Provincial Report, 2010

Types of AISI Research and Improvement Projects

The following options will be available for school authorities:

Options	Description	Funding
1. Individual School/ School Authority AISI Research and Improvement Project Proposal.	AISI Research and Improvement Project Proposals from individual school authorities could be authority-wide, a group of schools, a single school, or a single classroom.	Base funding includes funding for a minimum of 10% for research and related leadership and support.
2. Collaborative Cross- School Authority AISI Research and Improvement Project Proposal.	Two or more school authorities will submit one AISI Proposal for a Cross- School Authority Project.	Base funding includes funding for a minimum of 10% for research and related leadership and support. Possible additional funding for collaborative cross-school authority coordination.

Success Indicators

Indicators of success guide school authorities and stakeholders in the design and implementation of Cycle 5 AISI research and improvement projects. Project specific indicators will be developed by school authorities as appropriate.

- Evidence of improved student engagement and learning.
- AISI projects have elements of innovation.
- AISI contributes to the body of knowledge about teaching, learning and instructional improvement.
- AISI project results provide examples of promising practices that transform teaching and learning.
- Teachers and students benefit from the emerging knowledge, practices and technologies that are being developed through AISI.
- The AISI family shares knowledge widely through conferences, reports, the Clearinghouse, and provincial networking sessions.
- Established AISI networks contribute to the exchange of information, ideas and resources as well as communication, knowledge dissemination and knowledge mobilization.
- AISI contributes to research that informs policy and practice.

Basic Requirements for AISI Project Research and Improvement Proposals

Basic Requirement	Details
1. Research Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brief Description/Introduction • Statement of Student Learning Goals • Literature Review • Research Question(s) • Research Methodology • Significance/Contribution to Knowledge • Scope/Limitations
2. Project Strategies and Implementation Plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student learning goal(s), measures, and success indicators • Strategies to address student learning, engagement and performance goals, including activities and timelines • Implementation Plans for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ School Community Engagement ○ Professional Development ○ Data Collection and Analysis ○ Knowledge Mobilization
3. Budget	<p>From AISI Base Funding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum of 15% for Professional Learning • Minimum of 10% for Research and Related Leadership and Support • Maximum of 5% for Project Administration/Coordination • Maximum of 10% for Equipment <p>Accessing Further Funding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application for additional funding for Collaborative Cross-School Authority project coordination
4. Annual Progress Reports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preliminary Research Results/Findings • Progress Towards Student Learning Goals • Key Learnings • Future Actions/Directions • Financial Report • Proposed Budget for Next Year
5. Final Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final Results/Findings • Evaluation of Student Learning Goals Achieved • Key Learnings • Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations • Future Actions/Directions • Financial Report