

Alberta Regional Professional Development Consortia Support for Implementation of Social Studies: 2005-2011

Seasons of Professional Learning

Executive Summary



Alberta **Regional** Consortia



"A partnership to nurture continuing educational excellence"

Executive Summary

The following report is a synthesis of the professional learning opportunities and subsequent changes in teaching practice and student learning occurring as a result of the \$12 250 000 granted to the ARPDC to support the implementation of a drastically changed social studies curriculum. What follows is an examination of the evidence contained in the ARPDC reports from a whole-system perspective with a view to determining how the project influenced changes in teaching practices and ultimately improved student learning. The report takes a narrative approach and utilizes the metaphor of seed farming to illustrate the generative, ongoing nature of learning and planning for systemic change. The report highlights the data from each of the consortiums' cumulative reports within the four 'seasons' of implementation, tiling, seeding, harvesting and preserving.

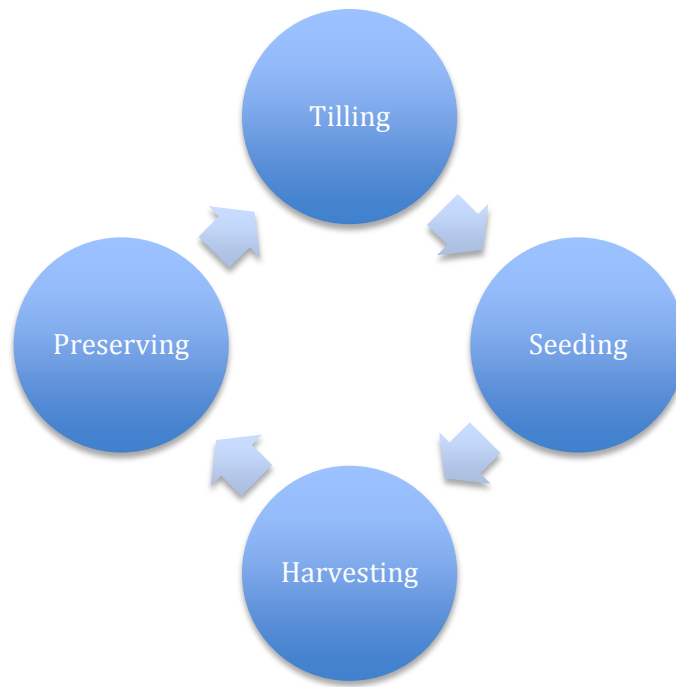


Figure 1: Seasons of professional learning

The reports generated by the executive directors and social studies coordinators on the implementation support provided for social studies over the last 6 years contain a wealth of data about the orchestration of large-scale change. The complexities of Alberta's diverse school system, the intricacies of professional learning and the extent of the shift in the program of studies this implementation project stands out as the most ambitious and heavily resourced endeavour. It is fortunate all those involved in making decisions regarding funding to support this massive change had the foresight to ensure the support for implementation was adequate. The \$12 250 000 invested in the planning and provision of quite possibly the most comprehensive, sustained support this province has experienced. We have learned, then, programs do not implement themselves. Change in classrooms and thus improvements in student learning require resources commiserate with the extent of the intended shift in practice.

We have also learned, and documented in *A Guide to Support for Implementation: Essential Conditions*, while teachers are ultimately responsible for bringing the program to life in classrooms, it takes a village of resources, leaders and specialists to shore up support and induce change. Alberta Education supported implementation by providing sufficient resources over time and leadership to consortium. In turn, regional consortium modelled leadership in implementation planning through the executive director and the social studies coordinators who championed implementation support for the region. The consortium model exemplifies shared responsibility as they developed a culture of learning about the process of implementation through advisory committee and extended networks. The work was grounded in the shared vision and program philosophy outlined in the curriculum and focused on effective professional learning and fostering strong regional community connections.

An overview: data articulated to model

Stage 1 - Tilling

In the fall, farmers prepare the soil for planting by tilling because loosening the soil allows for deeper penetration of the roots, helps mix the residue from the harvest and nutrients evenly throughout the soil and destroys weeds. This breaking of the ground is necessary to ensure the seeds take root and are fed by the soil.

Consortiums prepared the soil in their regions by drawing educational leaders together, eliciting the sharing of effective practice and working to balance competing priorities in innovative ways. In these ways, awareness and interest was generated and jurisdictions began to allocate and coordinate support for implementation with other priorities and available resources.

Four pieces of evidence illustrate how each consortium effectively prepared the soil for implementation, 1) creation of advisory committees, 2) supporting regional coordinators, 3) utilization of provincial expertise, and 4) conducting local needs assessment.

People change only if they believe that a new insight, a new idea, or a new form is important to them. People need to discover that there is sufficient shared interest among the community, shared meaning strong enough to bring people together and hold them together as they do the work. (Wheatley, M.J. 2005, p. 108)

Stage 2 - Seeding

Once the soil is prepared, the seeds are planted either through broadcasting or in rows¹. In terms of curriculum implementation, the two methods would parallel large group, open invitation and focused group learning. This stage is characterized by the introduction of new ideas, strategies, and resources.

¹ This method of planting in situ differs from container seeding which could be viewed as similar to learning opportunities occurring outside the school or district.

People do not need intricate directions, time lines, plans...they need information, access to one another, resources, trust, and follow-through to take initiative and make changes. Ultimately, we have to rely not on the procedure manuals but on people's intelligence and their commitment to do doing the right thing. (Wheatley, M.J., 2005, p. 71)

Four pieces of evidence demonstrate how the consortia plant seeds in their regions, 1) offering a wide range of specific learning opportunities, 2) supporting curriculum facilitators/leaders, 3) enacting the curriculum with credible specialists and 4) providing customized support for school leaders.

Stage 3 – Harvesting

Eventually, after some fertilizing, water and sunshine, the seeds germinate and eventually flower. When the crop is mature, that is the fruit or grain is ready to be gathered, the field is harvested. The harvest is often marked by celebrations as farmers are finally able to collect on their investments of time and resources. This stage is much less tangible and nuanced in curriculum implementation as professional development providers are often not able to 'see' the fruits of their efforts in classrooms.

All life thrives on feedback and dies without it. We have to know what is going on around us, how our actions impact others, how the environment is change, how we're changing. Without feedback, we shrivel into routines and develop hard shells that keep newness out. (Wheatley, M.J. 2005, p.

The regional reports did however, contain evidence of mature crops with teachers clearly demonstrating they had internalized the intent of the program of studies and made sense of it relative to their practice. The reports revealed the ARPDC was active in supporting harvesting activities in four ways, 1) Supporting teacher-created projects and exemplars (e.g. FNMI infusion), 2) Effecting change in practice (survey results), 3) Impacting Student-learning (artifacts), 4) Fostering mentorships.

Stage 4 – Preserving

After the harvest, some of the fruit or grain is prepared for storage to provide sustenance over the winter months. Traditionally, canning or freezing is the most typical method used to preserve food but root cellars, underground structures, are also used to keep food at a low temperature throughout the winter.

In the preserving stage of curriculum implementation, each consortium endeavoured to 'store up' support for educators not able to participate in the professional learning opportunities provided over the years (e.g. beginning teachers) or those interested in enhancing their understanding. Three types of evidence of the preserving stage were gleaned from the regional reports. The 'legacy pieces' are the single most significant piece of evidence relative to the preserving stage. The new relationships forged with local community groups could also be considered a key piece of sustaining implementation in the years ahead. Finally, the development of leadership capacity, specifically in terms of the knowledge and skills of the regional coordinators, facilitators/lead teachers, and administrators, will provide teachers with credible points of contact in each jurisdiction.

The four stages, tilling, seeding, harvesting and preserving, emerged quite naturally during the analysis of the reports and therefore the stages, or seasons of implementation, and provide the structure for the compiled report.

Lessons from the field: Recommendations for future implementation

If we want people's intelligence and support, we must welcome them as co-creators. People only support what they create.

The ARPDC social studies reports contain valuable insight regarding future large-scale implementation efforts. Based on the analysis, the following lessons are worth noting and re-visiting going forward.

Whole system recommendations:

1. Re-visit phased-in implementation
 - a. The reports intimated the phased-in implementation schedule was beneficial as in allowed resources to be shared equally over time and distributed focus and pressure (e.g. PATs) regarding change more equally. From a system perspective, this certainly is logical. However, from a school perspective, this may be less of a benefit. The most significant take up in terms of participation in professional learning and change in practice occurs when teachers are able to engage with colleagues with similar teaching assignments. Thus, K-3 garnered a groundswell of interest whereas the subsequent grades, staggered in implementation, produced a more diluted impact. Implementation scheduling needs to account for the tremendous support created by groups of teachers working in the same physical space.

2. Be discriminating regarding ways of engaging and meeting purposes
 - a. It would be advantageous at all points of implementation to carefully consider the difference between a cooperative and a collaborative² relationships and

² As we've all experienced, cooperation is an aligning of resources, a handshake between parties whereas collaboration is a coming together of resources resulting in a new product, it is messy, requires compromise, trust and a strong shared belief in the overarching purposes.

determine which best suits the needs of this work. Based on my limited experience, I would suggest cooperation seems desirable and necessary provincially and collaboration seems best suited to regional endeavours. In terms of realising efficiencies and creating learning opportunities for a specific context, a collaborative effort may not be appropriate. While it appears the social studies coordinators met fairly regularly and some reported benefiting from the support of the group, it is difficult to point to clear, productive outcomes from these meetings. Some noted cooperation occurred between individuals and coordination occurred with the booking of facilitators, etc. when plans aligned. Thus, meeting should occur as needed and in response to a shared concern/interest in order to ensure time is spent productively (see *Re-Work*, Fried & Hansson, 2010).

- b. In terms of effective collaboration, partnering and leveraging strategies, in addition to the recommendations above regarding meetings, the curriculum coordinator out of Workforce Planning is in the most advantageous position having a bird's eye view of the implementation planning, provincial resources available and work of other PD providers. To establish stronger linkages, it may be productive for the curriculum coordinator to meet with leads in the other organizations (e.g. ATA, AAC, 2Learn, etc.) and assist with 'connecting the dots' around the province.
3. Uphold shared accountability
 - a. All levels of the system must become more intentionally focused on finding ways to demonstrate the program, digital resource, speaker, planning tool, etc. was useful in supporting teachers as they take up the new program to enhance student learning. We cannot continue to throw seeds on parched land or forget to irrigate after the seeding. Plans to support implementation must keep the harvest in mind. Thus, prior to implementation strategies for identifying the influence of activities should be articulated relative to, for example, teachers, students, system leaders, and parents.

4. Adequately resource technology-mediated professional learning
 - a. Over the last 5 years the ARPDC has introduced various forms of technology-mediated professional learning opportunities to jurisdictions³. As the formats evolve, the quality is improving and more participants are reporting finding these options highly valuable. They do, however, come with a cost. It is anticipated demands for these types of synchronous and asynchronous learning opportunities will continue to increase and resources will be required to match the related costs. Also, as with other professional learning options, some consideration will need to be given regarding demonstrating influence.

5. Ensure authorized resources are available in French and English at time of implementation.
 - a. This month, May 2011, French resources are available and unfortunately implementation funding is no longer available.

ARPDC:

1. Retain a regional advisory committee and program coordinator at the outset and strive, for the sake of continuity and relationship building, to secure an extended commitment.
2. While engaging in work in the early months/years (stages 1 and 2) remain aware of the potential to grow sustainability in a coordinated, holistic manner (stage 4).
3. Realizing those involved in the creation of products garner the most benefits, whenever possible encourage this type of production method.
4. Look for opportunities to gather student-learning artifacts as evidence of implementation.

³ More examples of related work here: http://www.erlc.ca/who/pdf/ARPDC_DPL_Highlights.pdf

5. Ensure planning documents are living, flexible guides to support organic growth, failed strategies and unintended positive outcomes.
6. Focus on the people and the processes, rather than the structures and the content.
 - a. Seek out regional leaders first that are credible, respected educators with a strong affinity for the local conditions, a responsive disposition and a well developed understanding of the change process.
7. All resources developed with ARPDC resources should be digitally accessible from one central space.
 - a. Re-visit what content needs to be housed in regional sites and what should be placed in a central location.
 - b. Use respective websites to build and house reports. In this way, the reports could be widely accessible and provide a timely reflection of the work in progress throughout the project.
8. Work with Alberta Education and adopt a consistent format or create one that includes the best components of each.
 - a. Generally speaking, the reports included in this synthesis were well-written and sufficiently detailed allowing those external to the work to have a clear sense of how each consortium provided support for the implementation of social studies. While the reports reflected the unique characteristics of the regions and indeed the coordinators themselves, it would be beneficial to consider moving to a consistent format. In reading the reports side-by-side it is critical the reader is able to locate and analyze some key elements are presented in a similar manner. In some cases, the inconsistencies became distracting and at times led to questions of quality, accuracy and completeness.
 - b. Reports come to life through the use of images and audio clips. Again, a web-based report would facilitate easier access to multimedia pieces.

- c. All reports should include or point to artifacts of student learning and/or teaching practice relative to the professional learning provided.
- d. It is important to document failed attempts or unforeseen opportunities along the way as part of the 'lessons learned'. This is how we 'learn our way forward' and reporting adds credibility and authenticity to our journey.
- e. While cross-pollination often occurred, as mentioned in some feedback to this report, it was difficult to pinpoint evidence of this in the reports. Thus, it would be helpful if report writers traced this sharing by noting the source of a particular resource or connection. If this type of documentation was included in the reports, it would be easier to acknowledge which consortium did the front end work.

School jurisdictions:

1. While the ARPDC can encourage and assist jurisdictions in planning for implementation, it is incumbent upon the jurisdiction leaders to ensure the plan in place, resourced, implemented and reviewed.
 - a. The reports indicated when jurisdictions and the local consortium cooperated (e.g. shared resources, 'jurisdiction days') and planned together teachers enjoyed the full benefit of the opportunities available from both. Thus, rather than viewing the consortium as a 'provider', forward-thinking jurisdiction leaders viewed them as partners and created fully integrated implementation plans.
2. When one considers the question of 'impact' and specifically change in teaching practice and enhanced student learning, it is most appropriate to ask jurisdictions to share their observations, student artifacts and other pieces of evidence most likely to indicate if and how professional learning opportunities 'made a difference'.

- a. As noted earlier, the ARPDC lives in the middle – between Alberta Education and jurisdictions – and thus can only be held to account for those things over which it has knowledge, control or influence.
3. This implementation, both because of the degree of change and the duration of support provided, has demonstrated, once again, change in practice occurs over time and professional development is more likely to be impactful if participants are provided with opportunities for follow up.
 - a. For example, if jurisdictions sent a team of teachers to the social studies summer institute and then utilized their knowledge and skills to provide school-based support there would be a stronger impact on the system.
4. The notion of 'coverage' or ensuring all teachers are exposed to professional development while in theory may make sense, needs to be reconsidered in light of the literature. Teachers are more likely to benefit from professional learning – the seeds will take root – if they are ready and open to change.
 - a. When teachers are given choices, invited to participate, involved in the creation of products and involved in leadership roles they will take up the program and be actively engaged changing their practice.

Teachers:

1. Orient around student learning
 - a. Over the years, the ARPDC has gathered copious amounts of self-reported accounts of intentions regarding changing practice. This data is indeed valuable in itself as it demonstrates teachers have acknowledged the change required and begun to think about the implications for their practice. It would be even more powerful however, if a stronger feedback loop existed to capture what the change looked like in the classroom over time. Technology could facilitate this communication and sharing but a high degree of

professionalism and trust would need to be present (e.g. video blogs, SAPDC wiki). Further, it would be imperative the feedback was used to support other teachers and improve professional learning opportunities with an intentional focus on enhancing student learning. ARPDC and other PD partners and stakeholders share a responsibility in fostering a culture of sharing – deprivatizing practice – where student learning is the focus. *What might we see and hear in classrooms as a result of teachers participating in this learning opportunity?*

2. Adopt a participatory stance: teachers as learners
 - a. In order to support a shift in thinking from consumer to producer, it would be beneficial to encourage participants to engage prior to attending a professional learning opportunities. This is an important and necessary shift as it congruent with the literature on constructivist learning theory currently foundational to our curriculum. There are many examples of participatory professional learning experiences occurring in our province already serving as excellent examples. For example, participants are asked to view a 3-5 minutes video blog prior to attending, asked to bring something related (e.g. resource, assessment tool, etc) to work with at the session or asked to reflect upon some questions related to their practice. During or after the sessions, teachers are asked to demonstrate their understanding by sharing in the creation of related resource, contributing to an online community, etc.

Alberta Education:

1. Endeavour to present a 'united front' with specialists from curriculum, resources and assessment working together to provide support for teachers.
 - a. Much of this success of the social studies implementation is due to the high calibre of individuals in these roles and the extent to which they were able to work closely with the ARPDC, jurisdictions and schools. In future implementation efforts, it will be important to allow these curriculum

specialists to be involved in a consistent, equal manner at all phases of implementation for teachers with differing needs (e.g. pre-service, new to province) and to foster an ongoing dialogue about the challenges, successes, modifications and potential new opportunities.

2. Secure stable amounts of funding for each implementation effort commiserate with the degree of change intended.
 - a. Alberta Education allocated substantial funds to support each phase of the implementation. However, as each phase near completion the ARPDC and likewise jurisdictions were never certain if further funding would be forthcoming and at what level. This uncertainty colored some of the planning and may have caused momentum to be interrupted.
3. Maintain a reciprocal relationship with the executive directors to ensure a strong connection between the intension of the program and the lived reality of implementation.
 - a. The connections between leaders at various points in the province are vital to mitigating some of the challenges presented by the size and diversity of our province.

Appendix

Data Articulation to Four Stages

Tilling	Leadership components Teacher PD – new, innovative practices
Sowing seeds	Statistics – offerings, participation Report highlights – regional
Harvesting	Evidence of success' How do you know the Consortia made a difference? Qualitative data - survey results
Preserving	Sustainability/Legacy Pieces Community Engagement

ARPCD Social Studies Implementation Reports

Northwest Regional Learning Consortium: <http://www.nrlc.net/content/nrlc-reports>

Learning Network:

Social Studies Final Report Part A

<http://www.learning-network.org/uploads/userfiles/a79b12810204.pdf>

Social Studies Final Report Part B

<http://www.learning-network.org/uploads/userfiles/db12129c4129.pdf>

Edmonton Regional Learning Consortium: http://www.erc.ca/who/our_history.php

Central Alberta Regional Consortium: <http://goo.gl/4kkLB>

Calgary Regional Consortium: <http://www.crcpd.ab.ca/index.php/site/reports>

Southern Alberta Professional Development Consortium:

http://www.sapdc.ca/Pages/AnnualPlans_Reports.aspx

Consortium Provincial Francophone:

<http://www.cpfpp.ab.ca/uploads/userfiles/c9381a85d069.pdf>



Learning Opportunities to Support Implementation of Social Studies Quantitative Overview ARPDC Summary

Review of both qualitative and quantitative data will provide a more comprehensive picture of the support provided for social studies Implementation. This quantitative data provides an indication that significant numbers of participants have been involved in social studies learning opportunities as a result of the grants to support implementation and the number of learning opportunities provided.

Types of learning opportunities and numbers vary from one region to another due to size of region, grant funding available and requests from the region for specific types of professional development services.

Number of Consortia Sessions

	Consortium Sessions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Face to face, series, conferences, • Webinars • VC 	Number of participants	District Days Learning opportunities facilitated by consortium teams and/or contractors- in districts and primarily for an individual district	Number of participants	PD Leadership Capacity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers supported as a result of learning opportunities delivered by district curriculum facilitators , (e.g., lead teachers) 	Number of participants (e.g., numbers who were impacted by the curriculum facilitator work)	Other Learning Opportunities (e.g., archived webinars access, poster and newsletter access, emails, phone calls, moodle access, cohort conversations informal learning, advisory committee meetings, district contacts communications)
CARC	2005-06: 28 2006-07: 75 2007-08: 180 2008-09: 145 2009-10: 44	2005-06: 679 2006-07: 1616 2007-08: 3073 2008-09: 2451 2009-10: 720	2005-06: 30 2006-07: 68 2007-08: 60 2008-09: 31 2009-10: 14	2005-06: 592 2006-07: 1450 2007-08: 764 2008-09: 375 2009-10: 226	2005-06: No Data 2006-07: 78 2007-08: 74 2008-09: 27 2009-10: 15	2005-06: No Data 2006-07: 286 2007-08: 1268 2008-09: 338 2009-10: 188	
CPFPP	2005-06: No Data 2006-07: No Data	2005-06: No Data 2006-07: No Data	2005-06: No Data 2006-07: No Data	2005-06: No Data 2006-07: No Data	2005-06: No Data 2006-07: No Data 2007-08:4 2008-09:4	2005-06: No Data 2006-07: No Data 2007-08:23 2008-09:48	

	2007-08:37 2008-09:58 2009-10: No Data	2007-08:462 2008-09:392 2009-10: No Data	2007-08 : No Data 2008-09: No Data 2009-10: No Data	2007-08: No Data 2008-09: No Data 2009-10: No Data	2009-10:6 <i># of sessions offered for leaders</i>	2009-10:45 <i># of leaders who attended these sessions</i>	
CRC	2005-06: 16 2006-07: 34 2007-08: 54 2008-09: 54 2009-10: 30	2005-06: 954 2006-07: 2475 2007-08: 1509 2008-09: 1027 2009-10: 847	2005-06: 38 2006-07: 9 2007-08: 58 2008-09: 6 2009-10: 0	2005-06: 739 2006-07: 124 2007-08: 412 2008-09:2057 2009-10: 0	2005-06: 3 2006-07: 96 2007-08: 5 2008-09: 25 2009-10: 25	2005-06: 60 2006-07: 1152 2007-08: 1813 2008-09: 353 2009-10: 298	
ERLC	2005-06: 73 2006-07: 90 2007-08: 66 2008-09: 67 2009-10: 38	2005-06: 1561 2006-07: 2412 2007-08: 918 2008-09: 1105 2009-10: 474	2005-06: 450 2006-07: 511 2007-08: 268 2008-09: 192 2009-10: 55.5	2005-06: 3045 2006-07: 5556 2007-08: 3599 2008-09: 2862 2009-10: 979	<i>Districts send different pd leaders each year - no stats</i>	2005-06: 577 2006-07: 7253 2007-08: 2700 2008-09: 2394 2009-10: <i># that district curriculum facilitators impact when they return to district to share/teach others</i>	
LN	2005-06: 21 2006-07: 41 2007-08: 55 2008-09: 48 2009-10: No Data	2005-06: 452 2006-07: 623 2007-08: 1632 2008-09: 1491 2009-10: No Data	2005-06: 8 2006-07: 7 2007-08: 8 2008-09: 143 2009-10: No Data	2005-06: 138 2006-07: 117 2007-08: 127 2008-09: 281 2009-10: No Data	2005-06: No Data 2006-07: 36 2007-08: 10 2008-09: 108 2009-10: No Data	No Data	

NRLC	2005-06: 37 2006-07: 49 2007-08: 43 2008-09: 53 2009-10: 32	2005-06: 845 2006-07: 852 2007-08: 688 2008-09: 818 2009-10: 470	2005-06: 18 2006-07: 45 2007-08: 51 2008-09: 21 2009-10: 10	2005-06: 441 2006-07: 984 2007-08: 1655 2008-09: 319 2009-10: 159	2005-06: No Data 2006-07: 74 2007-08: 45 2008-09: 47 2009-10: 11	2005-06: No Data 2006-07: 270 2007-08: 161 2008-09: 431 2009-10: 178	
SAPDC	2005-06: 34 2006-07: 97 2007-08: 52 2008-09: 49 2009-10: 25	2005-06: 973 2006-07: 1507 2007-08: 1097 2008-09: 604 2009-10: 371	2005-06: 8 2006-07: 9 2007-08: 30 2008-09: 32 2009-10: 21	2005-06: 120 2006-07: 155 2007-08: 473 2008-09: 338 2009-10: 265	2005-07: 25 district teacher facilitators trained regionally 2007-08:126 2008-09: 49 2009-10: With HS Implementation Support Teacher , focus was on building capacity of all HS teachers through district and regional sessions and on- going support provided through Moodle	Stats were not required to be reported back to SAPDC	26 Collaborative Inquiry Projects designed to support SS implementation were approved and funded <i>*Soc30-1 Moodle – 24,000 hits by approx 150 teachers who have access to our Moodle in the zone. 100 of the users accessed the site at least weekly. *Stats not collected for other learning opportunities, e.g. archived webinars, district contact communications, etc</i>

Total

	Consortium Sessions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Face to face, series, conferences, • Webinars • VC 	Number of participants	District Days <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning opportunities facilitated by consortium teams and/or contractors 	Number of participants	PD Leadership Capacity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers supported as a result of learning opportunities delivered by district curriculum facilitators • numbers lack provincial consistency due to regional context/district requests for service. 	Number of participants	Other Learning Opportunities <p>(e.g., archived webinars access, poster and newsletter access, emails, phone calls, moodle access, cohort conversations,</p>
2005-06	175	4491	544	4955	3	637	
2006-07	390	9883	640	8231	284	8961	
2007-08	487	9379	475	7030	138	5965	
2008-09	474	7888	406	6232	211	3564	
2009-10	137	2412	90.5	1470	46	531	
Total support for social studies implementation provided by ARPDC	1663	34053	2155.5	27918	682	19658	

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