



CHRIST THE REDEEMER CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

Student Service Review 2024/25

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Table of Contents

Process of the Review.....	2
Incidence of identified Students Requiring Specialized Supports and Services	3
Section One – Policy and Procedures	4
Section Two - Continuum of Supports and Services – STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES.....	5
Section 2.1 - Being	6
Section 2.2 - Knowing.....	7
Section 2.3 - Doing	15
Conclusion and Summary of Recommendations.....	16
References.....	19

Introduction

Christ the Redeemer Catholic Schools (CTR) is a high performing Catholic school division that operates in seven communities throughout central and southern Alberta. The district includes 15 traditional schools, three Outreach schools and a robust online and home education school, serving close to 10,000 students.

Christ the Redeemer is a division that is committed to providing an educational programming that is inclusive and meet the needs of all their learners. Their Student Services department works hand in hand with schools, communities and departments to build and refine a robust continuum of supports and services.

This review will examine in what ways and to what extent is the current continuum of supports and services is:

- ensuring each learner has timely access to an appropriate continuum of supports and services.
- maximizing the academic success, wellbeing and sense of belonging of each learner.
- building the capacity of teachers and school leaders to meet the needs of all learners through beliefs, resources, actions, policies and procedures.
- is integrated in the vision, goals, and priorities of Christ the Redeemer Catholic Schools.

Process of the Review

The evaluator used a mixed methods approach to gathering evidence and data to help to answer the key questions, make recommendations and pose questions for further exploration. These included:

- Interviews with Senior Leadership, Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent and Director of Student Services.
- Interviews with all school leadership teams (Administration and Learning Support Teachers) – conducted at six school sites (Canmore; Strathmore; Brooks; Drumheller; High River; Okotoks).
- Student focus group (3 participants).
- Student Online questionnaire (7 participants).
- Teacher Online Questionnaire (18 participants).
- Administrator Online Questionnaire (12 participants).
- Learning Support Teacher Online Questionnaire (12 participants).
- Parent Survey (7 participants).
- Interview with other District Staff (Mental Health Lead; Student Services Coordinators).
- Review of division policies, procedures, continuum of supports and services as well as data (provincial assessments and/or assurance measures).

Identified strengths, opportunities for growth and recommendations are made in the spirit of growth and improvement. The evaluator wishes to thank the staff of Christ the Redeemer Catholic Schools for being so collaborative in sharing their time, expertise and feedback during this review.

Incidence of identified Students Requiring Specialized Supports and Services

Historically in Alberta, education funding was specifically tied to individual students to receive funding for specialized supports and services. The assignment of a special education code was not only to secure funding, but for purposes of monitoring that students were being provided with the appropriate supports and services. Alberta's Education system has moved away from a "find them and fund them" model to one that is more inclusive. School authorities receive a grant (SLS) that provides them with the ability to make the best decisions, within a local context, to ensure they are building a continuum of support and services to meet the needs of their students (Alberta Education, 2024). This includes students that have special education codes and those who do not have assigned codes. This does not mean however, that school authorities have completely disbanded from assigning students a special education code. Sometimes that code is required for transportation funding needs, or to assist in identifying and building their own school authority profile. What has changed is how districts use those codes and funds to ensure student support is flexible and responsive to each school and the needs of their students. Currently, Special Education codes remain the key statistical data point to make comparisons between incidence rates of students who might have severe or mild/moderate learning needs.

Christ the Redeemer schools continue to welcome a diversity of learners to their schools and must be prepared to ensure they have the appropriate support for students to achieve their full potential. Christ the Redeemer is also the school division of choice for many newcomers to Canada or those students whose first language is not English, in 2024-25 school year there are 1300 students (codes 301 and 303) in that category registered. Therefore, the supports and services required by this group of students also requires resources and capacity building of staff at the school level. The figure below shows a steady increase in students who have been identified as severe or moderate learning needs and a decrease in students who have been identified as gifted or talented.

FIGURE 1-1 - NUMBER OF STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATION CODES BY YEAR FOR CHRIST THE REDEEMER SCHOOL DIVISION

	2019 - 2020	2020 - 2021	2021 - 2022	2022 - 2023	2023 - 2024	2024 - 2025
Mild/Moderate and Severe Codes	983	1009	1042	1191	1342	1234
Gifted and Talented (code 80)		132	124	116	92	57

* Data supplied by CTR – Note there may be several students with a dual code of MM/S and EALand of Gifted/Talented. In 2014-2015 MM and Severe Coded students - 731

Section One – Policy and Procedures

Across Alberta classrooms are dynamic and continue to reflect the changes and shifts in demographics in the province. Diversity is expected and valued. In education, we have a greater understanding of how ensuring quality instruction, appropriate support and services as well as setting high expectations for all students results in improved student outcomes and more students achieving high school graduation. According to Alberta Education “Inclusion is a way of thinking and acting that demonstrates universal acceptance and promotes a sense of belonging for all students.” Legislation and policy changes have been implemented to ensure that school authorities across the province work hand in hand with all education stakeholders to achieve a more inclusive education system that demonstrates universal acceptance for all, one that values choice and provides equity of educational opportunities. The following key legislative and policy frameworks guide school authorities in ensuring success of their students;

- The *Education Act (2024)* includes some key sections that will direct and support the continued implementation and evolution of an Inclusive Education system in Alberta. They include;
 - Preamble, 11 recognizes “the importance of an inclusive education system that provides each student with relevant learning opportunities and supports necessary to achieve success”.
 - Section 33(1)(e) states that school boards “provide a continuum of supports and services to students that are consistent with the principals of inclusive education”.
 - Section 11(e) Additionally, the *Education Act* requires that “if a student’s behavioural, intellectual, learning, communication or physical characteristics, or a combination of any of them, impair the student’s ability to learn, a board may determine that the student is in need of specialized supports and services.
- *Implementing a Continuum of Supports and Services – A Resource Guide for School and School Authority Leaders (2022)* – A resource that supports the successful implementation of a Continuum of Supports and Services.
- *Funding Manual for School Authorities (2024/25)*- provides the assurance framework of which school authorities share the success and progress of their plans with stakeholders. Learning Supports are one of the five pillars that school authorities need to measure and report on.
- *Ministerial Order on Student Learning (2024)*– legislation that requires the educational programming for **all** students is to be based on the Standards set by the Ministry of Education.
- *Standards of Special Education (2009)* – legislated requirements for learners with identified Special Education Needs.

It is evident that Christ the Redeemer Catholic Schools continue to focus on building an education system that reflects these policies, frameworks, principles and legislation. As a division, their vision and values and policies reflect this. Their core priorities of Faith, Academic Excellence and Healthy Schools and Wellbeing support the growth and achievement of all learners. Their Initiative of “You are Loved” spells a commitment to every student, staff member, family and community member that will be welcomed and loved in each school.

Some key policies and procedures support and guide the programming and implementation of a continuum of supports and services. These include;

- Policy 18 – Inclusive Education Supports and Services;
- Policy 11 – Appeals to the Board;
- STU #13 – Students with Diverse Needs or Exceptionalities;

- STU # 04 – Welcoming, Caring, Respectful and Safe Learning Environments;
- STU #27 – Meeting the Needs of All Learner – Assessment Procedure;
- STU#10 – Assessment, Evaluation and Communication of Student Achievement and Growth.

The following APs (but not limited to) support these key APs and provide further guidance to schools in planning for supports and for all students:

- INS#6 English Language Learners;
- INS#01 Kindergarten Screening;
- STU #03 Anti Bullying;
- STU# 18 Safety/Risk Assessment;
- STU#23 Success for First Nations Metis Inuit Students;
- STU# 29 Success in School for Youth in Care.

The Director of Learning Services also shared with this evaluator many of the processes for attendance, behavior support plans and referrals to the Student Services Team. These appear to be thorough processes, however, as discussed later in this report, data or evidence to measure the impact and use of these processes in schools will be discussed.

Strengths

In the opinion of this consultant, the policies and procedures that have been developed by CTR are comprehensive, thorough and should guide the delivery of effective programming in each of their schools. System and school policies align and promote present legislation and frameworks as they relate to an inclusive education system and promoting learner diversity.

Opportunities for Growth

Some slight changes in language in Policy 18 and AP STU #27 would better align to current legislation, policy and societal shifts.

Recommendation 1

Consider rewording of Policy 18 - “Inclusive Education Supports and Services” to “Specialized Education Supports and Services”. This would better align with the current language and that of the legislation. All students need access to an education system that is “**inclusive**”, however, some students will require more “specialized” supports and services because of their particular and specific learning needs.

Consider rewording of Meeting the Needs of All Learners - STU #27 – “Inclusion is a way of thinking and acting that demonstrates universal acceptance and promotes a sense of belonging for all students.” (AB ED 2024) Removing the wording of “the process of inclusion” and “varying degrees of inclusion”, would be more in line with this definition and CTR values and vision.

As policies and procedures come up for review ensure the language and intent aligns with current policies and district vision and values.

Section Two - Continuum of Supports and Services – STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES

The [Alberta Education website](#) states six principles of inclusive education in Alberta. *“The following 6 principles are key to achieving Alberta’s vision for an inclusive education system. These principles can guide and inform value-based and learner-centered decisions related to*

policies, practices and actions at every level of Alberta's education system". They are identified as;

- *Anticipate, value and support diversity and learner differences.*
- *High expectations for all learners. –*
- *Understand learners' strengths and needs.*
- *Remove barriers within learning environments.*
- *Build capacity.*
- *Collaborate for Success.*

These principles guide the planning and design of a continuum of supports and services that will meet the needs of all learners. A continuum must be designed to not only incorporate evidence-based practices but encompasses values and beliefs in learners and school communities. A strong continuum is flexible and responsive to every changing context of schools to ensure continued positive outcomes for students. There is a strong foundation of universal practices and approaches starting in the classroom, with additional support provided at the school or school authority level. Supports are cumulative and students that are receiving targeted or individual supports still have access to strong universal supports. ALL students should have access to what they need, as they require it. This holistic, interrelated approach is referred to "*Being – Knowing – Doing,*" (*Implementing a Continuum of Supports and Services; A Resource Guide for School and School Authority Leaders (2022)*), and is critical to the design and implementation of a robust continuum of supports and services. For this review strengths and opportunities for growth will be considered in each area.

Section 2.1 - Being

Being is the value-based construct that is the foundation of Inclusive learning environments. It is evidenced by how we value and demonstrate our beliefs in the potential and acceptance of every learner and member of our learning communities. We "anticipate, value and support diversity and learner differences." "Our vision for learning sets high expectations for all learners" (Guide to Education, 2024)

Strengths

- Through the interview process and the online questionnaire, teachers, administrators and district staff spoke of their strong underlying beliefs and values of acceptance and caring for their students. The division's focus on Faith and initiatives such as "You are Loved", support a culture of belonging and commitment to student success.
- Many of the schools are the only Catholic schools in their more rural communities. Their learners are part of their school community for their entire K- 12 education. Staff get to know learners and their families as part of the school and community. Staff expressed that this also supports a commitment to belonging and learner success.
- Staff report that the Superintendent and District Leadership team has shared with staff that the division is committed to not only high achievement but ensuring each child achieves their individual potential or mastery in learning.
- Students both online and in the focus group reported that they feel welcomed and listened to by their teachers. They reported that their teachers are conscious and respectful of their learning needs and are supportive.
- In communities where there is a high number of students who are newcomers to Canada there are support workers that assist in supporting cultural understanding, collaboration and partnerships with parents.
- 91.9% of teachers, parents, and students who agree that their learning environments are

welcoming, caring, respectful, and safe. (Christ the Redeemer Three Year Ed Plan (2024)). This is higher than the 84.0% provincial average.

- Students who identify as First Nation, Metis and Inuit are across the system. CTR has made a priority to build the capacity of all schools in their knowledge and understanding of indigenous ways of being and knowing. Lead teachers are present in every school to support and facilitate foundational learning.
- The Many and One Committee works to promote inclusion and combat racism, discrimination, and other forms of marginalization. The committee develops programs to support schools in this area. According to 2024 AERR results 91 % of teachers, parents and students reported being satisfied with this support.
- Parents who completed the questionnaire reported feeling included and their opinions valued in planning for the individual program plan for their child.

Opportunities for Growth

- Teachers, Learning Support Teachers and Administrators all expressed that increasing classroom complexity, especially in student needs around behaviour and mental health/wellbeing, is making the ability to provide supports and services for all students more complicated. Some staff shared that they would like a division wide conversation on an inclusive education system and how the system can support all learners.
- Individual schools shared that they often gather student voices in their planning. There is no systematic data collection specific to student engagement or belonging, other than AERR, which can be very broad and not allow for targeting specific issues with certain grade levels/genders or ages. This might be something to consider for the future.

Recommendation 2

A system-wide facilitated discussion on CTRs vision for an inclusive education system would provide clarity and common understanding of how the system and schools are welcoming, planning for, and supporting the diversity of learners that are now part of every school. Together create a clear and compelling vision of Inclusion in Christ the Redeemer Catholic Schools.

Recommendation 3

Consider exploring systematic ways to collect data from students on issues such as engagement, belonging and additional supports and services. This could be in the form of division designed student surveys or questionnaires, focus groups or data systems such as “Our School”.

Section 2.2 - Knowing

A continuum of supports and services are those actions, strategies, supports and expertise that school authorities utilize to maximize the academic success and mental health and wellbeing of their learners. Through understanding the needs of their learners, quality teaching practices and learner supports are provided in a range from universal to targeted and more intensive individualized supports and services. In *“Implementing a Continuum of Supports and Services, A Resource guide for School and District leaders (2022),* states there should be tiers of supports and services that are flexible in intensity and time as learner needs dictate. This resource also outlines seven interrelated elements that are indicators of a robust continuum.

A continuum of supports and services was present in every school throughout Christ the Redeemer Catholic School Division. This section will address the strengths and opportunities for growth and learning in each of those elements.

Collaborative Structures

Strengths

- All schools implement collaborative approaches to address and support student needs, focusing on structured processes and communication. The frequency and makeup of the collaborative meetings varied by school and context. Some of those structured approaches included:
 - **Wrap-Around Meetings:** Regularly scheduled meetings involving teachers, educational assistants (EAs), learning support teachers (LSTs), Family School Liaison Workers (FSLW) administrators, and sometimes families to discuss and address individual student challenges.
 - **Team-Based Reviews:** Cross-functional teams (could be teacher teams; Admin, Learning Support and Family School Liaison Worker), monitor, evaluate, and adjust support strategies as needed.
 - **System for referral and follow up:** Centralized forms used by teachers to report concerns and request support, ensuring issues are systematically documented, discussed with LST and team and addressed.
 - **Collaborative Problem Solving:** Concerns are first addressed at the classroom level and escalated as needed. Strategies are brainstormed in meetings, with input from school and division-level experts when required.
 - **Collaborative Development of Individualized Program Plans:** Teachers, learning support teams (LSTs), and administrators work together to create Individualized Program Plans (IPPs) for students with specific needs, ensuring collaboration between classroom teachers, support staff, and parents. The Learning Support Teachers are key in coordinating this. In some schools, teachers are less involved in the development of the IPP but are aware of and contribute feedback. Staff stated that with the new implementation of Dossier (software program), this has allowed for some new training and capacity building for staff in designing IPPs.
 - **Parental and Student Involvement** – all the parents surveyed reported that they felt the school provided them opportunities to collaborate and contribute to planning for the child's IPP. School teams at the secondary level reported involving student voice and agency in planning for their specific learning needs.
 - **Leadership and Relationships** - Staff indicated that strong relationships among staff, students, and families facilitate open communication and quick responses to concerns. Teachers value administrators and Learning Support Teachers for providing leadership in collaboration and support.
 - **Partnerships** – Some schools shared that they appreciate the access they have to outside supports and agencies to help with some students, for example McMann Services, COPE. However, access is very dependent on location, as many rural schools have limited access to outside supports or agencies.

Opportunities for Growth

- Though the opportunity to problem solve and collaborate around student needs was present in every school, some schools had better structures in place that were more systematic and were better designed to ensure follow up and the ability to track outcomes of interventions. One school reported that when they did not have regular team meetings there was a disconnect between team members, they reported "...student supports were fractured. The lack of common understanding during that period of time created a disconnect between teachers, LS, admin and FSLW. These meetings matter!".
- Students reported that they would like to be included in the planning for their program plan

earlier in their school career. Students reported being included in high school but feel that it would be beneficial to be included and gain a better understanding of their learning needs at an earlier age. One student reported that they would like a better understanding of the post-secondary opportunities that might or might not be available to him/her given his individual learning needs.

- Schools where Learning Support Teachers are developing the IPPs with less involvement of teachers, teacher responses indicate that they are not entirely aware of how their students are triaged for support.
- Administrators and Learning Support Teachers both indicated they would like to have the opportunity to meet with other schools to share best practices around planning for collaboration and models of support for students.
- As individual students' needs become more complex, especially around behaviour and mental health, teachers, administrators and learning support teachers all shared they need access and collaboration to professionals with more specialized expertise.

Recommendation 4

Ensure all schools have a systematic approach and structures for collaboration around students, or groups of students that require targeted or individualized supports. The elements of the structure or approach could be common across the system (i.e. referrals, assessment approaches, team collaboration, data tracking) but how the schools implement or design them could be contextual to their needs.

Recommendation 5

All staff reported a gap in the ability to collaborate with a professional that could model and support them in developing behaviour support plans for their most complex students. It would be helpful to contract or hire a behaviour support specialist at the divisional level to build capacity, collaborate and consult with schools.

Recommendation 6

Encourage schools to involve students in understanding, planning for and advocating for their learning needs and supports at a younger age. In high school ensure that students and their families have a good understanding of the opportunities that are available to them both in post-secondary and their careers.

Assessment Structures

Strengths

- CTR has put an emphasis on evidence-based universal assessment practices, especially across literacy and numeracy. Their present focus is to continue to build capacity around assessment for mastery learning for all students.
- Schools all indicated that they are using a variety of data such as teachers' observation and assessments that might indicate academic, behavioral, or social-emotional concerns. Schools also use EAL Benchmarks, DIBELS, and Alberta Education provincial assessments to identify students requiring interventions in literacy and numeracy.
- The Director of Student Services reported that there is ongoing training of Learning Support Teacher in administering Level B assessments to help provide more diagnostic information for teachers.
- Some schools have developed a very systematic process for ensuring students that are identified for discussion and further assessment are brought forward to the school team.
- Schools use Kindergarten and Early Readiness assessments to plan for Early Reading Intervention support.

- Schools work collaboratively with the division office to prioritize students that are in need of a psychoeducational assessment to better plan for educational programming. Students are triaged to identify the most appropriate, however, schools report that parents sometimes use a private psychologist to have the assessment done more quickly.

Opportunities for Growth

- There is an opportunity to build the capacity of teachers on how to assess the learning of students with more complex learning needs. Teachers reported using differentiated assessment methods in their classrooms but some shared that they would like more tools for assessing those students that are performing below grade level.
- There seems to be some misunderstanding around obtaining Ed Psychology assessments, for both students that are being assessed for the first time or those students who need an updated assessment. A parent and some school staff felt that the assessment process took too long or was not available. The Director of Student shared that the longest a student would be on the waitlist for an assessment is three months. Schools can work with the division office to determine if a student is a good candidate for an Ed Psych assessment. This process is not widely understood; therefore, some miscommunications have occurred to parents and or to teachers. This is easily resolved with clear communication with schools around the protocol.

Recommendation 7

Ensure every school has a more systematic approach of using formative, diagnostic and specialized assessment to identify required supports and inform subsequent teaching and interventions. Once students have been identified and interventions provided, a process of tracking student progress needs to be present. This process can have some common system wide practices, however, school context such as size, resources need to allow for some flexibility.

Recommendation 8

As the division continues to build capacity around assessment for mastery learning, it is an ideal time to focus on differentiated assessment methods, aligning effective student assessments with the complex needs of diverse learners, ensuring accurate reporting of abilities. Developing a broader understanding that mastery for learning may look very different for some students, this will support better programming decisions for all students.

Approaches and Supports and Transitions

Strengths

- Teachers shared a strong understanding of universal practices that they utilize in their classrooms every day. In an online questionnaire they all spoke about expecting diversity in their classrooms and planning their daily teaching practice to meet the needs of a wide range of learners.
- Teachers, Learning Support Teachers and Administrators shared a number of universal practices for both academic success and behaviour/ mental health, that are evident in classrooms, they vary according to teacher practice, grade level and subject matter they include but are not limited to;
 - Differentiated seating – a wider range of areas or seating or learning spaces.
 - Fidgets, movement breaks and sensory items to support regulation.
 - Differentiated scaffolded instruction.
 - Differentiated assessment methods to better capture student learning and progress.
 - Use of visual schedules/ organizers/ note takers.

- Use of technology – laptops/I Pads/ Chromebook/Google Classroom tools.
- Social Emotional Learning – Zones of Regulation/ Mind Up/ Relationships.
- An understanding and focus on emotional regulation.
- A focus on evidence based practice for literacy and numeracy.
- Clear and consistent routines.
- Teachers report that the use of these practices help all the students in their classrooms when they are presented as tools that anyone can use to remove any stigma. As one teacher shared “These practices help build the foundation for learning. Students need to feel safe and cared for, in order for learning to take place. All these areas create a layered effect, so students are supported and successful within their day at school, which helps learning to occur. “
- There has been a strong focus on positive behaviour supports and understanding regulation of students emotions and behaviour. This has been mentioned as a very positive learning for teachers, administrators and educational assistants. The ARC (Attachment, Regulation Competency Framework and the training and work of EAs using the framework have been positive.
- Almost all schools had sensory rooms that are highly utilized. Staff reported that they use them to support emotional regulation for some students.
- The CTR Family School Liaison Workers Plan lays out a systems approach to providing universal and targeted programs at all grade levels as well as those supports that are specific to individual students. This provides clarity to school and school communities as to what types of supports and learning in the area of Mental Health and Wellbeing that is available and consistent across the division. The work of these professionals as well as the Connections workers is highly valued.
- Each school shared evidence that they provide targeted or individualized support for those students with specific identified needs. The nature of these supports or who provides the support varies from school to school given context, grade level and available resources. Some schools with a high number of EAL learners have adjusted their timetable for common ELA and Math times to allow for more groupings of students with similar needs across the school for language and math interventions. Those schools reported that they are finding success in supporting their students.
- For schools that have a lower concentration of EAL students, but they span across all the grade levels, there has been work done to build capacity of teachers around high yield universal approaches that not only benefit the EAL learner but all students (ex. Teaching vocabulary, providing language supports, the use of visuals etc.)
- All schools had a process for identifying students who required individualized supports and plan (IPP). The Individualized Program Plan (IPP) is based on assessments, observations and teacher feedback. Teachers report using those specific strategies in their classroom and that they were valuable in guiding and planning for instruction.
- Schools report good access to therapeutic supports such as speech language pathology, occupational therapy (provided by CTR) and physiotherapy (contracted through Low Incidence Supports at Renfrew.
- Students reported that teachers are aware of and use the strategies and accommodations that are in their IPPs. One student reported that their academic success has improved since they have been on an IPP.
- Parents reported that schools utilize the strategies in their child’s IPP and collaborate regularly to incorporate parental feedback. One parent reported, “We were strongly involved in the IPP development. From meetings to in-person reviews and eventually signing the plan. We were included in every stage of the process.”
- All schools spoke to supporting transitions for students through grade levels and from school to school. They regularly schedule meetings with teachers and or schools to ensure

consistency in supports. Some of the smaller rural schools have their students for the entirety of their school careers so every teacher knows them and has a good understanding of their learning needs.

- A system wide focus on Career Pathways will continue to support the transition of all students into post-secondary and/ or careers. As mentioned previously, a student who is on an IPP felt that he/she would like more support around what post-secondary opportunities are available.

Opportunities for Growth

- Teachers, LSTs and Administrators all reported that further capacity needs to be built across the system on those universal and targeted approaches that would support the diversity of learners in classrooms. This includes differentiated instruction and assessment, technology tools for learning, mental health and behaviour strategies.
- Though CTR has for many years a focus on literacy and numeracy, staff reported that they continue to need support and capacity for evidence-based interventions when students are flagged for support. The importance of building capacity in junior and senior high schools in this area was identified.
- With the implementation of the new Alberta Curriculum, teachers and LSTs report a need to understand how to utilize Universal Design for Learning Principles and use the scope and sequence to find the entry points for the diversity of learners.
- Educational Assistants are a highly regarded and valuable support to all schools. Teachers, LSTs and Administrators report that the majority of EA time is spent with students with the most complex behaviour, which leaves little time to support other students in the school with learning.
- Some administrators reported a need for teachers to build their capacity in how to utilize and work more effectively with Educational Assistants.
- As mentioned previously, as individual student needs become more complex, especially around behaviour and mental health, teachers, administrators and learning support teachers all shared they need increased access and collaboration to professionals with more specialized expertise (behaviour specialist; psychologist; mental health professional; FSLW)
- Those professionals involved in online learning environments spoke to the unique nature of their context and feel that there needs to be a refresh of how supports is provided in that learning environment.
- Some contracted services such as those for Low Incidence Support (Hearing, Augmentative Communication, physio) have been difficult to access, as outside agencies do not seem to have the capacity to provide timely support.
- In some schools where space is very limited due to the high number of students, both teachers and students reported a lack of alternative learning spaces if students needed to work in smaller groups or needed a quiet room for learning or assessment purposes.
- Administrators, teachers and Learning Support Teachers all mentioned how the increasing classroom complexity and present educational demands, such as implementation of a new curriculum, recovery from COVID, is impacting on the wellbeing of staff. They are worried about the health of teachers and the recruitment and retention of valued professionals.

Recommendations 9 (Building Capacity)

Professional development for staff should focus on continuing to build an understanding and implementation of evidence based universal approaches, such as Universal Design for Learning, differentiated instruction and assessment as well as supporting positive behaviour and relationships. ARC training has been very successful, and continues to build on that success and

the capacity of how teachers might utilize some of those strategies in the context of the classroom. Implementation support of the new Alberta Curriculum for literacy and numeracy should not only include understanding of the scope and sequence of the curriculum and where teachers can find entry points for learners with diverse needs, to ensure they have access.

Ensuring that junior/senior high teachers are supporting students with differentiation strategies and accommodations scaffolded up to diploma level courses.

Supporting teaching in utilizing evidence-based intervention strategies for literacy and numeracy is also critical to ensure timely intervention occurs when students are identified as struggling. This has been identified in the CTR Three Year Educational Plan as a key strategy for the next three years.

As mentioned previously, engaging (hiring or contracting) a professional with a strong background in supporting learners with complex and challenging behaviour, would support building capacity, provide elbow to elbow support and model best practices for schools.

Recommendation 10

Research has shown that the well-being of staff has a direct impact on positive outcomes for students. CTR has a plan to utilize and build capacity around the 13 factors of psychological safety to support staff wellness, which is a good starting point for staff. To learn more about next steps and implementing a systematic approach to wellbeing, many resources can be found at the [EdCan Network](#).

Pathways to, through and from services

Strengths

- Teachers, Administrators and Learning Support Teachers reported that they feel their schools, for the most part, have good systems and structures that support their learners. Teachers had a good understanding of supports available at the school level.
- All schools reported that they felt that the Student Services department supported their requests for support, especially with their most complex students. They shared that support was provided in a timely manner and that access to Student Services Coordinators and Director of Student Services was valued and appreciated.
- Administrators and Learning Support Teachers report that the flow chart developed by the division office to contact the appropriate people; and the ability to consult with the CEC team to ensure they have not overlooked something reported to be valuable.
- Some schools reported that community services such as McMann Community Services and collaborative approach such as COPE (tirage system for students with complex mental health needs) have been valuable, other schools report a lack of access to such services. CTR considers geographical location, access to services and overall school profile when planning for resourcing schools.

Opportunities for Growth

- Not all teachers know and understand the supports and services available, or the process of accessing them, that exist beyond what is available at the school level. Some reported not knowing how to access divisional support or when it might be needed.
- Depending on location, access to community supports may be limited. In rural areas such as Drumheller, Oyen or Brooks, community health, mental health and or social services supports can be limited. School reported taking on the role of transporting students to other communities to get the help they might need.

Recommendation 11

A continuum of supports and services is more effective when all stakeholders have a good understanding of what is available and the process of how it is provided. It is worthwhile for every school team to discuss and make visible their continuum of support and services (including district and community) unique to their context. Once this is completed it can be a tool that can be used for reflection and refinement as the priorities of the school and the learners they serve dictate.

Managing Resources

Strengths

- Christ the Redeemer Catholic Schools have provided resources and expertise across the system to provide a robust continuum of supports and services. As in any system, resources are limited and sometimes stretched to capacity. Senior Leadership shared that they are striving to keep classroom sizes as small as possible and provide each school with funding for Administrators, Learning Support Teachers, FSLWs or Connection Workers and Education Assistants. The level of these supports depends on the school population.
- The division continues to invest in the ongoing professional development of teachers, educational assistants and administrators to build their capacity in supporting the learning of all students.
- At the division level they have made available Directors in Student Services, Students Services Coordinators, Therapy teams (OT, SLP and Physiotherapy) as well, Learning and FSLWs to provide support, leadership and build capacity. They contract services such as Educational Psychology and Low Incidence Support (Communication, Hearing and Physiotherapy)
- The Director of Student Services has been given a budget to provide extra support (Educational Assistants) if a school has an immediate need such as an increase in enrolment of students with complex learning needs.

Opportunities for Growth

- Teachers, Learning Support Teachers and Administrators all reported that they feel there is a need for more learning support in schools (Educational Assistants, FSLWs, EAL leads and other expertise).
- CTR has seen an increase in schools requesting additional EA support from the contingency fund provided by the division office.

Recommendation 12

CTR continues to use learner data and their local context to ensure that the strategies, support and services (including expertise) reflect their current student needs. As learners' needs change, ensure that specialized supports and services continue to reflect those changing needs. Building the capacity of teachers and school principals to ensure they have the skills to provide a high-quality education for all learners is the most sustainable approach. Capacity must be built at the school level and key actions and strategies of the system need to focus on doing this.

Processes and Protocols – please see section on policies and procedures

Section 2.3 - Doing

The [*2024/25 Funding Manual for School Authorities*](#) from Alberta Education provides a framework for school authorities to follow that will provide assurance to students, parents and the public that they are providing educational opportunities that result in learners reaching their highest potential. There are five interconnected domains that are reviewed yearly, they include:

- Student Learning and Achievement;
- Learning Supports;
- Governance;
- Teaching and Leading;
- Local and Societal Context.

This iterative, reflective process supports continuous improvement and learning. For this review, we will focus on Learning Supports, though a successful continuum of supports and services is also dependent on the successful implementation of the other domains.

Strengths

- In the CTR 2023-24 Annual Results, 91.9 % of parents, teachers and students reported that learning environments are safe, caring and welcoming. This is higher than the provincial average of 84.09%.
- In the CTR 2023-24 Annual Results 89.3 % of parents, teachers and students reported that students had access to the appropriate supports and services when they needed them. This is also higher than the provincial average of 79.9%.
- Students and parents who provided feedback for this review shared that they felt they had access to appropriate supports for their learning needs or that of their child. The limitations on this data would be the low number of participants in the survey, though this is in line with AERR results.
- Most schools report using a variety of data to determine if interventions are resulting in improved achievement for students. As mentioned previously some schools take a more systematic approach to this process.

Opportunities for Growth

- Some schools have a system for tracking the impact that interventions that have been provided have had on the growth and achievement of students. This was not evident in every school.
- Not every staff member is aware of the continuum of supports and services that are available at the school, district or community level. It is not regular practice to review this with staff so that they have an understanding of protocols, procedures and supports available.
- Administrators and Learning Support teachers shared that sometimes policies, procedures and roles and responsibilities that support an inclusive education system are not clearly understood, especially as new staff move into new leadership roles.

Recommendation 13

Provincial measures in literacy and numeracy are becoming more entrenched as part of practice. This would be one point of systematic data collection that could be regularly reviewed by schools and division offices to see if interventions and supports are having a positive impact on learners.

Recommendation 14

Provide regular opportunities for administrators and learning support teachers to discuss their roles and responsibilities in supporting an inclusive education system. Their leadership at the school level is critical to success in this work. Ensure there are also opportunities for school leadership teams to share and learn from colleagues at other schools.

Conclusion and Summary of Recommendations

Christ the Redeemer Catholic Schools provide excellent educational opportunities for the learners that they serve. The Division has established many effective policies, procedures and practices that support learning for all students and reflect the principles of Inclusive Education that have been established by Alberta Education.

This report has shared many of the strengths and accomplishments of the Division. Principals, teachers and other staff share a commitment to providing the most appropriate supports and services for all learners that will support their success. The Division has established a Student Services Learning Team that ensures even the learner with the most complex needs has access to a quality catholic education. The following are a summary of recommendations that can be considered in the spirit of continuous growth and improvement, and to support the achievement of each learner.

Recommendation 1

Consider rewording of Policy 18 - “Inclusive Education Supports and Services” to “Specialized Education Supports and Services”. This would better align with the current language and that of the legislation. All students need access to an education system that is “inclusive”, however, some students will require more “specialized” supports and services because of their particular and specific learning needs.

Consider rewording of Meeting the Needs of All Learners - STU #27 – “Inclusion is a way of thinking and acting that demonstrates universal acceptance and promotes a sense of belonging for all students.” Removing the wording of “the process of inclusion” and “varying degrees of inclusion”, would be more in line with this definition and CTR values and vision.

As policies and procedures come up for review ensure the language and intent aligns with current policies and district vision and values.

Recommendation 2

A system-wide facilitated discussion on CTRs vision for an inclusive education system would provide clarity and common understanding of how the system and schools are welcoming, planning for, and supporting the diversity of learners that are now part of every school. Together create a clear and compelling vision of Inclusion in Christ the Redeemer Catholic Schools.

Recommendation 3

Consider exploring systematic ways to collect data from students on issues such as engagement, belonging and additional supports and services. This could be in the form of division designed student surveys or questionnaires, focus groups or data systems such as “Our School”.

Recommendation 4

Ensure all schools have a systematic approach and structures for collaboration around students, or groups of students that require targeted or individualized supports. The elements of the

structure or approach could be common across the system (ie. referrals, assessment approaches, team collaboration, data tracking) but how the schools implement or design them could be contextual to their needs.

Recommendation 5

All staff reported a gap in the ability to collaborate with a professional that could model and support them in developing behaviour support plans for their most complex students. It would be helpful to contract or hire a behaviour support specialist at the divisional level to build capacity, collaborate and consult with schools.

Recommendation 6

Encourage schools to involve students in understanding, planning for and advocating for their learning needs and supports at a younger age. In high school ensure that students and their families have a good understanding of the opportunities that are available to them both in post-secondary and careers.

Recommendation 7

Ensure every school has a more systematic approach of using formative, diagnostic and specialized assessment to identify required supports and inform subsequent teaching and interventions. Once students have been identified and interventions provided, a process of tracking student progress needs to be present. This process can have some common system wide practices, however, school context such as size, resources need to allow for some flexibility.

Recommendation 8

As the division continues to build capacity around assessment for mastery learning, it is an ideal time to focus on differentiated assessment methods, aligning effective student assessments with the complex needs of diverse learners, ensuring accurate reporting of abilities. Developing a broader understanding that mastery for learning may look very different for some students, this will support better programming decisions for all students.

Recommendations 9 (Building Capacity)

Professional development for staff should focus on continuing to build an understanding and implementation of evidence based universal approaches, such as Universal Design for Learning, differentiated instruction and assessment as well as supporting positive behaviour and relationships. ARC training has been very successful, continuing to build on that success and the capacity of how teachers might utilize some of those strategies in the context of the classroom.

Implementation support of the new Alberta Curriculum for literacy and numeracy should not only include understanding of the scope and sequence of the curriculum and where teachers can find entry points for learners with diverse needs, to ensure they have access.

Supporting teaching in utilizing evidence-based intervention strategies for literacy and numeracy is also critical to ensure timely intervention occurs when students are identified as struggling. This has been identified in the CTR Three Year Educational Plan as a key strategy for the next three years.

As mentioned previously, engaging (hiring or contracting) a professional with a strong background in supporting learners with complex and challenging behaviour, would support building capacity, provide elbow to elbow support and model best practices for schools.

Recommendation 10

Research has shown that the well-being of staff has a direct impact on positive outcomes for students. CTR has a plan to utilize and build capacity around the 13 factors of psychological safety to support staff wellness, which is a good starting point for staff. To learn more about next steps and implementing a systematic approach to wellbeing, many resources can be found at the [EdCan Network](#).

Recommendation 11

A Continuum of Supports and Services is more effective when all stakeholders have a good understanding of what is available and the process of how it is provided. It is worthwhile for every school team to discuss and make visible their continuum of support and services (including district and community) unique to their context. Once this is completed it can be a tool that can be used for reflection and refinement as the priorities of the school and the learners they serve dictate.

Recommendation 12

CTR continues to use system learner data and local context to ensure that the strategies, support and services (including expertise) reflect their current student needs. As learners' needs change, ensure that specialized supports and services continue to reflect those changing needs. Building the capacity of teachers and school principals to ensure they have the skills to provide a high-quality education for all learners is the most sustainable approach. Capacity must be built at the school level and key actions and strategies of the system need to focus on doing this.

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Respectfully Submitted

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January 2025

References

Alberta Education (2024). Funding Manual for School Authorities 2024/25 School Year.
Alberta Education (2024) Education Act
Alberta Education (2024) Guide to Education
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