EOSDN THINKING SYMPOSIUM PROGRAM EVALUATION

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1. Introduction

The Eastern Ontario Staff Development Network (EOSDN) is a consortium of the nine Eastern Ontario District School Boards (DSBs) and the Faculty of Education at Queen's University. Established in 1989, the network facilitates professional learning and collegial sharing to improve student achievement. The network encourages and facilitates the development and collaborative sharing of resources and initiatives for all its members. EOSDN members believe that continuous professional learning is critical to the ongoing and future success of all students.

EOSDN Goals (as outlined in the 2011 EOSDN External Evaluation Report)
- Provide a regional voice, through the Board of Directors, on educational issues and initiate problem-solving strategies when necessary.
- Build, support, and maintain a flexible infrastructure of collaborative systems that promote the exchange of effective practice and shared decision-making.
- Establish, maintain, strengthen, and broaden networks to meet local needs, set direction, and/or respond to provincial mandates.
- Provide diverse and high quality professional learning opportunities on a cost-recovery basis.
- Foster and support the best models of learning opportunities based on current research.
- Facilitate the exchange of information about locally organized activities and ensure accessibility for all members.

Various professional learning opportunities provided by EOSDN serve to foster ongoing professional discourse and peer support. These opportunities currently include: The Supervisory Officer's Qualification Program, The Thinking Symposium, le français à coeur, the Leadership Academy, and the Support Staff Learning Assembly. The proposed evaluation is focused on elucidating the perceived value and impacts of The Thinking Symposium.

EOSDN Thinking Symposium

Initiated in 2012, the Thinking Symposium provides teams of educators from the nine EOSDN DSBs the opportunity to explore and think deeply about a precise area of professional practice over a sustained period. The Thinking Symposium sessions are planned collaboratively by the EOSDN planning team (i.e., the EOSDN Director, the EOSDN Manager, and one representative from each of the nine DSBs in the network) to address network goals and identified needs as well as interests of regional educators.

Two external facilitators have supported educator participants' learning during Thinking Symposium sessions: Lucy West (Fall 2012-Spring 2016) and Sandra Herbst (Fall 2016-Spring 2019). Each facilitator worked with the planning team members to collectively determine the content and focus of their respective sessions. Lucy West, a content coach, emphasized fostering classroom discourse through *Talk Moves*. Sandra Herbst, an educational consultant, is currently providing support focused on assessment *for* learning, feedback, and coaching.

The Thinking Symposium entails four full-day, face-to-face regional sessions during each school year—two consecutive full-day sessions in Fall and two consecutive full-day sessions in Spring. Educator teams from the nine EOSDN DSBs are invited to participate, with teams consisting of classroom teachers, school support teachers, school administrators, and system administrators. Participating teams are supported through web-based materials provided in advance of, and between, the face-to-face sessions. While teams are determined by each participating DSB, the planning team encourages attendance of the same educator teams at both the Fall and Spring sessions each year to maximize intended impacts. The Thinking Symposium endeavors to shift professional thinking and practice among participating educators and empower these educators to the spread this new thinking and practice to educator colleagues across the EOSDN region.

2. Evaluation Approach

A collaborative evaluation approach was used throughout this evaluation project. The EOSDN Director, EOSDN Manager, and Queen's evaluators collaborated to refine the evaluation focus and methods as well as to review evaluation tools and analysis approach. Findings from the evaluation are intended to inform the EOSDN Board of Directors and the Thinking Symposium planning team and to facilitate communication about program effectiveness, outcomes, and future directions.

Data collection will prioritize a developmental approach (adapted from Grove, Kibel, & Hass, 2012):

▪ *Developmental Data.* These data are selected because they can track changes in program users' learning and practice over time. Developmental data serve to inform program developers about possible sequences, stages, or growth periods within the program. Developmental data also help to respond to emergent issues and potential challenges with long-term implementation of the program. Both quantitative and qualitative data can be appropriate for understanding program development.

Evaluation Questions

The evaluation was guided by the following questions:
1. How is the current Thinking Symposium model supporting the learning needs and interests of participants and the EOSDN?
2. How has the Thinking Symposium impacted the learning and practice of participants and the EOSDN?

Evaluation Method

Multiple methods were used to collect evaluation data on the EOSDN Thinking Symposium. Specifically, data was collected in relation to the current professional learning model and the impact of the model on participants' learning and practice. All evaluation protocols (i.e., surveys, questionnaires, interview protocols) were developed in collaboration with the EOSDN Director to ensure relevance to the evaluation of the Thinking Symposium. The EOSDN Manager worked with evaluators to recruit Thinking Symposium participants for data collection.

Educator Participant Survey

To understand how educator participants valued the Thinking Symposium and how the Thinking Symposium has impacted educators' practice, past and current educator participants (i.e., classroom teachers, school support teachers, school administrators, system facilitators, system administrators, and educators in other roles) were invited to respond to a brief online survey regarding their experiences with the Thinking Symposium. Evaluators worked with the EOSDN Manager to distribute survey links via email to educator participants in the EOSDN Thinking Symposium database in Spring 2017.

Two versions of the survey were developed—one for educators who attended the Thinking Symposium with Lucy West and one for educators who attended the Thinking Symposium with Sandra Herbst (see Appendix). The educator participant surveys addressed the following themes: (a) value of the Thinking Symposium to support professional learning, (b) impact of the Thinking Symposium on professional practice, and (c) demographic characteristics of educator participants.

Educators were sent the appropriate survey version(s) based on the EOSDN Thinking Symposium participant registration logs. Each version of the survey contained 9 items (5 fixed- and 4 open-response) and took approximately 10 minutes to complete. Participation was voluntary and responses were anonymous. In total, 1340 Lucy West educator participants were invited to respond to the survey and 201 completed responses were received, for a response rate of 15.0%. In addition, 310 Sandra Herbst educator participants were invited to respond and 112 completed responses were received, for a response rate of 36.1%.

Planning Team Questionnaire and Focus Group Interview

In an effort to understand the perspectives of EOSDN Thinking Symposium planning team members, online open-response questionnaires were emailed to all past and current members. Questionnaires contained 5 questions pertaining to planning team members' experiences as organizers of Thinking Symposium. In total, 31 past and current planning team members were invited to respond to the questionnaire and 11 complete responses were received, for a response rate of 35.5%.

In addition to online questionnaires, a focus group interview was conducted with the nine current planning team members from each DSB, the EOSDN Director, and the EOSDN Manager in June 2017. The purpose of this focus group was to stimulate collective reflection on the 2016-2017 implementation year and inform planning for the 2017-2018 Thinking Symposium.

Facilitator Questionnaire

In order to understand the perspectives of the EOSDN Thinking Symposium facilitators, online open-response questionnaires were emailed to the past and current facilitators—Lucy West and Sandra Herbst, respectively. These questionnaires contained 4 questions and took approximately 15 minutes to complete (see Appendix).

Thinking Symposium Artifacts

Various Thinking Symposium artifacts were collected in collaboration with the EOSDN Manager to enrich and expand understandings of the experiences of educator participants, planning team members, and facilitators. These artifacts included: educator feedback collected at previous Thinking Symposium sessions, planning team meeting notes and reflections, facilitator PowerPoint presentations, and selected resources provided at face-to-face sessions.

Data Collection & Evaluation Questions

The following maps the data collection strategies for the evaluation questions.

Evaluation Focus	Evaluation Questions	Data Collection Strategy
Professional Learning Model	How is the current Thinking Symposium model supporting the learning needs and interests of participants and the EOSDN?	- Educator participant survey - Planning team questionnaire and follow-up interview - Facilitator questionnaire
Impact	How has the Thinking Symposium impacted the learning and practice of participants and the EOSDN?	- Educator participant survey - Planning team questionnaire and follow-up interview - Facilitator questionnaire

Data Analyses

Quantitative survey data were analyzed through descriptive statistics (i.e., frequency, mean, standard deviation) to elucidate trends in how educator participants valued the Thinking Symposium and how it impacted their respective practices. Qualitative data from the questionnaires, interviews, and artifacts were analyzed using a standard thematic coding process (Namey, Guest, Thairu, & Johnson, 2008; Patton, 2002). From an initial analysis of these data, a code list was generated and then codes grouped into broader thematic categories. Direct participant quotations were used to explain and highlight themes. Two evaluators reviewed and analyzed all data to ensure trustworthiness of results. Results were interpreted for each stakeholder group (i.e., educator participants, planning team members, or facilitators) and in relation to the identified overall evaluation questions.

3. Evaluation Findings

Evaluation findings are presented in relation to the three stakeholder groups that provided feedback regarding their experiences with the EOSDN Thinking Symposium – educator participants, planning team members, and facilitators. These three groups offered varied perspectives on the value and impacts of the Thinking Symposium. However, across the groups, there was consensus that the Thinking Symposium: (a) provided constructive opportunities for learning, collaboration, networking, and reflection among educators, and (b) fostered intended shifts in thinking and practice among participating educators.

Educator Participants' Perspectives

Educators who participated in the Thinking Symposium with Lucy West (2012-2016) and Sandra Herbst (2016-2017) were surveyed in Spring 2017 to understand how they valued this professional learning and how participation impacted instructional practice in classrooms.

Educator participant surveys were completed online and contained 9 items (5 fixed- and 4 open-response). Fixed-response items included two demographic items, two items that asked educator participants to rate how they valued the Thinking Symposium (5-point scale, Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree), and one 6-part item that asked educators to report how frequently they used/observed specific instructional strategies emphasized during Thinking Symposium sessions (5-point scale, Commonly Use/Observe to Rarely Use/Observe). This 6-part item was customized to align with strategies explored during Lucy West or Sandra Herbst sessions, respectively. The four open-response survey items asked educator participants to elaborate on the valuable aspects and impacts of the Thinking Symposium as well as provide suggestions for moving forward. (See Appendix for complete educator participant surveys distributed to Lucy West and Sandra Herbst participants.)

Educator participant findings are organized according to four categories: (a) educator participant demographics, (b) valuing of the Thinking Symposium, (c) impacts on educator participants, and (d) moving forward. Within each category, related themes are described.

Educator Participant Demographics

In total, 313 completed educator participant surveys were received, 201 from Lucy West participants (15.0% response rate) and 112 from Sandra Herbst participants (36.1% response rate). A majority of respondents were classroom teachers (103 Lucy

West respondents and 60 Sandra Herbst respondents; representing 51.2% and 53.6% of responses, respectively). The balance of responses were obtained from non-classroom teachers including school support teachers, school administrators, system facilitators, system administrators, and educators in other roles (e.g., Ministry of Education personnel, guidance counsellor, librarian). Specifically, 98 non-classroom teachers responded to the Lucy West survey (48.8% of responses) and 52 non-classroom teachers responded to the Sandra Herbst survey (46.4% of responses). A majority of educator participants who responded attended one to four days of the Thinking Symposium with Lucy West (85.1%), not necessarily during the same school year. Some educator participants only attended Spring sessions with Sandra Herbst (83.9% attended in Fall versus 92.9-95.5% attended in Spring). Demographic frequencies for educator participants are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. *Frequency of Educator Participants' Demographic Information for Lucy West and Sandra Herbst Thinking Symposium Sessions*

Demographic	Lucy West		Sandra Herbst	
	# of Educator Participants (n = 201)	Frequency (%)	# of Educator Participants (n = 112)	Frequency (%)
Current Role				
Classroom teacher	103	51.2	60	53.6
School support teacher	10	5.0	4	3.6
School administrator	39	19.4	23	20.5
System facilitator	33	16.4	17	15.2
System administrator	4	2.0	1	0.9
Other	12	6.0	7	6.2
Number of days attended (Lucy West only)				
1-4	171	85.1	n/a	n/a
5-8	23	11.4	n/a	n/a
9-12	7	3.5	n/a	n/a
13-16	0	0	n/a	n/a
Dates attended (Sandra Herbst only)				
Sept. 28, 2016	n/a	n/a	94	83.9
Sept. 29, 2016	n/a	n/a	94	83.9
Apr. 19, 2017	n/a	n/a	107	95.5
Apr. 20, 2017	n/a	n/a	104	92.9

Note. Survey questions 1 & 2.

Valuing of the Thinking Symposium

Educator Participants overwhelmingly valued opportunities provided by the Thinking Symposium (see Table 2). Ninety-five percent of Lucy West participants and 96.4% of Sandra Herbst participants agreed or strongly agreed that the Thinking Symposium provided them with a valuable opportunity to think about their practice as an educator. In addition, 93.0% of Lucy West participants and 97.3% of Sandra Herbst participants agreed or strongly agreed that the Thinking Symposium provided them with a valuable opportunity to discuss their practice with colleagues and other educators.

Table 2. *Frequency Percentages of Educators Participants' Valuing of the Thinking Symposium with Lucy West and Sandra Herbst*

	Agree/ Strongly agree (%)		Neutral (%)		Disagree/ Strongly disagree (%)	
	Lucy West	Sandra Herbst	Lucy West	Sandra Herbst	Lucy West	Sandra Herbst
The Thinking Symposium provided me with a valuable opportunity to **think about my practice** as an educator.	95.0	96.4	4.5	2.7	0.5	0.9
The Thinking Symposium provided me with a valuable opportunity to **discuss my practice** with colleagues and other educators.	93.0	97.3	5.5	1.8	1.5	0.9

Note. Survey questions 3 & 4.

Educator participants further elaborated valued aspects of the Thinking Symposium in open-response survey questions. Specifically, educator participants identified three valued aspects of the Thinking Symposium: (a) face-to-face collaboration and networking; (b) attending multiple sessions over time; and (c) expert facilitation and support.

Face-to-face collaboration and networking: Educator participants appreciated that the Thinking Symposium provided opportunities to engage in sustained, face-to-face collaboration and networking at regional sessions. In particular, they valued uninterrupted time with their school teams to reflect on practice, explore new ideas and strategies, and collaboratively plan next steps for implementation. In addition, educator participants valued opportunities to network with colleagues across DSBs, allowing them to explore regional perspectives and learn what others were doing in their contexts of practice. Educator participants asserted the importance of face-to-face collaboration and networking, one participant stating, "Attending the Thinking Symposium sessions made me appreciate the rich dialogue, professional accountability, and personal connections that come from sustained face-to-face professional learning opportunities. I have yet to experience a virtual session that has achieved these outcomes. In addition, I was struck by the many valuable "off topic" professional discussions and new professional connections that emerged during the face-to-face sessions—within and across boards and organizations (e.g., Ministry of Education and Queen's University)."

> *It is very helpful to have time out of the building to engage in uninterrupted, focused discussions with colleagues.*

> *The opportunity to work with the concepts and ideas over several occasions and over time really helped to consolidate the knowledge.*

Attending multiple sessions over time: In addition, educator participants valued the opportunity to attend multiple Thinking Symposium sessions over time within the school year. This model promoted depth and continuity in educators' professional learning and allowed educator participants to revisit and build on ideas and strategies after experimenting with implementation between Fall and Spring sessions. As one educator participant explained, "The two days in September and April was the perfect combination to give you a lot of material and then time to process, discuss, and apply the new learning." Another educator participant summarized, "The [Thinking Symposium] was excellent. There was a balance between listening, thinking, and doing. I was engaged throughout the learning because we maintained a pace that respected the amount of time it takes to digest and understand new ideas."

Expert facilitation and support: Educator participants also highlighted the value of the expert facilitation and support provided by Lucy West and Sandra Herbst. First, both facilitators provided content rooted in current pedagogy and research that could be implemented in a variety of contexts (e.g., grades or subjects). Notably, educator participants appreciated that Sandra Herbst's

> *The Thinking Symposium facilitators are amazing - they shift my thinking, change the culture of teaching, and are approachable and responsive.*

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content was rooted in Canadian policy and practice. Second, educator participants valued that facilitators presented and modelled practical tools and strategies that could be readily implemented within their own classrooms and schools, "going beyond ideas and taking us right into doing." Educator participants particularly enjoyed classroom videos shared by the facilitators, demonstrating authentic examples of educators implementing strategies with students. As one participant explained, "The chance to hear an "expert" share proven ideas that come directly from student successes is invaluable." Third, educator participants appreciated that facilitators were responsive to their learning needs and priorities, adapting content "on the fly" during regional sessions in response to educator feedback and, in a few cases, responding to educator participants' email questions between regional sessions to inform implementation.

Impacts on Educator Participants

Educator participants shared various impacts of the Thinking Symposium on classroom practice through both fixed- and open-response survey items. Impacts are reported by Thinking Symposium facilitator (i.e., Lucy West or Sandra Herbst) and discussed according to each educator participant group (i.e., classroom teachers and non-classroom teachers), then summarized as overall impacts across facilitators.

Impacts of Lucy West Sessions: Educator participants who attended Lucy West sessions were asked how frequently they use (classroom teachers) or observe (non-classroom teachers) the Talk Move strategies emphasized by Lucy West (see Table 3). Most classroom teachers reported that they "Commonly Use" or "Very Commonly Use" the six focal Talk Moves. According to classroom teachers, they most commonly *Turn and Talk* and *Infuse Academic Language*, and least commonly use *Take a Stand*.

Non-classroom teachers (i.e., school support teachers, school administrators, system facilitators, system administrators, and educators in other roles) also reported that they "Commonly Observe" or "Very Commonly Observe" the six focal Talk Moves in classrooms (see Table 3). However, with the exception of *Turn and Talk*, non-classroom teachers observed these Talk Moves to a lesser extent than classroom teachers reported using them. This result is not surprising, as non-classroom teachers are not consistently in classrooms for sustained periods of time to observe teachers' implementation of strategies. Of note, there were no significant differences found between the mean responses for classroom teachers compared to non-classroom teachers.

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Table 3. *Mean (SD) Responses for Intended Impacts of Attending the Thinking Symposium with Lucy West on Classroom Practice*

	Classroom Teachers	Non-classroom Teachers
	n = 103	n = 98
Please indicate the extent to which you use/observe the following strategies in the classroom.		
	use	*observe*
Turn and Talk	4.08(.89)	4.09(.82)
Listen and Restate Idea	3.96(.89)	3.46(.91)
Check for Understanding – Paraphrase/Probe an Idea	3.98(.83)	3.51(.79)
Slow Down – Allow Positive Struggle/Scaffold to Understanding	4.00(.83)	3.28(.91)
Take a Stand about an Idea (e.g., agree/disagree/not sure; thumbs up/down/sideways)	3.60(1.01)	3.37(.95)
Infuse Academic Language (e.g., make idea visible on blackboard; apply terminology to idea)	3.96(1.03)	3.59(.79)

Note. Survey questions 5a & 5b. 5-point scale from 1 = Do Not Use/Observe to 5 Very Commonly Use/Observe.

Educator participants elaborated on the impacts of attending Lucy West sessions in open-response survey items. First and foremost, teachers across various grades and subject areas (e.g., math, language arts, science, social studies, French, and English) reported the use of Talk Moves in their classrooms. They most commonly described using

> *I have learned to wait! Kids need the internal struggle to figure things out. I have stopped "rescuing" them, leading to deeper understanding on their part.*

Turn and Talk, but also shared the value of using questioning to *Check for Understanding* and wait time to *Slow Down/Allow Positive Struggle*. One teacher stated, "Lucy West made me realize that deliberate questioning and wait time can have a huge impact on the amount of knowledge that can be drawn out from students." Another teacher described using Talk Moves to promote accountable talk and make student thinking visible, stating, "I now focus on accountable talk and classroom dialogue, rather than just having students write things down. It has been a great way to differentiate instruction and meet the needs of diverse learners in my classroom."

> *I have totally rethought my practice after our time with Lucy West. Rarely have I left a workshop and implemented the knowledge so quickly. Her no nonsense approach resonated with me, and challenged me to listen as well as teach my students to do so.*

Second, according to educator participants, the implementation of Talk Moves has contributed to associated shifts in classroom culture. Through participation in sessions with Lucy West, educators became aware that "the person doing the talking is doing the learning." In response to this shift in educator mindset, classrooms have been rearranged to support discourse and accountable talk, enabling a more interactive approach to teaching and learning. Educator participants shared that students have been allowed greater ownership in classroom conversation and learning, with increased engagement noted among students who generally struggle.

Finally, educator participants observed that Talk Moves and Accountable Talk strategies have spread to educators who did not attend the Thinking Symposium with Lucy West. According to system facilitators and school administrators, Lucy West provided tangible strategies that they could readily spread to educators not involved in the Thinking Symposium through professional learning initiatives in DSBs and schools. In addition, teachers who attended Lucy West sessions were inspired to adopt a more collaborative approach to professional learning and practice in their schools after attending the Thinking Symposium with Lucy West. As one teacher shared, "Returning to my school after the Thinking Symposium, I forced myself to get out of my comfort zone of teaching mostly in isolation and, instead, work more collaboratively with my colleagues. This has proven to be a much richer teaching and learning experience not only for me personally and professionally, but most importantly for my students." As a result, in many educator participants reported that Talk Moves have become "common practice" in classrooms and "second nature" among educators and students across the EOSDN region.

> *As a school administrator, the Thinking Symposium has highlighted the importance of explicitly teaching teachers the steps involved in making thinking visible - it is not intuitive and takes a lot of work to change practice and shift beliefs.*

Impacts of Sandra Herbst Sessions: Educator participants who attended Sandra Herbst sessions were asked how frequently they use (classroom teachers) or observe (non-classroom teachers) assessment strategies emphasized by Sandra Herbst (see Table 4). Most of these classroom teachers reported that they "Commonly Use" or "Very Commonly Use" the six assessment strategies that were emphasized during Sandra Herbst's sessions. According to classroom teachers, they most commonly use *developing learning goals based in curriculum documents* and *differentiating student assessments to meet individual learning needs*. Classroom teachers least commonly used *co-constructing success criteria in relation to learning goals with colleagues* or *with students*.

Non-classroom teachers (i.e., school support teachers, school administrators, system facilitators, system administrators, and educators in other roles) also reported that they "Commonly Observe" or "Very Commonly Observe" the six focal assessment strategies in classrooms (see Table 4). As with Lucy West impacts, non-classroom teachers observed these assessment strategies to a lesser extent than classroom teachers reported using them, likely because non-classroom teachers are not consistently in classrooms to observe teachers' use of strategies for sustained periods of time. Notably, no significant differences were found between the mean responses for classroom teachers compared to non-classroom teachers. However, consistent with classroom teachers' reported use, non-classroom teachers most commonly observed teachers *developing learning goals based in curriculum documents* and *differentiating student assessments to meet individual learning needs* and they least commonly observed classroom teachers *co-constructing success criteria in relation to learning goals with colleagues* or *with students.*

Table 4. *Mean (SD) Responses for Intended Impacts of Attending the Thinking Symposium with Sandra Herbst on Classroom Practice*

	Classroom Teachers	Non-classroom Teachers
	n = 60	n = 52
Please indicate the extent to which you use/observe the following strategies in the classroom.		
	use	*observe*
Developing learning goals based in curriculum documents.	4.35(.76)	3.48(.85)
Co-constructing success criteria in relation to learning goals with colleagues.	2.98(1.12)	2.81(.82)
Co-constructing success criteria in relation to learning goals with students.	3.53(.98)	2.71(.82)
Differentiating student assessments to meet individual learning needs.	4.20(.80)	3.55(.76)
Triangulating observations, conversations, and products.	3.76(.90)	2.88(.81)
Providing students with opportunities to receive and use feedback from teachers, peers, and self to inform their next steps.	4.08(.74)	3.41(.78)

Note. Survey questions 5a & 5b. 5-point scale from 1 = Do Not Use/Observe to 5 Very Commonly Use/Observe.

Educator participants from Sandra Herbst sessions elaborated on these impacts in open-response survey items. First, educator participants began to think differently about engaging students in learning and encouraged them to put students "at the forefront of learning". Sandra encouraged participants to slow the pace of instruction and go deeper with fewer curriculum expectations. As one educator participant stated, "The Thinking Symposium changed my thinking in terms of putting student learning at the forefront - knowing your learners, your curriculum and setting your classroom and instruction in ways which showcase student success."

> *I began to see the gap between how teachers present expectations and what students access from these expectations. Co-creating success criteria with students makes so much sense in terms of helping students move to the next level in their learning.*

Second, although educator participants least frequently used or observed the co-construction of success criteria with colleagues or students, they began to rethink and appreciate the value of these processes. Through sessions with Sandra Herbst, educator participants began to understand that co-constructing success criteria provides students with "the language of quality and proficiency" for these expectations, enabling students to "challenge themselves and strive toward success." As one

Sandra has inspired me to continue to love learning and to grow as a teacher. I am more uncertain than ever and it is making my teaching practice better because by her own example, I'm trying something new to see if it will work with my students.

educator participant stated, "The phrase 'providing students with the language of quality and proficiency' has changed my thinking immensely as it has reminded me that students are not meant to 'figure it out' but rather see the bar that they are to achieve and work towards that with my support." Another educator participant shared, "The entire process of co-creating criteria is helping me and my students have a common understanding of criteria." An educator participant indicated, "I now

understand how to truly co-create success criteria - not just either create myself or cold brainstorm with students."

Third, educator participants began to intentionally think about and plan for ongoing cycles of assessment that (a) include timely, constructive feedback rooted in success criteria, and (b) triangulate multiple forms of assessment data (i.e., observations, conversations, demonstrations, and products). Educator participants began to move away from a reliance on products to provide valid evidence of students' learning, and explored ways to document observations and conversations in both elementary and secondary classrooms. Educator participants appreciated the practical strategies that Sandra Herbst presented and shared several *ah-ha* moments they experienced during Thinking Symposium sessions with Sandra, including:

- ➲ "Educators need to model what success looks like for students through processes or products."
- ➲ "Sandra's notion of 'process as product' made me rethink my approach to assessment."
- ➲ "Evidence is not just products. We need to document more observations and conversations to build a more complete picture of students' learning."
- ➲ "The triangulation of evidence does not have to look the same for each student. I used to think - how can I get observations and conversations plus products for all my students; when is there time?! Now I realize that assessment and evaluation can be differentiated as well, as long as the assessment is valid for each student."

- ⟳ "Triangulation of data should not be represented as an equilateral triangle - which can be very misleading for educators as they plan, prepare and complete assessment and evaluation experiences for their students if they believe it must 'balance' the triangle. Not all triangles of data are equal and they are not congruent for every student."
- ⟳ "Sandra asked 'Does it matter when they show us their learning or does it just matter that they have learned it?' This has really made me reflect on the idea of providing students with opportunities to go back and demonstrate knowledge that they missed on the summative when they have learned it, whenever that is over the course of the semester."

Fourth, educator participants shared that approaches to assessment advocated by Sandra Herbst are beginning to spread across classrooms, schools, and DSBs. In particular, educator participants in system facilitator roles stated that they are actively spreading this learning to educators throughout their DSBs who did not attend the Thinking Symposium. One system facilitator explained, "I now reflect as I co-plan with educators on how we need to plan with not just the end in mind (a product and evaluation) but with ongoing assessment for learning and be intentional about how we will collect ongoing assessment evidence through observations and conversations." Another system facilitator shared, "In my work with teachers, we have worked together to co-construct success criteria. This has happened with multiple groups of teachers at many different grade levels. Many teachers have gone back to their classes and tried the same strategy as a result. Teachers are then giving targeted descriptive feedback to students on formative work based on those criteria."

Overall Impacts on Educator Participants: Overall, educator participants in both Lucy West and Sandra Herbst sessions highlighted three key impacts of the Thinking Symposium on their professional learning and practice. First, the Thinking Symposium provided educator participants with opportunities to rethink their practice with their school teams and regional colleagues, which led to associated mindset shifts associated with classroom discourse and assessment. In particular, educators began to recognize the importance of including students in these processes to enrich students' learning. Second, the Thinking Symposium provided educator participants with actionable strategies to enhance classroom discourse and approaches to assessment, as well as the inspiration to implement these new strategies in their practice. Most notably, educator participants were empowered to slow down the pace of learning in order to (a) allow for classroom discourse, (b)

> *Attending the Thinking Symposium with educators from EOSDN has inspired me to continue our regional work— strengthening our practices and moving forward as we meet the unique learning needs of our students.*

triangulate multiple sources of student assessment data (i.e., observations, conversations, demonstrations, and products) to construct evidence of student learning, and (c) leverage feedback from both teachers and students to move learning forward. Finally, the Thinking Symposium provided educator participants with common language and tangible strategies that could be shared with colleagues who did not participate in Thinking Symposium sessions. This enabled spread of key practices related to classroom discourse and assessment among educators in schools and DSBs across the EOSDN region.

Moving Forward

Educator participants from both Lucy West and Sandra Herbst sessions offered three primary suggestions to enhance the Thinking Symposium moving forward: (a) incorporate more breakout sessions, (b) provide more in-between support, and (c) address venue issues.

Incorporate More Breakout Sessions: Educator participants requested additional breakout sessions during Thinking Symposium sessions to enhance their learning experiences. In particular, educator participants would like more opportunities for cross-DSB networking specific to educators' roles, needs, or interests (e.g., system coaches, school administrators, elementary grade divisions, secondary subject areas). In addition, educator participants would like additional breakout time to discuss Thinking Symposium learning and plan next steps within their school teams. According to some educator participants, adding more breakout sessions would not only provide valuable learning opportunities but also decrease sustained periods of sitting in a large group and listening to the session facilitator.

Provide More In-Between Support: Educator participants advocated for additional support between Fall and Spring Thinking Symposium sessions to enhance the implementation and spread of new learning. Classroom teachers indicated that, while they were inspired to try new strategies while at regional Thinking Symposium sessions, it was sometimes overwhelming to implement these strategies when they returned to their daily classroom routines. This was especially challenging in schools where only a few educators

> *Facilitated in-between sessions for participants would support implementation, increase professional accountability, and build professional networks within and across contexts.*

participated in regional sessions, thus limiting the number of colleagues with whom to discuss and explore implementation of new strategies in practice. Moreover, school administrators expressed the need for in-between support to help them spread new strategies to teachers who did not attend regional Thinking Symposium sessions.

Educator participants suggested that in-between support might be provided in the form of professional resources (e.g., notes or PowerPoints from sessions, handouts with suggested strategies, videos that demonstrate classroom implementation). Classroom teachers also emphasized the need for release time to engage in ongoing school-based collaboration, as well as human resources (e.g., system facilitators) to support their professional collaboration and classroom implementation.

Address Venue Issues: Some educator participants expressed challenges with the current Thinking Symposium venue, stating that it was difficult to engage in professional learning and dialogue with colleagues in the large conference room. In particular, educator participants at the back of the room had trouble reading the screens at the front and suggested providing screens at both the front and back of the room to enable the viewing of all participants. In addition, educator participants had difficulty engaging in discussions with their entire table groups in the large room because it became noisy when all of the table groups were simultaneously engaged in dialogue. Some participants suggested that providing smaller breakout sessions outside the large room might alleviate this issue. Finally, many participants experienced inconsistent WiFi access throughout Thinking Symposium sessions, impeding their participation in various activities. Participants agreed that addressing these issues with the venue would enhance the success of future regional sessions.

Planning Teams' Perspectives

Planning team members participated in an online questionnaire and a focus group interview to provide their perspectives on the Thinking Symposium model and impacts. Specifically, past and current Thinking Symposium planning team members responded to an online questionnaire in Spring 2017 to obtain their feedback on how the professional learning has impacted educator participants and provide suggestions for moving forward. The questionnaire consisted of five open-response items, one collecting demographic information, two pertaining to Thinking Symposium impacts, and two pertaining to suggestions moving forward. In addition to the online questionnaire, current planning team members participated in a focus group interview in June 2017 to stimulate collective reflection on the 2016-2017 implementation year and inform planning for the 2017-2018 Thinking Symposium with Sandra Herbst. (See Appendix for the planning team online questionnaire and focus group interview protocol.)

Planning team members who participated in this evaluation were also system facilitators in their respective DSBs (e.g., consultants or coaches) and had served on the planning team for an average of three years over the past five years of Thinking Symposium implementation (Fall 2012-Spring 2017). Planning team responses are organized by (a) impacts on educator participants, (b) challenges to participation, and (b) moving forward.

Impacts on Educator Participants

Planning team members shared various Thinking Symposium impacts on educator participants, including themselves. In particular, planning team members learned valuable strategies (e.g., using Talk Moves to promote classroom discourse, triangulating assessment data to support student learning, leveraging classroom video to enhance professional learning) that they could spread to educators in their respective DSBs through their roles as system facilitators. In addition, planning team members developed an appreciation for the value of collaboration among regional educators through their work organizing the Thinking Symposium. As one planning team member stated, "Working on the [planning] team gives each of us the opportunity to see a bigger picture and to connect with the whole region."

> *Having the opportunity to sit at the table with colleagues across my region is a rare and treasured opportunity that has helped me grow as a facilitator and an educator.*

Planning team members also identified impacts on Thinking Symposium educator

participants (i.e., classroom teachers, school support teachers, school administrators, system administrators, and educators in other roles). Most notably, planning team members observed educator participants implementing new strategies explored during Thinking Symposium sessions in their respective contexts of practice. This was particularly true for Talk Moves and Accountable Talk strategies explored during Lucy West sessions over four successive years (Fall 2012-Spring 2016). According to planning team members, these strategies have been sustained in practice and spread across schools and DSBs by educators who attended the Thinking Symposium with Lucy West. This spread occurred informally via discussions among colleagues and/or more formally through school-based professional learning (e.g., staff meetings, collaborative inquires) or district-wide professional learning initiatives. Planning team members also observed the impact of Talk Moves and Accountable Talk on students, with students across classrooms more frequently engaging in classroom discourse to make their thinking visible. In addition, planning team members indicated that educator participants' implementation of assessment strategies emphasized by Sandra Herbst (Fall 2016-Spring 2017) are emerging in classrooms and schools (e.g., triangulating observations, conversations, and products; co-constructing success criteria with students and colleagues) but will likely require additional time to "take root and spread" among regional educators.

Challenges to Participation

Planning team members articulated two key challenges to educators' participation in the Thinking Symposium: (a) engagement during sessions, and (b) implementation between sessions.

Engagement during sessions: Planning team members collaboratively planned the focus of Fall and Spring Thinking Symposium sessions with facilitators (i.e., Lucy West or Sandra Herbst), striving to ensure that learning aligned with Board Improvement Plans for Student Achievement (BIPSAs) and responded to the needs and priorities of participating educators. Despite this intentional planning, planning team members observed that some educator participants experienced challenges engaging in Thinking Symposium learning activities. First, some educators did not actively contribute to table group discussions or reflection activities. Second, some educator participants felt conflicted about being out of their schools or classrooms finding it challenging to fully engage in the Thinking Symposium learning because they were preoccupied with school-administration or classroom-based concerns. Finally, some educator participants found it difficult to fully engage in learning during Thinking Symposium sessions because the days were "jam-packed" with content, discussion, and reflection and, for some, the large conference room was distracting.

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Implementation between sessions: Planning team members noted that educator participants experienced challenges implementing new learning between Fall and Spring Thinking Symposium sessions. According to planning team members, most educator participants were eager to implement new learning in practice, but did not always have the adequate supports in place to do so. First, not all participating DSBs had time and funding allocated for planning team members to provide in-person support for their school teams' implementation of new strategies explored during Thinking Symposium sessions. Second, not all schools had structures in place to support implementation among school teams and to spread new learning to other school-based colleagues who did not attend the Thinking Symposium. Finally, while most educator participants were open to changing their practice, some were resistant and reverted to their old ways after regional sessions.

> *One challenge that educators face is in-between sessions. It is easy to get caught up in their day-to-day work and put some of their learning on the shelf, instead of keeping it at the forefront of their practice.*

Moving Forward

Planning team members offered three primary suggestions to maintain positive aspects of the Thinking Symposium and address challenges moving forward into 2017-2018: (a) clarify goals and commitments, (b) enhance face-to-face sessions, and (c) increase in-between support.

> *As educators, we need to think collectively in order to advance our profession and our practice.*

Clarify goals and commitments: Planning team members identified the need to make Thinking Symposium goals and time commitments explicit for educator participants prior to the initial Fall regional session. In particular, they explained that school teams need to be aware of the Thinking Symposium's desired outcomes and understand that participation entails a full-year commitment to attend face-to-face sessions in Fall and Spring as well as to implement new thinking and practices in their contexts of practice between face-to-face sessions. As such, planning team members suggested purposefully "front-loading" participation by communicating with educator participants in late summer/early September regarding desired Thinking Symposium outcomes, how these outcomes tie-in to their respective BIPSAs, and associated time commitments through the year. This would help educator participants "begin with the end in mind."

During the focus group interview, current planning team members articulated the overarching, desired outcomes for the Thinking Symposium:

- ➲ **Elevate professional thinking:** Educators will come together to think critically about practice, actively reflect on the profession, and collectively commit to trying new things in classrooms, schools, and districts.
- ➲ **Build repertoire of strategies:** Educators will explore and implement multifaceted strategies that transfer across grades and subjects to support all students' learning.
- ➲ **Build confidence as professionals**: Educators will develop confidence to openly explore new thinking and strategies with their school teams, and begin to "speak authentically and with authority that comes from being effective in practice."
- ➲ **Shift professional lens:** Educators will shift their ways of thinking and doing in in lasting ways, ultimately stating "I could never go back to what I was doing before."
- ➲ **Promote spread to others:** Educator participants will share new learning with colleagues in their schools and/or DSBs to promote the spread of new practices and build critical mass among educators in the EOSDN region.

And in particular, for the upcoming year with Sandra Herbst, the team articulated the following goal:

- ➲ **Develop assessment fluency:** Educators will (a) differentiate between assessment *for* and *as* learning in theory and practice, and (b) become fluent in the ongoing triangulation of observations, conversations, demonstrations, and products to construct evidence of student learning.

In addition to sharing desired outcomes of the Thinking Symposium with participants, planning team members proposed creating a full-year calendar to guide the in-between work of school teams and clarify the nature of this commitment. This calendar would outline a monthly learning focus, a means of connecting via technology (e.g., Twitter, Google, Adobe Connect), and relevant resources to explore. Some planning team members also suggested asking educator participants to commit to collecting student assessment data from one cycle of learning between the Fall and Spring sessions that could be shared with regional colleagues during the Spring session. In these ways, planning team members hoped to provide constructive support and "soft accountability" for educator participants between Fall and Spring sessions.

Enhance face-to-face sessions: With respect to regional face-to-face sessions, planning team members agreed that the Thinking Symposium should maintain two

sessions in Fall and Spring, inviting school teams that include classroom teachers, school support teachers, and school administrators. Planning team members asserted the importance of school administrator involvement to provide "soft-accountability" to implement new strategies in classrooms and "time and space for teachers to continue their learning between sessions." However, planning team members also recognized the need to be responsive to provincial trends as well as educator participants' needs and priorities. Consequently, they suggested three ways to enhance regional face-to-face sessions in Fall and Spring.

First, planning team members identified the need to provide more breakout sessions during regional sessions for collaboration among educators in like roles (e.g., elementary divisions, secondary subjects, school administrators). These role-specific breakout sessions would enable cross-DSB networking among educators and allow educators to explore new thinking outside of their school teams. For some educators, this may provide critical opportunities to share openly about wonderings and challenges they experience in their respective contexts of practice. Despite the anticipated benefits of like-role breakout sessions, some planning team members cautioned about the need to balance like-role breakouts with school team planning time, to ensure that desired Thinking Symposium outcomes are achieved.

Second, planning team members suggested providing educators time to create a concrete tool or plan during the Fall session that they could readily implement in their context of practice between Fall and Spring sessions. These tools or plans could be developed during like-role breakout sessions or school planning time and would ideally empower educators to implement new learning within their contexts of practice. Moreover, co-creating explicit tools or plans during the Fall session would enable greater depth during the Spring session, allowing the Thinking Symposium facilitator to build Spring learning content around educators' experiences with implementation of tools or plans between sessions.

Third, planning team members noticed that many educator participants struggled to co-create success criteria during face-to-face sessions, as well as between sessions. Accordingly, they discussed various ways to scaffold the process of co-creating success criteria to increase educator participants' confidence and capacity to co-create success criteria with colleagues and students. In particular, planning team members suggested: (a) debunking the myth that success criteria should be created for each curriculum expectation, (b) providing educators with examples of quality success criteria, (c) providing educators with guiding questions to help them think through the *process* of creating success criteria, (d) giving educators time to co-construct success criteria in like-role breakouts or school teams, (e) focusing on creating success criteria for more tangible concepts (e.g., working collaboratively) versus abstract concepts

(e.g., reflection), and (f) providing educators with scripts of Sandra Herbst's classroom videos in which she guides educators and/or students in the co-construction of success criteria.

Increase in-between support: In addition to refining face-to-face regional sessions, planning team members identified the need to increase in-between support for educator participants in order to achieve desired Thinking Symposium outcomes. While they agreed that the school administrator plays a key role in supporting in-between learning and implementation, planning team members recognized the importance of structures and processes that would facilitate this administrator support. As such, planning team members offered two primary suggestions.

School administrators need to keep learning momentum going in-between sessions, but the planning team needs to support their work.

First, planning team members suggested using technology to support regularly scheduled reconnections with Thinking Symposium participants throughout the school year. For example, a planned Twitter chat could be used to re-connect with educator participants in October, posing the question "What have you taken back to your classroom?" or "How did you start?" In addition, Adobe Connect mini-meetings could be planned within DSBs or across DSBs to address questions that emerge as educators explore the implementation of new strategies. Moreover, each DSB's planning team member could connect with school teams via email mid-year to ask "How's it going?" and elucidate additional supports needed in each context to shift thinking and practice. Planning team members also noted that technology could be leveraged within DSBs to spread Thinking Symposium learning to educators who did not attend face-to-face regional sessions.

Second, planning team members suggested selecting a lead educator for each Thinking Symposium school team (not the school administrator) to serve as their primary contact throughout the year. Planning team members would connect regularly with school leads to remind them about scheduled reconnections and offer individualized support as appropriate and feasible. School leads would then communicate this information to their teams and, ideally, reach out to planning team members for additional guidance as needed. Selecting a lead for each team might enhance teacher leadership within schools and promote collaboration among Thinking Symposium participants between Fall and Spring sessions.

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Facilitators' Perspectives

The Thinking Symposium facilitators, Lucy West and Sandra Herbst, responded to an online questionnaire in Spring 2017 to obtain their perspectives on how the professional learning has impacted educator participants and obtain suggestions for moving forward. The facilitator questionnaire consisted of four open-response items, two pertaining to impacts two pertaining to suggestions moving forward. (See Appendix for the facilitator questionnaire.) Facilitator responses are organized by (a) impacts on educator participants, and (b) moving forward.

Impacts on Educator Participants

Both facilitators indicated that educator participants shared with them how they have implemented new strategies explored during Thinking Symposium sessions in classrooms. Specifically, facilitators received emails from educator participants weeks and months after face-to-face sessions, sharing evidence of how they put new thinking and strategies into practice. This evidence included descriptions of what teachers did along with images of students at work. According to one facilitator, "Because this [sharing] is unsolicited, I believe it to be the most authentic feedback." Facilitators also received feedback from participants during face-to-face sessions (in person or via Today's Meet) regarding how much they were learning and what they were trying in their classrooms.

Moving Forward

Despite positive impacts of the Thinking Symposium on educators' thinking and practice, one facilitator noted that it can be difficult to facilitate the learning of 350 K-12 educators "at varying stages of development and [teaching] in different content areas." The other facilitator added, "It is difficult for some participants to generalize from examples that are not of their age level students, content area, or population." Both facilitators suggested incorporating differentiated breakout sessions moving forward, targeting educators in different roles (e.g., classroom teacher, school administrator, system coaches) and addressing educators' varied needs (e.g., grade- or subject-specific topics) in order to maximize desired impacts on educator participants.

4. Summary and Key Considerations

The EOSDN Thinking Symposium is a unique professional learning opportunity that provides teams of educators from nine regional district school boards (DSBs) the opportunity to explore and think deeply about a precise area of professional practice over a sustained period. This professional learning opportunity is designed collaboratively by the EOSDN planning team (i.e., the EOSDN Director, the EOSDN Manager, and one representative from each of the nine DSBs in the network) to address network goals and identified needs and interests of regional educators. Since inception, relevant external facilitators have supported Thinking Symposium learning: Lucy West, a content coach, emphasized fostering classroom discourse through *Talk Moves* (Fall 2012-Spring 2016), and Sandra Herbst, an educational consultant, is currently providing support focused on assessment, feedback, and coaching (Fall 2016-present).

The Thinking Symposium entails four full-day, face-to-face regional sessions during each school year—two consecutive full-day sessions in Fall and two consecutive full-day sessions in Spring. School teams of educators (i.e., classroom teachers, school support teachers, school administrators) are invited to participate by system administrators in their DSBs. Planning team members from each DSB support their respective school teams in advance of and between face-to-face regional sessions through email communication, web-based resources and, when possible, school-embedded support.

The EOSDN engaged in a systematic evaluation of the Thinking Symposium model at the end of the 2016-2017 academic year to elucidate impacts over the past five years of implementation (Fall 2012-Spring 2017) and inform next steps for the upcoming year and beyond. In Spring 2017, data were collected from key stakeholders including educator participants (2012-2017), planning team members (past and current), and facilitators (i.e., Lucy West and Sandra Herbst). The evaluation has explored the following questions:

1. How is the current Thinking Symposium model supporting the learning needs and interests of participants and the EOSDN?
2. How has the Thinking Symposium impacted the learning and practice of participants and the EOSDN?

Summary of Key Findings

Findings from this evaluation of the EOSDN Thinking Symposium have demonstrated a clear valuing of the professional learning opportunity by all stakeholders – educator participants, planning team members, and facilitators – and elucidated specific impacts on educator participants' thinking and practice. Key findings are summarized below in relation to each evaluation focus: (a) Thinking Symposium model, and (b) Thinking Symposium impacts.

Thinking Symposium Model

A primary purpose of this evaluation was to elucidate how the EOSDN Thinking Symposium model is supporting educator participants' learning. Driving data collection and analysis was the question: *How is the current Thinking Symposium model supporting the learning needs and interests of participants and the EOSDN?*

Evaluation findings provide overwhelming evidence that educator participants (i.e., classroom teachers, school support teachers, school administrators, system facilitators, system administrators, and educators in other roles) valued the Thinking Symposium model as a unique professional learning opportunity. Specifically, over 95 percent of educator participants who responded to the evaluation survey agreed or strongly agreed that the Thinking Symposium provided a valuable opportunity to think about and discuss professional practice with colleagues and educators across the region. Moreover, educator participants elaborated three valued aspects of the Thinking Symposium model:

1. Face-to-face collaboration and networking

Educator participants appreciated that the Thinking Symposium provided opportunities to engage in sustained, face-to-face collaboration and networking at regional sessions. They particularly valued having uninterrupted time with their school teams, away from daily routines, to reflect on practice, explore new ideas and strategies, and collaboratively plan next steps in implementation. In addition, educator participants valued opportunities to network with colleagues across DSBs, allowing them to explore regional perspectives and learn what others were doing in their contexts of practice.

2. Attending multiple sessions over time

Educator participants explained that the Thinking Symposium differentiated itself from other professional learning models by providing the opportunity to attend multiple sessions over time within a school year – two consecutive full-day sessions in Fall and two consecutive full-day sessions in Spring. According to educator participants, this professional learning model promoted depth and continuity in their learning and allowed them to revisit and build on ideas and strategies after experimenting with implementation between Fall and Spring sessions.

3. Expert facilitation and support

Educator participants highlighted the importance of the expert facilitation and support provided by Lucy West and Sandra Herbst at regional face-to-face sessions. Both facilitators provided content rooted in current pedagogy and research that could be implemented in a variety of contexts (e.g., grades or subjects) and modelled practical tools and strategies that could be readily implemented within their classrooms and schools. Educator participants also appreciated that facilitators were responsive to their learning needs and priorities, adapting content "on the fly" during regional sessions and, in a few cases, responding to email questions between regional sessions to inform implementation.

Thinking Symposium Impacts

In addition to elucidating how educator participants value the Thinking Symposium as a professional learning model, this evaluation also explored the impact of the EOSDN Thinking Symposium on educator participants. Driving data collection and analysis related to impact was the question: *How has the Thinking Symposium impacted the learning and practice of participants and the EOSDN?*

It is evident from evaluation data that the Thinking Symposium has positively impacted the thinking and practice of educator participants. With respect to key strategies emphasized by Lucy West and Sandra Herbst, a majority of classroom teachers reported that they commonly or very commonly use these strategies. Furthermore, educator participants in other roles (e.g., school support teachers, school administrators, system facilitators, and system administrators), confirmed that they are observing these practices in classrooms across the region. Impacts of the Thinking Symposium on educator participants are summarized in the following three key findings:

1. Shifting professional thinking through face-to-face collaboration and networking with regional colleagues

The Thinking Symposium provided educator participants with opportunities to rethink their practice with their school teams and regional colleagues during face-to-face regional sessions in Fall and Spring. This resulted in mindset shifts and *ah-ha* moments among educator participants with respect to classroom discourse (e.g., "The person doing the talking is doing the learning.") and assessment ("Evidence is not just products. We need to document more observations and conversations to build a more complete picture of students' learning."). In particular, educators began to recognize the importance of engaging students in classroom discourse and assessment processes to enhance their learning experiences and outcomes.

2. Shifting professional practice with actionable strategies that transfer across grades and subjects

The Thinking Symposium provided educator participants with actionable strategies to enhance classroom discourse and approaches to assessment, as well as the inspiration to implement these new strategies in practice. As a result, classroom teachers and educators who support classroom teachers (i.e., school support teachers, school administrators, system facilitators, system administrators, and educators in other roles) reported the implementation of these new strategies in classrooms across various grades and subjects, positively shifting classroom cultures to align with contemporary educational research and policy. Most notably, educator participants reported that the Thinking Symposium empowered them to slow down the pace of learning in order to (a) allow for classroom discourse, (b) triangulate multiple sources of student assessment data (i.e., observations, conversations, demonstrations, and products) to construct evidence of student learning, and (c) leverage feedback from both teachers and students to move learning forward.

3. Spreading new professional thinking and practice to educators across regional contexts

The Thinking Symposium provided educator participants with a common language and tangible strategies that could be shared with colleagues who did not participate in Thinking Symposium sessions. This enabled spread of key practices related to classroom discourse and assessment among educators in schools and DSBs across the EOSDN region. Spread occurred informally via discussions among colleagues and/or more formally through school-based professional learning (e.g., staff meetings, collaborative inquires) or district-wide professional learning initiatives. This was especially true for Talk Moves emphasized during Lucy West sessions (Fall 2012-

Spring 2016), which were commonly used or observed across classrooms in the EOSND region, with students in these classrooms more frequently engaging in classroom discourse to make their thinking visible. Assessment strategies emphasized by Sandra Herbst (Fall 2016-Spring 2017) are emerging in classrooms and schools (e.g., triangulating observations, conversations, and products; co-constructing success criteria with students and colleagues) but will likely require additional time to "take root and spread" among regional educators.

Key Considerations Moving Forward

It is evident from the data collected via this evaluation that the Thinking Symposium is a valuable professional learning opportunity that benefits educator participants and is impacting practice in classrooms, schools, and districts across the region. To further enhance the Thinking Symposium model and impacts, stakeholders offered three key considerations for moving forward.

Key Consideration 1: Clarify Thinking Symposium Goals and Commitments for Educator Participants in Advance

Thinking Symposium impacts might be further enhanced if educator participants are systematically made aware that participation entails a full-year commitment to attend face-to-face sessions in Fall and Spring, as well as to implement new thinking and practices in their contexts of practice between sessions. To this end, planning team members might communicate with all educator participants via email prior to the first Fall regional session in order to: (a) articulate desired Thinking Symposium outcomes, and (b) share a full-year calendar that guides the ongoing work of Thinking Symposium school teams throughout the school year.

Key Consideration 2: Enhance Face-to-Face Regional Sessions through Scaffolded Breakout Sessions for Educators

Regional Thinking Symposium sessions might be enhanced by incorporating breakout sessions for educators in like roles and additional time for school team breakout sessions. Introducing breakout sessions for educators in like roles (e.g., elementary divisions, secondary subjects, and school administrators) would enable cross-DSB networking among educators and allow educators to explore new thinking outside their school teams and/or create tools with colleagues who understand their specific roles and responsibilities. Additional breakout sessions for school teams would provide valuable time for teams to create concrete plans during the Fall session that could be

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implemented between Fall and Spring sessions, then revisited in the Spring. To maximize the effectiveness of these breakout sessions, planning team members and facilitators might scaffold the learning, providing educators with quality exemplars and explicit processes to guide their collaborative work.

Key Consideration 3:   Increase In-Between Support for Educator Participants' Implementation of New Strategies

Educator participants' implementation of Thinking Symposium learning between Fall and Spring sessions might be enhanced through targeted support. Planning team members could provide this support by: (a) leveraging technology (e.g., Twitter, Google, Adobe Connect, e-mail) to promote ongoing learning and communication among school teams throughout the school year; (b) designating a lead for each school team (not the school administrator) to facilitate communication and build relationships with school teams; (c) sharing professional resources (e.g., notes or PowerPoints from regional sessions, handouts with suggested strategies, videos that demonstrate classroom implementation) to inform educator participants' implementation; and/or (d) providing school-embedded support of school teams' learning and implementation, as possible. In addition, school administrators might provide release time for their teams to engage in ongoing collaboration and/or spread new learning to school-based colleagues not officially involved in the Thinking Symposium.

5. Appendix
Data Collection Protocols and Ethics Documents

Online Survey for Educator Participants
(Lucy West Sessions: Fall 2012-Spring 2016)

EOSDN THINKING SYMPOSIUM FEEDBACK: LUCY WEST SESSIONS
1. PLEASE INDICATE YOUR CURRENT ROLE.

- ○ Classroom teacher
- ○ School support teacher
- ○ School administrator
- ○ System facilitator (e.g., consultant, coach, coordinator)
- ○ System administrator
- ○ Other, please specify... _____

2. IN TOTAL, HOW MANY DAYS DID YOU ATTEND THE THINKING SYMPOSIUM WITH LUCY WEST?

- ○ 1-4
- ○ 5-8
- ○ 9-12
- ○ 13-16

PLEASE INDICATE THE EXTENT TO WHICH YOU AGREE WITH EACH STATEMENT.

3. THE THINKING SYMPOSIUM PROVIDED ME WITH A VALUABLE OPPORTUNITY TO THINK ABOUT MY PRACTICE AS AN EDUCATOR.

- ○ Strongly agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Neutral
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Strongly disagree

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4. THE THINKING SYMPOSIUM PROVIDED ME WITH A VALUABLE OPPORTUNITY TO DISCUSS MY PRACTICE WITH COLLEAGUES AND OTHER EDUCATORS.

○ Strongly agree

○ Agree

○ Neutral

○ Disagree

○ Strongly disagree

LUCY WEST DESCRIBED AND DEMONSTRATED USING TALK MOVES TO STIMULATE DIALOGUE IN THE CLASSROOM.

[NOTE: BASED ON RESPONSES TO QUESTION 1, CLASSROOM TEACHERS WILL RECEIVE QUESTION 5A. ALL OTHER EDUCATORS WILL RECEIVE QUESTION 5B.]

5A. PLEASE INDICATE THE EXTENT TO WHICH YOU USE THE FOLLOWING TALK MOVES IN YOUR PRACTICE. [NOTE: FOR CLASSROOM TEACHERS]

	Very Commonly Use	Commonly Use	Use Sometimes	Rarely Use	Do Not Use
Turn and Talk	○	○	○	○	○
Listen and Restate Idea	○	○	○	○	○
Check for Understanding – Paraphrase/Probe an Idea	○	○	○	○	○
Slow Down – Allow Positive Struggle/Scaffold to Understanding	○	○	○	○	○
Take a Stand about an Idea (e.g., agree/disagree/not sure; thumbs up/down/sideways)	○	○	○	○	○
Infuse Academic Language (e.g., make idea visible on blackboard; apply terminology to idea)	○	○	○	○	○

5B. PLEASE INDICATE HOW OFTEN YOU OBSERVE THE FOLLOWING TALK MOVES IN CLASSROOMS. [NOTE: FOR NON-CLASSROOM TEACHERS]

	Very Commonly Observe	Commonly Observe	Observe Sometimes	Rarely Observe	Have Not Observed
Turn and Talk	○	○	○	○	○
Listen and Restate Idea	○	○	○	○	○
Check for Understanding – Paraphrase/Probe an Idea	○	○	○	○	○
Slow Down – Allow Positive Struggle/Scaffold to Understanding	○	○	○	○	○
Take a Stand about an Idea (e.g., agree/disagree/not sure; thumbs up/down/sideways)	○	○	○	○	○
Infuse Academic Language (e.g., make idea visible on blackboard; apply terminology to idea)	○	○	○	○	○

6. PLEASE SHARE A SPECIFIC EXAMPLE OF HOW THE THINKING SYMPOSIUM HAS IMPACTED YOUR THINKING OR PRACTICE.

7. PLEASE DESCRIBE THE MOST LASTING IMPACT THAT PARTICIPATION IN THE THINKING SYMPOSIUM HAS HAD ON YOU AS AN EDUCATOR.

8. A VALUABLE ASPECT OF THE THINKING SYMPOSIUM IS:

[ ]

9. WHAT ADDITIONAL ADVICE MIGHT YOU GIVE TO THINKING SYMPOSIUM ORGANIZERS TO BETTER MEET THE NEEDS OF PARTICIPATING EDUCATORS?

[ ]

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND FEEDBACK!

EOSDN THINKING SYMPOSIUM FEEDBACK: SANDRA HERBST SESSIONS
1. PLEASE INDICATE YOUR CURRENT ROLE.

○ Classroom teacher

○ School support teacher

○ School administrator

○ System facilitator (e.g., consultant, coach, coordinator)

○ System administrator

○ Other, please specify... _____

2. WHICH DATES DID YOU ATTEND THE THINKING SYMPOSIUM WITH SANDRA HERBST? (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY.)

☐ September 28, 2016

☐ September 29, 2016

☐ April 19, 2017

☐ April 20, 2017

PLEASE INDICATE THE EXTENT TO WHICH YOU AGREE WITH EACH STATEMENT.

3. THE THINKING SYMPOSIUM PROVIDED ME WITH A VALUABLE OPPORTUNITY TO THINK ABOUT MY PRACTICE AS AN EDUCATOR.

○ Strongly agree

○ Agree

○ Neutral

○ Disagree

○ Strongly disagree

4. THE THINKING SYMPOSIUM PROVIDED ME WITH A VALUABLE OPPORTUNITY TO DISCUSS MY PRACTICE WITH COLLEAGUES AND OTHER EDUCATORS.

○ Strongly agree

○ Agree

○ Neutral

○ Disagree

○ Strongly disagree

SANDRA HERBST DESCRIBED AND DEMONSTRATED A NUMBER OF ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES INTENDED TO SUPPORT STUDENT'S LEARNING.

[NOTE: BASED ON RESPONSES TO QUESTION 1, CLASSROOM TEACHERS WILL RECEIVE QUESTION 5A. ALL OTHER EDUCATORS WILL RECEIVE QUESTION 5B.]

5A. PLEASE INDICATE THE EXTENT TO WHICH YOU USE THE FOLLOWING STRATEGIES IN YOUR PRACTICE. [NOTE: FOR CLASSROOM TEACHERS]

	Very Commonly Use	Commonly Use	Use Sometimes	Rarely Use	Do Not Use
Developing learning goals based in curriculum documents.	○	○	○	○	○
Co-constructing success criteria in relation to learning goals with colleagues.	○	○	○	○	○
Co-constructing success criteria in relation to learning goals with students.	○	○	○	○	○
Differentiating student assessments to meeting individual learning needs.	○	○	○	○	○
Triangulating observations, conversations, and products	○	○	○	○	○

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Providing students with opportunities to receive and use feedback from teachers, peers, and self to inform their next steps.

| | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

5B. PLEASE INDICATE HOW OFTEN YOU OBSERVE THE FOLLOWING STRATEGIES IN CLASSROOMS. [NOTE: FOR NON-CLASSROOM TEACHERS]

	Very Commonly Observe	Commonly Observe	Observe Sometimes	Rarely Observe	Have Not Observed
Developing learning goals based in curriculum documents.	○	○	○	○	○
Co-constructing success criteria in relation to learning goals with colleagues.	○	○	○	○	○
Co-constructing success criteria in relation to learning goals with students.	○	○	○	○	○
Differentiating student assessments to meeting individual learning needs.	○	○	○	○	○
Triangulating observations, conversations, and products	○	○	○	○	○
Providing students with opportunities to receive and use feedback from	○	○	○	○	○

teachers, peers, and
self to inform their
next steps.

6. PLEASE SHARE A SPECIFIC EXAMPLE OF HOW THE THINKING SYMPOSIUM HAS IMPACTED YOUR THINKING OR PRACTICE.

7. PLEASE DESCRIBE THE MOST LASTNG IMPACT THAT PARTICIPATION IN THE THINKING SYMPOSIUM HAS HAD ON YOU AS AN EDUCATOR.

8. A VALUABLE ASPECT OF THE THINKING SYMPOSIUM IS:

9. WHAT ADDITIONAL ADVICE MIGHT YOU GIVE TO THINKING SYMPOSIUM ORGANIZERS TO BETTER MEET THE NEEDS OF PARTICIPATING EDUCATORS?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND FEEDBACK!

For Thinking Symposium Planning Team Members (past and present, N = 30)

1. Please describe briefly your involvement in the EOSDN Thinking Symposium.
(e.g., past and present level of involvement; number of days attended; various roles served—
attendee, planning team, etc.)

2. How has your involvement in the Thinking Symposium impacted your thinking about and
approach to professional learning for educators?

3. What specific evidence do you have that the Thinking Symposium contributed to growth in
educators' thinking and practice?

4. Thinking about educators' participation in the Thinking Symposium, describe some of the
challenges and opportunities you:
        a. encountered in your role [on the planning team]
        b. observed among participating educators

5. Moving forward, how might the EOSDN refine the Thinking Symposium design to better meet
the needs of educators involved? (probes: professional learning model, content, resources)

For Thinking Symposium Facilitators (Lucy West, Sandra Herbst)

1. How has your involvement in the EOSDN Thinking Symposium impacted your thinking about and approach to professional learning for educators?

2. What evidence do you have that the EOSDN Thinking Symposium contributed to growth in educators' thinking and practice?

3. Thinking about educators' participation in the Thinking Symposium, describe some of the challenges and opportunities you:
      a. encountered in your role as a facilitator
      b. observed among participating educators

4. Moving forward, how might the EOSDN refine the Thinking Symposium to better meet the needs of educators involved?

Focus Group Interview Protocol for Planning Team

For Current Thinking Symposium Planning Team Members (n = 11)

Thinking about the current TS Model:
1. What are key elements of the current TS model that should be maintained moving forward?

2. What are critical changes to the TS model that should be enacted in order to better meet the needs of educator participants next year?

Thinking about desired impacts of the TS:
1. Moving forward, what are the key impacts you hope the TS will have on educator participants next year?

2. How might you plan for learning opportunities that enhance these impacts on educator participants in the upcoming year?

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