JOAN POWELL: To me, it’s not about teaching, any more. It’s about learning. We’ve got some very bright principals and teachers coming together with board people and they’re exploring questions. They’re saying: OK, I heard this is happening over there and why is that happening and they’ll watch videos and they’ll start questioning: Does that make sense in our context?

PETER PROCHILO: So collaboration has been key here for staff and students. We start with an inquiry stance, so students as young as three and four years old and early learning classrooms come with questions. And when we explore those questions with staff, we determine the direction of where the inquiry takes us.

JOAN POWELL: It’s all about what questions are you asking. What kinds of thinking are you doing? What are you trying to accomplish with your kids? What are the real goals in education for our students?

BARRY QUARRELL: It’s just creating a different environment for the students in the classroom. When I happened to be in classrooms years and years ago, I didn’t get to see that. So I really do see a lot of changes in our school based on technology.

CYNTHIA GORDON: Children have changed. Times have changed. It’s not the way it used to be and we need to move forward with it.

ADA COSTANZO: Students learn differently and I think just taking a test doesn’t meet their needs. I think we have to provide them with multiple opportunities to problem solve.

CYNTHIA GORDON: It is a shift in perception for teachers that it doesn’t necessarily have to be all about the marks. It’s about where your students get at the end point and providing feedback for them to learn - not necessarily eight out of ten.
BARRY QUARRELL: I can see it. It's just in the expressions on their faces that they really love the ideas of technology in the classroom and what they can do with the technology. That's the learning of the 21st Century and I get to see that. I know what the kids want. The task that I have is how the teachers can embrace that, so I'm going to do anything I can to support the teachers in that.

PETER PROCHILO: We have a group of teachers specifically at the school, that have embraced the technology and the new 21st Century learning and they've become mentors within the school and so it's providing opportunities for them to explore technology effectively, providing them the tools they need to change- to change the way they approach students and they approach their own learning and student learning.

JOAN POWELL: You try to create conditions where leaders feel that they will be supported by taking risks. They'll be encouraged to try new things by allowing them the opportunity to share what they are doing with others within our own board, across the Province, over the world.

PAUL ROZON: Generally what I like doing, I like giving real world problems. I always make it open-ended and I put a portion of their mark where they have to sort of surprise me. So, they have to think outside the box, and show me something I haven't seen before or do something different than the other students haven't done.

STUDENT: Mr. Rozon, he challenges you to do something that's out of the box, to do something that's not normal to learn something. Where say, like in math class, you learn a formula, you do the formula and that's it. Wherein this class, Mr. Rozon teaches you something and then you do that and you build off of it, which I think is really good.

KY NOTT: When we come up against a problem in the real world, it’s not something we’ve seen fifty times and know how to do it. So teaching them “how to,” teaching them the skills that they need to do that and focus in on problem solving, making connections and, again, just bigger ideas.

STUDENT: Our teacher gave us an assignment, basically as a final project. So we decided for us we wanted to make a game, except the only problem with that is our teacher has never used it and doesn’t really know about it either, so we were relatively on our own. We had to learn everything about it ourselves.

STUDENT: And we couldn’t really figure it out at the beginning, so we tried to go on the internet. We asked about other developers on how to combine them and we were able to solve the problem on our own and it was a great experience.

STUDENT: Even if we don’t completely finish it as far as if they want for our project, I’d probably like to kind of work on it afterward and, maybe even, get it on the App Store.

PAUL ROZON: I’m willing to accept the challenge that I might not know the answers, but we’ll figure it out together.
TEACHER: The teachers aren’t necessarily teaching step one, steps two, step three. We’re teaching problem solving and how you can get there on your own.

STUDENT: There are a lot of things that you have to do that you aren’t always going to be so prepared for and I guess that’s kind of like games or whatever, and so you do it, you solve the problem. And not only does that give you more experience, it gives more knowledge on how to tackle the next problem. Because, you know, you learn something, you’re more prepared for the next step. I think also it just kind of gives you a confidence boost, makes you feel more prepared.

STUDENT: And I think this is a great way to combine the knowledge I’ve learned from school and to benefit the society.

JOAN POWELL: So they start on that journey of directing their own learning, based on what their interests are, what their needs are, what their capabilities are, and just what the fun they want to have in the learning itself. So, I think more than ever before in history, we’re just at that place where not only can we make it personal we have an obligation to do that.

PETER PROCHILO: And that’s how real learning should happen. We should be able to connect instantly with professionals and individuals that will inspire our students and inspire our teaching staff as well.

STUDENT: I’ve built a website that now sells my artwork…

JOAN POWELL: Part of what we’re talking about is how do we make learning really authentic for kids, real for kids and help them understand how they’re connected to the world around them. And once they understand their connection, what are they going to do about it? What are we going to do because we can now? And even as an adult, what are we preparing these kids to do?

PAUL ROZON: If they have the confidence and the ability to solve these kind of problems on their own and sort of teach themselves and use the internet and use their peers and use online communities, and be creative and think outside the box, then, you know it’s just amazing from a personal point of view and even for society that you can have individuals solving these crazy problems. But, you know, you don’t have to have someone tell them this is what you do.

PETER PROCHILO: Establishing the vision is an easy thing. We can see it. We can name it. We can say it and we can try to do it. The hard part is keeping up with the change, right, and staying - not necessarily - staying ahead, but staying comfortable with my own learning as a leader and then inspiring others within my school, and within my school community-my greater school community-to learn, to keep learning on their own.
JOAN POWELL: We have the tools now to really help them do that, each and every one of them. And I don't think it makes teaching more difficult. I think it makes it more exciting and certainly more meaningful. And so, every one of those students graduating from our schools feeling that “Yah, I really accomplished something here, but I'm only on the doorstep now of going out and accomplishing something in the world”.

[MUSIC]

TEXT ON SCREEN: THUNDER BAY CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD