

**Aboriginal Student Achievement Initiative
Dehcho Region**

**Minister's and Community Education Forums
Fort Simpson
January 5-7, 2011**

The Minister's Forum - January 5-6, 2011

The Minister of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) and the Dehcho Divisional Education Council (DDEC) brought together more than 60 leaders, elders, youth, and educators from throughout the Dehcho to discuss ways to improve the achievement of Aboriginal students. All participants were grateful for this forum because Dehcho people have been looking forward to a regional discussion on educational for several years.

The Leaders' Words

Grand Chief Sam Gargan explained that in the past, the Dene in the Dehcho grew up to be proud and independent. For decades, he has observed a diminishing sense of pride amongst the people. Education contributes to this because schools continue to emphasize that 'fitting' in is more important than carrying on Dene traditions and language. He disagrees with this emphasis.

The 1982 *Tradition and Change* report on education in the NWT recommended that First Nations' languages be used in the school. That government report created false hopes and expectations because despite efforts to get Dene languages into the school, "the schools work on their own terms." Schools continue to "expect community members to go to the school but the school doesn't go to the community." Grand Chief Gargan identified a main challenge as reversing past trends and returning power to First Nations. This is the challenge to consider in discussions about Aboriginal student achievement.

Kevin Menicoche, Nahendeh MLA, referred to the Auditor General's report on education. He said that he wants to see more youth graduating with strong skills and knowledge "who are able to run our own nation." He applauded efforts to strengthen Dene language use, particularly the full day K- 3 immersion program in Fort Providence. "People who learn their own and a second language are more confident and have a strong sense of identity." Dene language should be a focus of the education system. He said that "immersion programs are needed but are likely a long way off. It is easy to blame loss of language on what happened in the past. It is much harder to take responsibility for it today and in the future but that is what will make the difference for young people in the Dehcho."

Chief Jim Antoine, Liidli Kue First Nation, spoke about the impacts of residential school on culture and language. It is important that everyone work together to address these impacts and ensure that students do well in school. This is a challenge in Fort Simpson.

To speak from the heart, Chief Antoine prefers to use his Dene language. When he was first elected chief in 1974, elders spoke about the children being shipped off to residential school. Elders thought that education was not good because it took the culture and language away. "We all want the best for our children but our children are

not finishing school and do not have strong culture and language skills." As Dene, we ask "are we going to school to be like a white person or to be a strong Dene?" "We are not white people. We are Dene from the land." Chief Antoine said that we need to teach youth to be strong Dene people. "We can't turn into white people. Dene values and perspectives have to be part of the school system. We have been talking about it for years. The French do it. Why can't we have Dene language immersion? Our language is the basis of our culture. At last year's treaty conference, elders said that we have to 'walk with our culture' so we have to have our language. We need to follow the trail of our culture. Our elders put us on that trail to hang onto the land, our culture, and language. We need to stay on our own trail and not follow someone else's trail. This means that if we lose something we can go back and find it. But if we sit beside the trail too long or go down another trail, we can lose our way. The Dene have a lot to contribute to Canada and to the north. We can make these contributions if our culture and language are respected."

Martina Norwegian, Dehcho DEC Chair, said that she always tries to use the language so that she can live well in two worlds. To be strong like two people, we all need to keep using the language even though fewer people are using it. "People who use Dene can speak from the heart. English is different." Each of us needs to know about, and develop a strong sense of identity to be successful. We need to know about our personal power. Young women are very powerful because they are the givers of life.

Ms. Norwegian has been chair of the DDEC for the past three years. The Dehcho DEC has a strategic plan and every school has a plan. These plans can be improved to make Aboriginal student achievement happen. But "it is not just the schools that have a responsibility for Aboriginal student achievement. Each of us is responsible."

Hayden Trenholm, policy advisor to Senator Nick Sibbeston, spoke on his behalf. He said that the Senator has always been a champion of education and language. He mentioned that a national study on education seeks to address gaps in achievement outcomes for Aboriginal and other students. This report is due in the spring of 2011. Culture and language are critical pieces of the solution to Aboriginal student achievement. Senator Sibbeston has conducted some research into immersion programs and found that these programs are making a difference.

Chief Fred Tesou of Nahanni Butte expressed his appreciation for this forum and the recognition given to language.

Chief Joachim Bonnetrouge of Fort Providence, said that it is an honour to participate in these important discussions. He recognized the challenges and the strengths of the work being done to support Aboriginal student achievement. While it is a significant challenge, "it is necessary to bring the teachings of the elders into today's world." Everyone has this responsibility even though many people in the Dehcho endure incredible struggles every day just to get through the day.

Chief Isadore Simon of Jean Marie River stressed the need to work together for the youth and future generations. "We all need to support youth so they are prepared and able to cope with the 'hard world out there'." We need to hold onto our language and pass it on to young people.

Chief Tim Lennie of Wrigley said that he and other leaders always have to watch the way they step. Leaders have to be aware of everyone's agenda and figure out how to get involved and be helpful. Education is very important. It is important that leaders get involved. He worries that standardized approaches cause important things to get lost. He said the language and distinct dialects are being lost and standardization contributes to this loss. Parents have to take back responsibility for their children and their education but this is an education in itself. Parents need to be educated to take back responsibility. To help both parents and their children, it is important to listen to the people.

Aboriginal Student Achievement (ASA) Priorities

The discussion paper recommended four priorities for eliminating the achievement gap between Aboriginal and other students.

1. Early Childhood and Childcare:

- Quality school-based early childhood and childcare that reflects the local community and culture and ensures competitive staff wages and benefits.
- Full day compulsory kindergarten for all five year olds and optional junior kindergarten for four year olds.
- Help for parents to learn essential parenting skills.
- Partnering with NWT Health and Social Services for early childhood assessments, interventions, and special needs supports.

2. Student and Family Support:

- Positive student-home-school relationships built through counselling, teacher orientations, interagency training and involvement, and community support.
- In-school, alternative, and workplace programs and Aurora College-school and community partnerships to help youth complete their education.
- Resources and programs for successful transitions and to overcome barriers to success such as homework, tutoring, and library programs.

3. Aboriginal Language Curriculum and Resource Development:

- An Aboriginal language curriculum and resources in place by 2013.
- Stronger Aurora College Aboriginal language instructors' program with relationships with the Teacher Education Program (TEP), Teaching and Learning Centres (TLCs), mentors, and community members.

4. Literacy:

- More coordination and collaboration, literacy resource centres, and expanded literacy initiatives to improve literacy skills.

Participants at the Dehcho Minister's Forum discussed these four priorities.

1. Early Childhood and Child Care

Success in the early years

Forum participants said that children need their families to meet their physical, social, emotional, and spiritual needs in order to have success in the early years. Young children need healthy food, loving care, a healthy safe environment, active interaction with family members, stimulating play, and good role models. The family needs to help the child develop language and learn new things.

Early childhood programs should be like a healthy family environment. These programs need to offer caring, safe, supportive, stimulating, and healthy learning and play environments. They need to teach the local language and culture. They should work from early childhood research and a framework based on Aboriginal perspectives/ traditional knowledge rather than preparing young children for Western-style kindergarten. “We need to change head start programs to prepare children for an Aboriginal language and culture curriculum in the schools.” “We need to shift the thinking of administrators/ leadership.”

To be successful in their development during their early years, forum participants said that young children need their communities to advocate for stable environments, good influences, and role models who have goals and positive attitudes. Communities need to encourage local people to work as educators and encourage parents to follow traditional teaching methods. Communities need to have facilities and resources to support childcare, preschool, and other learning and play programs/ activities for younger children.

Early childhood programs

Forum participants said that programming for early childhood varies throughout the Dehcho. In Fort Simpson, Open Doors and the Toy Lending Library are well used but an early childhood program is needed. In Fort Providence, the Aboriginal Head Start program operates but does not have appropriately skilled staff to teach Dene culture and language. They said that the Dene Cultural Institute’s (DCI) education curriculum which takes a holistic view would be a good model for the Aboriginal Head Start in Fort Providence to follow. In Fort Liard, there is no regular program due to lack of staff. In the smaller Dehcho communities, most women stay at home with their younger children because there are no programs. Small Dehcho communities lack early childhood facilities, trained staff, and funding for programs.

Forum participants said that healthy day homes or a drop-in family centre are needed. Training for crisis intervention and support for traditional child rearing practices are also required. An elders in residence program that brings elders in contact with school age and preschool children was also suggested.

Development delay or disability

Forum participants said that development delay and disability in young children is often linked to the residential school legacy. That is, some parents don't have the skills to properly nurture the development of young children. More parental support and information is needed especially for young parents so they can have healthy pregnancies and can better respond to their children's needs. In Fort Simpson, Open Doors and the Toy Lending library can help parents to learn necessary parenting skills to avoid development delay. But in all communities, traditional parenting skills workshops and better coordination of community programs are needed to support healthy child development.

Mandatory full day kindergarten for all five year olds

Dehcho forum participants agreed that many parents in the NWT are likely unaware that kindergarten for five year olds is optional and/or that DEA/DECs have the option of offering full or half day kindergarten. Forum participants had mixed views about mandatory full day kindergarten. Some said that kindergarten should be optional because a child might not be ready or parents might not want their child to go. Parents should have a choice. Others said that mandatory full day kindergarten and early childhood programs are good ideas as long as these experiences honour an Aboriginal perspective. They said that there are many children who look forward to going to kindergarten. Some said that perhaps the most important question is not whether kindergarten should be optional or mandatory but what the purpose of kindergarten is and whether it is meeting the needs of Aboriginal children and founded on Aboriginal perspectives, values, and culture.

Optional NWT-wide structured early childhood program for all four year olds in every community at no cost to parents

Dehcho forum participants had mixed views on optional programming for four-year olds. Those who agreed said that programming for four-year olds would introduce children to school, begin learning at an early age, and be "a good start to a long term learning journey." It would help them to socialize through play and encourage relationships between the school and the home. Aboriginal Head Start programs delivered from a Dene perspective are a good model for a program for four-year olds. Others said that children may not be ready for school, that parents wouldn't want their children to go to school at such a young age, or that it would be "scary for little kids". "A lot of parents don't want full day kindergarten. They probably don't want a full day four year old program." "Four and five year olds are still babies and there is great concern about putting the children into school too early."

Locating an optional NWT-wide structured early childhood program for four year olds in a community school

Some Dehcho forum participants said that a preschool/four-year old program should not be part of the school system. "It would lead to 'Westernization'." They said such a program should be part of the community to allow for flexibility or possibilities for parents and children to learn together. Others said that early childhood programs in schools would be appropriate if parents/grandparents can have input into the programs and curriculum.

Some forum participants said that there is a need to "think creatively about early childhood programming." Early childhood programs should be broadly structured given that many parents have no options but to put their child into a program because they need to work. This is especially true for low income families who are struggling. If parents aren't comfortable putting their young children in a program, perhaps programs can be brought into the home. This would require improved communications and collaboration among all early childhood programs/services. Forum participants also said that First Nations need to take greater responsibility, use their ability to access funding, and work closer with the schools. They also said that ECE needs to provide resources and assistance to allow communities to implement their own early childhood programs.

There was agreement that much more community discussion is required to determine what parents and grandparents want and expect for their children in terms of early childhood program options. "Parents must have choices and options for their children." Discussion is required to consider the role of Aboriginal culture and perspectives in early childhood and/or kindergarten programs as well as to deal with issues and financial implications of staff qualifications and wages. "How do we move away from a Western based education system to an authentic education system based on Aboriginal, Dene life and values?" "When will the community people really take control of the type of early childhood and K-12 systems (and) programs offered?"

2. Student and Family Support

Barriers and challenges preventing school successes

Dehcho youth participating in the forum detailed many barriers preventing their success at school:

- Attendance.
- Bullying or teasing.
- Distractions from friends.
- Bad behaviour.
- Family issues.
- Lack of support.
- Lazy, boredom, or lack of motivation.
- Lack of confidence or low self-esteem.
- Conflict.
- Negativity in class.

- Poor relationships with teachers.
- Not eating or sleeping well.
- Drugs and alcohol.
- Jobs and family responsibilities, or too busy for homework.
- Getting sick and falling behind.
- Distracted by technology.
- Not caring about the future.

Dehcho leaders and elders identified somewhat different barriers to school success:

- Leaving the community to complete high school.
- Living in residence.
- Foster families who are unfamiliar with the language.
- Being kicked out of school rather than assisted to overcome problems.
- An unwillingness among students and parents to talk about barriers and challenges.
- Racism.
- Teachers not helping Aboriginal students, parents unable to assist students, and Aboriginal students not asking for help.
- Poor English skills.
- Too few Aboriginal teachers and too few teachers who understand the language and culture.
- Teacher turn-over.

Parents/grandparents in the Dehcho attending the forum said that the main barriers and challenges to school success are:

- Substance abuse among students and in the home environment.
- Lack of support from parents, community leaders and elders.
- Poor home-school communications.
- Under-resourced classrooms.
- Lack of relevant, 'hands on' learning opportunities.
- Inclusive schooling.
- Lack of support in the early years (e.g. in preschool and kindergarten).
- Poor attendance.
- Lack of alternatives to suspensions.
- Lack of trained community/parent counsellors.
- No peer counselling/buddy system.

Educators in the Dehcho identified the barriers and challenges to student success as:

- Poor student attendance.
- Lack of motivation and engagement.

- Lack of proper nutrition and inadequate sleep.
- Home/ life issues.
- Lack of early childhood programs and services.
- Parents disengaged and/or not supportive of school.
- Lack of real/ meaningful communication between all education partners.
- Lack of real consequences for families who do not send their children to school.
- Poor parenting skills.
- Low family literacy.

Dehcho educators said that some students are left at a relatively young age to make the decision about whether to attend school. “Parents step back or do not enforce daily attendance.” Many students also lack a vision or goal for themselves. Teacher turnover or a lack of consistency in teaching in some schools makes it difficult for students to develop strong relationships with teachers which may contribute to barriers to school success.

Support needed from the home, school, and community

Dehcho forum participants said that students need to be recognized, valued, respected, supported, and encouraged in all environments. Children need to see the family, school, and community working together and having expectations for their success. Dehcho parents and families must be actively engaged and involved in their children’s life and education. They need to ensure that students:

- Have a stable environment,
- Are eating and sleeping well,
- Get up for school,
- Have their homework done and get help with homework if they need it, and
- Have materials/ tools needed for school.

Family members need to motivate, show love, trust and understanding, and have a positive attitude. Families need to help students set and achieve goals and stay in school. There must be expectations for success and recognition that success is not the same for all students.

The school needs to value and respect students, and have expectations for their success. Like families, schools need to recognize that success is not the same for everyone. The school needs to offer a positive learning environment. It should have well-trained staff who are oriented to the community and students, have good relationships with students, and are involved in the community. It needs to offer advice on school and non-school matters, one on one help, after school help (e.g. tutors and study hall), and paper/ tools/ computers. The school needs to monitor attendance, have intervention programs, provide career planning, have motivational speakers, focus on early literacy, and coordinate efforts with other schools/ regions. The school should also offer training for Aboriginal teachers and land-based education to motivate students. Schools should consider different education models in order to accommodate and credit land-based education. The community and parents need to support land-based activities.

Dehcho forum participants said that the community should be a support system for students and parents/families so they can be actively involved in their children's life and education. The support system would be a source of friendship, "wise ideas," public spaces (e.g. recreation centre, study hall), fundraising assistance, feasts and celebrations, and volunteers. The community support system should include wellness programs and support workers that encourage students to stay in or come back to school. Communities also need to have bridging/upgrading/access programs.

Helping families to help their children be successful in school

Dehcho forum participants said that families need many things to help their children succeed in school. Youth said they need money, a stable environment, adequate housing, a good diet, family communications and interaction/working together/team work, love, discipline, security, respect, and trust. Leaders and elders said that families need a support system that encourages them to be involved in their children's lives without fear of repercussions. They need to understand their rights as parents and student's rights, and to know what makes students successful. Families need to focus on solutions and know how to express concerns and work with the school. "Everybody has to be willing to take risks, get out of their comfort zone." Families need the school to make an effort to work with them, for instance through "Friday night family literacy activities to get families into the school."

Dehcho educators attending the forum said that families need to understand their responsibilities and the responsibilities that reside with the student. Families need to feel welcome and comfortable coming to the school. The school has a responsibility to reach out to families and the community. Parents need to have ongoing and detailed information to help them understand the education system, and the differences in senior secondary courses. While the school needs to reach out to families, it must remember that the focus should be on how the child is treated and engaged in school everyday. There needs to be recognition of the powerful influence of peer role modelling, and new communications and technologies on students' learning.

3. Aboriginal Languages Curriculum and Resource Development

Aboriginal language fluency and strong cultural knowledge

Dehcho youth attending the forum said that they need their family, school, and community to:

- *Motivate:* the Dene language needs to be used regularly / in day to day life and through telling stories and taking trips on the land.
- *Influence:* the language must be seen and heard everywhere.
- *Be aware:* fewer people know the language today or are aware of the importance of language. Youth need to be taught the language.
- *Practice:* and encourage language use within families, schools, and other aspects of daily life.
- *Attend camps:* with community language experts who are willing to lead language camps.

Youth said that they need to live with their grandparents for extended periods to be immersed in the language and practice the culture (e.g. pray in a traditional way, tell stories, and gather medicinal information on rat root, spruce gum, and other plants).

Dehcho youth attending the forum said that schools should have a fully trained Slavey language teacher who teaches the language in K-Grade 3. In the other primary and secondary school grades, more time should be allocated for Slavey classes and students should be encouraged to speak the language. Slavey classes should be fun, interactive, and frequently held outside (e.g. going for walks and cultural camps) so that students look forward to them. They also said that they need community members to speak to them in Slavey and for there to be community gatherings with storytelling in Slavey, handgames, and opportunities to learn how to prepare and cook traditional foods. There should be one day a week to share traditional stories and teachings.

Bilingual people attending the forum said that language fluency cannot be taught in the school. To be fluent, the language in the home has to be the Aboriginal language and it has to be respected and meaningful. "You need more conversation everywhere. You need to speak it and be spoken to." Children need to learn a sense of pride in being an Aboriginal person and pride in knowing and speaking the language. "To find their identity, children need to understand that knowing the Dene language is part of who they are." The family needs to nurture the language and give lots of exposure to the language especially at an early age so "it will stay with the child." "Start when the child is in the womb." They said that changing language use in the home means "changing the way of life today. Turn off the TV and computer or use them for different purposes such as downloading videos and traditional stories to use on iPods." It also means changing ways of disciplining children, and moving to a more traditional way of life. To help families use the language, resources are needed to assist community members to learn and write the language, value its use, and make the language functional, relevant, purposeful, and current. "Everyone trying to use the language needs to be

supported and not made fun of when attempting to speak the language. They need to feel safe and supported.”

Some forum participants said that “it is a shame that the Aboriginal language needs to be introduced in the school when it should start at home.” However, to be successful in the schools, the language “requires absolute buy-in from the school principal” and there has to be enough teachers who can teach it. Bilingual people at the forum said that schools need to reinforce the language and provide immersion wherever possible. Cultural camps with community language experts and parents can help schools do immersion programming. Also, schools need to communicate that it is ‘okay’ to speak the Dene language. At the same time, schools need to recognize that not everyone values both languages (e.g. some people might prefer English and time spent on math and sciences rather than on the Aboriginal language). Schools need to encourage students to use the Dene language rather than providing language translation. Language should be linked to the *Dene Kede* curriculum or an Aboriginal curriculum with criteria and assessment to ensure validity. Language and culture need to be connected through ‘hands-on’ school activities. Schools need to be more inviting to the community, elders, and parents. “When there are K-6 immersion programs offered then more parents will want to or feel they need to learn to speak the language.”

Community leaders and administrators need to value and role model Dene language use and promote understanding of Dene protocols including communicating that the “Aboriginal language is a public language that is spoken everywhere.” The community including First Nations’ councils can promote the language by holding meetings in the Aboriginal language, using local radio and local signage, and elders telling legends. The community needs to play a bigger role in coordinating language and cultural learning and creating more opportunities for parents/adults to learn the language.

Ways the regular school system can strengthen Aboriginal languages

Dehcho youth attending the forum were aware that Fort Providence has four school terms, year-round schooling, and a language immersion program. Perhaps with this awareness in mind, they suggested three options for strengthening Aboriginal languages in the regular school system:

1. "Have an actual Aboriginal language program" that continues beyond elementary school,
2. An optional high school immersion program, or
3. Allot more time to Slavey classes.

Whatever the option, more structured, focused language programming is needed with games, youth engagement in community government activities, youth assemblies, and outdoor classrooms "so it is more comfortable, more relaxed." "Youth can share more if the program is outside." Youth said that they could engage their parents/grandparents in language activities at school and in the home.

Other forum participants said that all education partners need to work together to make language and culture a priority and provide more options and flexibility so students can make choices about their learning. Some "youth choose their culture. There is a potpourri on the internet." Education partners need to increase innovative uses of technology, multi-media, and teleconferencing to help teach, expose, and promote the language (e.g. create a Slavey App, use phraselators, webcasts, on-line language lessons recorded materials, and other digital tools). Education partners need to engage and support elders in teaching the language and culture, involve the community and school in hosting two-three month long culture camps and other school/community activities and clubs as a means to learn, strengthen, and teach the Aboriginal language. They said that more trained Aboriginal language teachers are needed who use the language all the time "so students do not have English as an option." They also said that a formal Aboriginal language curriculum is needed to reduce repetition and focus on sequential learning. Other suggestions included:

- Reforming the Teacher Education Program to include an Aboriginal language component.
- Learning from other schools with strong language programs such as immersion programs in Alberta and New Brunswick.
- Inviting successful Aboriginal language speakers to share reflections on the strength of their language with students and describe how their Aboriginal language is an asset.
- Better using the arts/ arts education as a means to teach and strengthen Aboriginal language (e.g. composing and recording Aboriginal language songs).

Making the NWT K-12 school program more culturally relevant

Dehcho youth had five suggestions for making the K-12 school program more culturally relevant:

1. Offering an immersion program.
2. Involving elders were in the classroom.
3. Incorporating Dene laws into all classes.
4. Reflecting the history of the NWT in all classes.
5. Offering extracurricular classes and community activities that focus on culture.

Unilingual forum participants said that the school program would be more culturally relevant if an Aboriginal languages curriculum modelled after the social studies curriculum was implemented. The Aboriginal languages curriculum would have more land and community-based programming and engage elders. They queried “why in communities are there strong language/ cultural leaders who are not working but who could really help if they were in the school?” Forum participants also suggested that schools could facilitate a buddy system for all students that matches students with a fluent Aboriginal language speaker to immerse them in the language, strengthen the culture, and promote relations between the school, home, and community. Others said that there is a need to respond to all cultures both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, by promoting the concept of dual cultural awareness and relevance. There is also a need to address the impacts of residential school on the current state of Aboriginal language and culture.

Making the NWT K-12 school system better for all NWT Aboriginal students

Dehcho youth said that the school system could be made better for all Aboriginal students if there were more Aboriginal teachers who are fluent in the language. They suggested “hiring a bunch of Aboriginal people to teach kids to speak Slavey one-on-one.” Youth also recommended “more stuff outdoors”, more musical options, more options for classes (e.g. culinary arts, foods, and carpentry), more opportunities to learn about trapping, exchanges with other schools especially Aboriginal schools, and more exposure to other communities including life in the south. “Expose students to the south and other countries. Do trips to visit universities so they can see what they are all about. Give them an idea of what’s out there instead of just in the NWT.” “Teach them how to live in the city, how to find their way around, what to do and what not to do.”

Bilingual forum participants said that the school system would be improved if language was the focus. Schools need to model and reinforce Aboriginal language use, promote it, and support efforts to strengthen the language (e.g. cultural walks, naming ceremonies where all students get Slavey names, sharing traditional place names, cultural and language camps). They also suggested workshops/ meetings to discuss language responsibilities, priorities, and awareness.

Other forum participants said that “everyone has a responsibility to improve our school system. There needs to be accountability of all educational partners such as school principals, teachers, parents, government, and community leaders...” Parents need to be

educated to understand the education system and educational standards so that they can better help their children succeed. "Parents must start very early to help their children set high standards (e.g. of 90% versus 50%) and to look at a variety of careers." Parents need information about what a child needs to be successful in school and for postsecondary acceptance. They need to understand that not all children learn in the same way and that the definition of 'success' is very broad. Other forum participants said that a child centred learning system is needed. "Child centred learning is about helping children learn in successful and meaningful ways (e.g. learning through the arts)." Some forum participants also suggested moving away from the current testing/standards to a more open and broad way of teaching students and providing them with a variety of experiences. Others suggested a serious review of the current inclusive schooling policy and the concept of 'social passing'. "Is this really serving our children? It's a serious problem."

4. Literacy

Developing strong literacy skills

The youth drew a picture depicting literacy and the various tools/media used to encourage and express literacy. They said that they need support from their family, school, and community to develop strong literacy skills. They need teaching, encouragement, practice, opportunities, fundraising (so youth can do different things), comfortable environments, and libraries. Youth need help to develop basic skills such as where to find information of interest including a reason to look for information. People working on school-based literacy spoke about the "power of the story" and the need for children to be exposed from birth to stories, music, language, and conversation. "There needs to be a balance of opportunities for children/students to listen, speak, view, and respond." Children need early exposure to books and to be taught how to become critical thinkers and problem solvers. People who have taken leadership on literacy said that literacy and the importance of it should be promoted everywhere in all its different forms. Community literacy champions can celebrate children/students literacy successes. The schools can better recognize that learning needs to be individualized and accommodate different learning styles. They said that there should be literacy centres in every community and a broad range of opportunities in the school to foster literacy development. There also needs to be a focus on financial literacy and workplace literacy so people can make decisions and be self-sufficient in the community and in their lives.

People working on Aboriginal language literacy said that within the family, school, and community cooperation, role modelling literacy practices, and experiential learning are important. "Parents need to instil in their children the value and importance of literacy in Aboriginal languages." In all environments, efforts need to be made to combine both traditional and modern/Western approaches to teaching and learning, and recognize alternative concepts of what literacy means (e.g. survival, oral culture, knowledge, and social relationships). There is also a need for better understanding of how Aboriginal people learn. Literacy leaders/coaches are needed in all communities. To support Aboriginal language literacy, a website on Aboriginal language resources and online

lessons are needed. Making South Slavey mandatory and crediting these skills within the school program would also be helpful.

Barriers and challenges preventing children from becoming capable readers by Grade 3

Dehcho youth said that the barriers to becoming a capable reader by Grade 3 may be related to lack of reading at home, lack of reading supports in school, and lack of technology use (e.g. e-readers and computer programs to teach such as Leapfrog). They suggested that there is a need for reading buddies in preschool and Grades 3 and 6, and more access to a greater variety of reading materials including magazines and graphic novels.

Forum participants working on Aboriginal language literacy agreed that the barriers and challenges preventing children from becoming capable readers by Grade 3 relate to lack of encouragement of literacy in the home, different expectations of literacy, and lack of appropriate resources in all environments (e.g. movies, songs, music, oral stories, and text including up to date dictionaries). “Many stories are in English and don’t seem to make sense to Aboriginal people, for example, the story about Jack and Jill going up the hill for water rather than down to the river.”

Forum participants who are leaders on literacy said that everyone needs to concentrate on literacy in K-3 and to recognize that numeracy builds on language. “The community and school have to work together to develop parents’ educational abilities regarding parenting and literacy.” These participants said that barriers to being a capable reader by Grade 3 relate to the lack of early assessment of disabilities and appropriate treatment options. Another problem is busy or single parents who may not value or be aware of the importance of reading. They may lack time and resources to support their children’s literacy or opt for the use of X-boxes and computer games over reading and storytelling. These participants said that family problems and low literacy at home could be overcome through story telling (even if parents lack literacy), getting online help (e.g. through wikipedia), and using audio books. In the school, ‘hidden’ illiteracy, a stigma about illiteracy, and judgemental attitudes are barriers that need to be addressed through individualized teaching by educators who are trained to differentiate and respond to individual needs. There is also a need to value alternative ways of self-expression in order to improve confidence. High teacher-student ratios and insufficient time and attention may also impact on literacy skills. Difficulties supporting literacy in the school and home can be compounded by lack of community resources including literacy centres, libraries, book lending and exchange programs, and opportunities to encourage alternate modes of expression (e.g. arts, dance, painting). “Libraries are needed in every community as is support to build parenting skills.”

Becoming a capable reader by Grade 3

To ensure that all children are capable readers by Grade 3, people working on school-based literacy suggested that between kindergarten and Grade 3, more time needs to be spent on teaching literacy skills. “The amount of content in K-3 needs to be reviewed and perhaps diminished to increase the focus on developing strong literacy skills,

reading, and problem solving in the early grades.” They also suggested lower student-teacher ratios and more funding to support smaller classes in K-3. They also said that teachers need in-service / training in all aspects of teaching, assessing, and supporting reading. “It can’t be assumed that teachers know or have training in this area.”

People working on family literacy advised reading, singing, talking, telling stories, dancing, and acting from the beginning of a child’s life. “We need to teach our daughters to talk to their babies before they are born.” They suggested tools to help parents (e.g. a checklist for parents, questions they can ask about their children), early testing (e.g. vision and hearing), and early intervention to address problems. They encouraged the practice of young children spending more time with their grandparents and other family members and advocated for more Slavey to be spoken in the home and community. “As a community, we need to support ourselves in speaking and respecting our language and culture.” “Children must know who they are and have a sense of identity and family history.”

Parents need to get involved in the schools. “Parent/elder volunteers are required because literacy takes a lot of one on one time.” At school, buddy programs with older students helping younger students, would encourage reading. Teachers need training on how to teach literacy and reading, make sure that programs are relevant to student’s needs and abilities, and ensure consistency in teaching methods and reporting. “Teachers need to be honest about students’ levels/abilities.” Teachers should ensure that the basics (phonetic sounds) of reading are in place before expecting children to learn to read.

Improving literacy development in early childhood and K-12 school programs

Dehcho youth said that early childhood and K-12 school programs could help students develop stronger literacy skills if there were more reading and writing “practice sessions,” more interesting books and use of technology, and more reinforcement of the importance of literacy and numeracy in life. They said that “your future depends on it.” People working on Aboriginal language literacy said that literacy needs to be everywhere and connected in/ with the home, media, school, community, meetings, signage, celebrations, communications, and on the land. Literacy education needs to be culturally relevant in the classroom, at home, on the land, and in the community. People working on school-based literacy suggested using best practices for teaching literacy. People who have taken leadership on literacy agreed. They suggested looking at programs where there are good literacy levels and adopting these practices (e.g. Busy Bees, play groups, preschool, Aboriginal Head Start, and early immersion programs). They also recommended establishing a literacy coach position in every school, greater focus on literacy skills in K-3, and alternate approaches to teaching language (e.g. animal phonetics). Teachers need to be prepared to teach early literacy skills, even in later grades (i.e. the skill set of teachers needs to encompass multi-levels of learning). The Aurora College TEP program needs to prepare teachers to teach reading skills. People who have taken leadership on literacy also said that “learning doesn’t just happen in schools but also at work experience sites.” The community needs to get involved in literacy perhaps through an industrial arts program, workplace experiences, funding and interagency support (e.g. ENR trapper training program), financial literacy

activities, and work skills programs (e.g. getting up on time, problem solving, team work, discipline, and punctuality).

Is the Discussion Paper on the Right Track?

Most forum participants agreed that the discussion paper is on the right track or a good start to narrowing the achievement gap between Aboriginal and other students. **Lori Bertrand**, a youth from Nahanni Butte, spoke passionately about the hope that the Plan and the discussion at the forum gives her. She is hopeful that she and others can change the existing situation and make a positive difference. She is hopeful that the community can come together and work together for the education of children and youth. She is also hopeful that she can learn her language. **Margaret Thom** acknowledged the power of young people and encouraged them to speak out. Every adult has a responsibility to support and nurture the education and growth of our young people. **Margaret Ireland** spoke about her own life and how her parents encouraged her to get an education. "Today, we have to support our young people to get a good education but we also have to make sure that they have strong identity as Dene people and have the knowledge of language and culture that are central to that identity." **Hayden Trenholm** spoke about the need to build different relationships. It is not just about bringing the community into the school but bringing the school into the community. He also stressed the need to respond to individual needs because every student is different. **Betty Hardisty** stressed the importance of culture and the cultural context of education.

Dehcho Community Forum – January 7, 2011

Messages from the Keynote Speaker

To set the tone for community plans that support Aboriginal student achievement, the Dehcho community forum heard from **Margaret Thom**, elder and educator from Fort Providence. Mrs. Thom said that narrowing the achievement gap between Aboriginal and other students is a huge task but "we can do it." Our children are precious gifts. We need to nurture our children. This is our responsibility as parents, grandparents, and elders to make sure that our children are nurtured. She agreed with Chief Antoine who said that we need to get back on the trail that was set out by our ancestors. Because our journey of life was interrupted by residential schools, we are letting the trail get overgrown by unhealthiness. Our journey was planned for us by those who have come before. As much as we are angry, we must move forward and get back on this trail. It is not enough for leaders to challenge us. They need to walk beside us. We need to help youth make the connections they want so much, connections to themselves and to the environment. We need to wake up and help our youth.

The Dene come from a place of dignity and respect. It is critical to build a strong foundation of culture and tradition so our youth can walk with dignity. It is not enough to do an orientation only for teachers. All visitors to our communities who play a role in the lives of our children including the RCMP, social workers, and nurses need to be

oriented. Everyone needs to understand where our children are at and where they want to be. It is encouraging and hopeful when non-Aboriginal people join in our drum dances. This feels good. It is good that people want to be part of our community.

In Fort Providence, the school has a year-round program. It also has a Slavey immersion program. The immersion program is a struggle. Elders are reluctant to get involved and it is difficult to engage non-speakers of the language and find ways to help them. The school has on the land programs that have been very successful. By doing on the land programs, the school has learned that it takes two days for kids to get used to being on the land. On the land experiences offer insights into the issues affecting our children. One issue is how tired our children are. One youth participating in an on the land program slept for 20 hours. This is an example of the attention that we need to give to our youth so that they get enough sleep to learn, participate, and be successful.

The Fort Providence school has a family history project. The students really enjoy this project because they want to know where they come from. The school sponsors rites of passage camps in the fall to honour young men and in the spring to honour young women and their power to give life. The fall camp involves a moose hunt, sharing the meat with the community, and a ceremony to honour the young hunters. In all the activities that the school does, the students take responsibility for fundraising. They fundraise to participate in the Dream Catchers conference in Edmonton. When they are in Edmonton, they work a shift at the Edmonton Food Bank so they can understand how many of their neighbours don't have enough to live on. At Christmas, the school focuses on those children who have very little and those who are not cared for or left alone. Throughout the year, the school offers a lunch program and parents pay \$40/mo. In cases where parents can't pay, the school makes arrangements for these families to contribute in other ways.

Students have participated in Northern Youth Abroad, a military outing to the Arctic to monitor climate change, junior rangers, and other activities. The school does its best to encourage students to look at and understand their options. The school recognizes the importance of technology and this is well-supported within the school. The school believes that homework is an area that could be done differently. A different approach is needed because the school does not want its students to have to complete an access year or do upgrading in order to get into further study after high school.

The school works hard at disciplining students following the ethic of dignity. Discipline recognizes the individual and where he/she is at. We need to be more forgiving which is very difficult sometimes. The school works hard at honouring and celebrating success and achievement no matter how big or small. The success of Aboriginal students is supported by attitudes and actions that:

- Accept and value wholeness,
- Seek balance and health in all spheres,
- Support ownership by students,
- Help students accept responsibility,
- Show respect,
- Help others to succeed, and

- Recognize that children also need to grieve (e.g. grieve at transitions or life phases).

Mrs. Thom said that our students don't know how to grieve. As adults we need to help. We need to treat each child as a special individual and celebrate his/her life. We need to be non-judgmental, support our students to be all that they can be and to be assertive, and to challenge leaders. Leaders are not always right. In accordance with Dene law, we need to listen and to love our children unconditionally. We need to say and speak what is in our hearts and teach our children the culture and language and about Dene spirituality. Our culture and language are the roots of who we are and where we are going. Our spirituality helps us develop as people and to live with respect and dignity. Our commitment to our children needs to be clear and strong.

Fort Providence has several students in postsecondary studies in many communities across Canada. The community also has students who are in the military, volunteering in South Africa, and involved in interesting endeavours and professions in other communities. These students are successful in large part because of home support and self-discipline.

We need to talk with our students and ask for their opinions and ideas rather than making assumptions. We need to develop trusting relationships and make sure that basic needs are met. We need to make connections to language and culture and celebrate who we are. "This is not rocket science. We can do this."

Dehcho Community Plans

The eight Dehcho communities caucused to identify main education issues; efforts that are working to support the success of Aboriginal students; issues that need to be addressed to support Aboriginal student success; and develop plans for supporting Aboriginal student achievement. Many participants commented on the active role that youth played in shaping the plans. Community plans follow.

The Kakisa Plan for Supporting Student Success

Main Issues	Working Now	Need to be Addressed	What?	How?	Who & When?
<p>-Very small staff - one teacher can't do everything. -Not enough land-based school activities. -Inadequate resources to help the school integrate land-based education with the current curriculum.</p>	<p>-Students are close to home. -Warm, inviting community environment. -Community support for broader, hands-on experiences. -Exhibitions of student work celebrate success. -Good attendance rates.</p>	<p>-Need to identify community resources/expertise available to help students. -Need for collaboration among all community groups/members to help students and integrate land-based education.</p>	<p>-Capitalize on positive elements such as great community connections and good attendance rates to support Aboriginal student achievement.</p>	<p>1. Improving language instruction and use by: -Supporting Slavey instructors. -Advocating for and following a sequential program to give students a sense of accomplishment. -Dedicating more than 30 min. per day to speaking the language. -Getting periodic on-site assistance from a language specialist. -Integrating the language into other subject areas. -Having a school-centred Slavey Day that includes community activities, opportunities to speak the language, cultural activities, and project exhibition. -Daily rewards for using Slavey in the school/classroom. -Encouraging/supporting students to keep a 'book of Slavey words.'</p> <p>2. Giving more priority to early childhood by: -Advocating for a consultant/ regional resource to periodically check in with families with young children to ensure that nutrition and literacy needs are met and other child raising issues are addressed. -Creating opportunities to bring parents and kids from Kakisa to</p>	<p>The principal and student delegate will meet with others in the community to discuss and implement this plan.</p>

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				larger centres to connect with other families to deal with isolation and build support networks.	
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The Jean Marie River Plan for Supporting Student Success

Main Issues	Working Now	Need to be Addressed	What?	How?	Who & When?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Little community involvement beyond a small number of parents. -No extracurricular activities. -Lack of opportunities/jobs for students after completing schooling. -English as first language and Slavey not taught in school. -Students with weak Slavey and English skills. -Elders learning English to communicate with grandchildren. -Education not recognized as broader than schooling. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Good attendance. -Access to the internet and computers. -Students successes in the local school but difficulty making transition to larger schools and communities. -Safe, supportive community environment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Non-parents (leaders and role models) involvement in the school. -Ways to attract youth back to community after schooling. -Fluent speakers to teach Slavey in or outside the school. -Open-minded, language focused teaching teams (e.g. local language speaker and educator/planner). -Language immersion culture camps. -Using allocated funding locally rather than for outside trips. -More support for social issues faced by students in senior high school. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Re-empower the DEA. 2. Involve the Band Council in decision making. 3. Find out how language money is being used. 4. Establish a language specialist position in Jean Marie River. 5. Reopen elders and youth centre (trailer) with the goal for interaction as a "Slavey only zone". 6. Re-establish culture camps in fall, winter and spring 7. Drug and alcohol prevention education. 8. Mentoring Grade 10s in Fort Simpson. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Workshops to inform the DEA of its powers and staff roles. -Distinct Band Councillor on DEA who reports back to the Band. Continue to include education as a regular agenda item for the Band. -Get info from DDEC. -DDEC budget changes. -Sell crafts and share profits. Find out about volunteer recognition programs. Issue language bonus. -Week long sessions, leave classroom curriculum behind and focus on applying skills. -Education activities. -Volunteers of JMR currently living in Fort Simpson invite students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -DDEC. Hold it in Fort Simpson. ASAP (February 2011). -Band Council. ASAP (February 2011). -DDEC rep, DDEC, DEA. ASAP (February 2011). -DEA, DDEC. March 2011. -Junior elders, senior elders, DEA, Band. DEA to stock trailer with supplies to encourage conversation in context (e.g. tea, cooking, sewing, carving, painting). April 2011. -DEA and teacher. Involve students in planning and preparation. Ongoing -H&SS, Community Health Worker, former students. Before Grade 10. -JMR Band members living in Fort Simpson. Ongoing.

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			<p>9. Summer jobs for students.</p> <p>10. Business development to attract educated youth back to community.</p> <p>11. Students involved in planning trips, etc. including budgeting, communications, and reports.</p> <p>12. Participate in Fort Providence immersion and rites of passage activities.</p>	<p>to visit (e.g. once a week, cook together, etc.).</p> <p>-Apply for funding.</p> <p>-Not identified</p> <p>-Use planning activities as classroom applications.</p> <p>-One week visits.</p> <p>In summary, always celebrate success at the end of the school year by for example, having a BBQ / party, acknowledging volunteers, and displaying the students' work.</p>	<p>-Band and DEA. Ongoing.</p> <p>-Not identified. ASAP</p> <p>-DEA and teacher. Ongoing 2011/12 school year.</p> <p>-Students with Fort Providence school supervisors. Immersion (May 2011). Camps (2011/12 school year).</p>
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The Nahanni Butte Plan for Supporting Student Success

Main Issues	Working Now	Need to be Addressed	What?	How?	Who & When?
<p>-Need a new school with no structural issues that is conducive to learning.</p> <p>-Need a continuous, functional and adequate Grade 10 program.</p> <p>-Need one on one tutoring and assistance for students not at grade level.</p> <p>-Small school population (20) impacted by attendance (e.g. if student population drops, Nahanni may have only one teacher).</p> <p>-Poor teachers' housing (e.g. same foundation issues as the school).</p> <p>-Need a new school van.</p> <p>-Students need to leave the community for educational success.</p> <p>-Major computer / internet access</p>	<p>-Successful on-the-land program that needs to expand to include younger students.</p> <p>-Broad school staff and student access to the community.</p> <p>- Greatly improved student attendance.</p>	<p>-More community involvement (e.g. why aren't the open door policy and welcoming school atmosphere working?).</p> <p>-Using the facility available for upgrading for youth needing to upgrade.</p>	<p>1. Get community involved in education and into the school.</p> <p>2. Better understand and deal with unhealthy habits and lifestyles of youth.</p>	<p>-Set aside time in DEA meetings to discuss support that is needed from the community.</p> <p>-Develop a poster campaign targeting parents and others to recruit volunteers. Include messages about the importance of volunteering, the value of education and community's role in education, and asking people to be responsible for what they commit to.</p> <p>-Ask DEA and Council members to role model volunteering.</p> <p>-Invite elders into the school.</p> <p>-Develop a plan with the community to address this issue. The community needs to take responsibility for and ownership</p>	<p>-The DEA has the main role with support from the Chief and Council including the student rep on Council.</p> <p>-All five people attending the forum from Nahanni Butte need to form a buddy system and follow-up on this plan.</p> <p>-The Band can work with Georgie to coordinate support with help from Lory</p>

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<p>upgrade needed. -No playground. -Increasing work load of teaching principal. -More community involvement needed.</p>			<p>3. Education starts at home. Help students with transitions to Grade 11 and post-secondary.</p>	<p>of this issue. -Organize community workshops on wellness, self-esteem, dangers of drinking and drug use, anger management, counselling, and parenting. -Hold sharing/healing circles.</p> <p>-Motivate students to get outside their comfort zone socially by providing more experiences and getting used to sharing living spaces. -Expand opportunities for Northern Youth Abroad. -Look at having a Grade 12 buddy system at TSS for kids from the communities to share issues/challenges before they come to TSS. -Check in and check up.</p>	<p>and Mindy. -One workshop should be held each season.</p> <p>-DEA and DDEC.</p>
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The Trout Lake Plan for Supporting Student Success

Main Issues	Working Now	Need to be Addressed	What?	How?	Who & When?
<p>-Small school building/ classroom (e.g. K-9 housed in one big room) with too many distractions. -Small gym. -Variable land-based /culture education depending on available staff skills. -Sports not challenging for all students due to the age gap -Students missing school/falling behind when parents leave town. -Poor school-community connections although this is changing as evidenced by 100% of parents attending parent-teacher interviews. -Heavy reliance on school based on staff commitment, involvement and energy. -Once yearly visits from the ophthalmologist. -No childcare or preschool/ Head Start facility or programs. -Need staff changes to allow for full-time positions.</p>	<p>-Current teachers involved in outdoor cultural activities and community cultural events. -Elders are involved in the school in weekly beading activities. -Band sponsorship of a culture camp twice a year and the Take a Kid Trapping program. -Students not marked absent when on the land trapping. -Student journals kept when on land trips. -Band sponsorship of students going to larger centres (e.g. bowling, skating in Hay River). -Student mentorship and accomplishment awards. -Weekly spelling tests result in great marks. -Math tests at the end of each chapter. -Perfect attendance for a month entitles students to lunch with the principal. -Teachers evaluate students according to grade, and assign specific work in targeted areas.</p>	<p>-Move away from the one room classroom (e.g. fix the classroom or build a new school). -Repair small school windows to allow adequate light. -More supplies for hands-on science experiments. -Funding for a preschool, Head Start or childcare program. -Realignment of students (e.g. Grades 6-9 and K-6). -Leaders for a drumming group, more cultural exposure including having elders in the school telling stories. -Stronger school-parent connections and communications especially around homework. -Mandatory homework from Grade 7 on and a study hall program in the evenings. -Compassionate, tactful teachers who do not compare students.</p>	<p>1. Ongoing parenting skills workshops (rather than just once a year event) tailored to different generations.</p> <p>2. More elder involvement in the school to talk about local history.</p> <p>3. Bring hand games and drumming into the school because</p>	<p>-Parents need ways to learn acceptance, balance, ownership, responsibility, initiative, and grieving. -Incentives could be offered (e.g. bring another parent to the next meeting and receive.....). -Ask the elders to come to school. -Visit elders' homes ("we can do this because we have a small school").</p> <p>-The DEA Chair or principal will invite the elders into the school for storytelling (e.g. about how Trout Lake was formed).</p> <p>-The DEA and principal will agree on how and when this will happen.</p>	<p>The DEA has to get parents involved in the school and the Band Council and parents must support and encourage one another. The DEA will ask Margaret Field from Fort Providence or seek advice from northern experts in this area (e.g. Rebecca Martel on traditional parenting practices). To be discussed at the January DEA meeting.</p> <p>-The DEA and principal will agree on how and when this will happen. To be discussed at the January DEA meeting.</p> <p>-The DEA and principal will ask Gilbert Lamalice and</p>

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		<p>students strongly want to know this part of their culture.</p> <p>4. More sports in the school helps to build students' confidence and teach them to accept both winning and losing.</p> <p>5. Counselling/healing for students who are angry or lacking balance in mind, body, and spirit.</p> <p>6. Broaden students' horizons through more out of town trips, involvement in out of town events, out of town workshops, and bring in inspirational First Nation speakers.</p> <p>7. Boys only activities geared to different learning styles/ interests, immediate rewards, physical activities and opportunities to learn their heritage.</p> <p>8. Develop a better transitional plan for students leaving the community for high school in a larger centre.</p> <p>9. Summer opportunities for youth (e.g. summer camps).</p> <p>10. Work on the language.</p>	<p>-School and Recreation department need to form a partnership. -Invite the Recreation department to January DEA meeting to discuss sports options.</p> <p>-Bring in more First Nations role models and traditional dancers, and involve youth groups (e.g. Turtle Concepts).</p> <p>-Fundraise to get students involved. -Partner with other schools who have done/ do trips (e.g. Providence and Simpson for the Nahanni River trip). -Contact organizations that do territory-wide trips/ events such as Taiga Girls Camp, NYA, and Ecology camps.</p> <p>-Boys only summer camp; boys rites of passage camp (through a partnership with Fort Providence); and boys fall camp.</p> <p>-Have an orientation. -Send a student counsellor to the community to explain the high school process including timing and SFA. -Formulate an initial career plan.</p> <p>-Send kids out to the land for a couple of months for Slavery language immersion programs.</p> <p>-More time in Slavery class; more out on the land camps/ authentic experiences with elders; more</p>	<p>Edward Jumbo. To de discussed at the January DEA meeting. -Recreation department and DEA. To de discussed at the January DEA meeting.</p> <p>-DEA. To de discussed at the January DEA meeting.</p> <p>-Parents and students (particularly people who like to cook). Beginning of school year.</p> <p>-Partnership between Trout Lake and Fort Providence schools with help from DEC and Recreation departments. Beginning of the school year.</p> <p>-The principal or delegate from the high school. Beginning of the school year or at the point of transition.</p> <p>-The Band Council with MACA and elders who have the knowledge. Before summer.</p> <p>-All family and community members. Begin immediately.</p>
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				practice with people who speak Slavey; and more encouragement to spend time with their grandparents to learn Slavey and the culture.	
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The Wrigley Plan for Supporting Student Success

Main Issues	Working Now	Need to be Addressed	What?	How?	Who & When?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Poor attendance – absenteeism or students coming to school tired or late. -Lack of culture and language in the school. -Low literacy levels. -Impact of the internet/ technology on reading, learning, communications and relationships. -Lack of respect for elders, too little discipline of children/ youth, and parents not taking responsibility. -Everyone not treated the same even if they are failing or succeeding. -Attracting educated people back to Wrigley. -Poor housing for teachers. -More integration of the school and community. -Weak communications between the leadership, parents, community, DEA, and school. -Impact of education issues on self-government – “What are we working towards? What is the future of the Dehcho if our education system isn’t working?” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Doing a lot with very few resources. -Cultural resurgence (e.g. drumming, singing and on the land programs). -More use of Slavey in the classroom. -Positive support in the school due to EBS. -Teachers staying longer and building trust and relationships with students and community. -Frontiers Foundation volunteers of different cultures and perspectives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Need a community educational forum to hear from students. -More integration of leadership and DEA in education/ school including regular Chief and Council involvement and support for the school. -A school bus for cold weather. -More traditional knowledge integrated in the curriculum. -Professional people to develop Dechinta-type programs. -Stronger elder-youth relationships (e.g. exchange of technology and traditional knowledge). -Improve communication and awareness about education among parents. -More science courses, labs/ resources, hands-on learning, and life skills that focus on learning Dene ways. -Increase grade levels. -Prepare/ mentor youth for future self-government. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improve attendance and reduce lateness. 2. Improve literacy. 3. School-community relationship building to improve cultural relevance/ perspectives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Talk to parents and students to promote the importance of a regular, early bedtime, and attending school. -Have a poster contest among students to promote the message that a good night sleep = success in school. -Explore changing the school schedule/ calendar. -Offer more fun activities (e.g. Wii games in morning, rewards for attendance, larger reward trips). -Use technology to promote literacy (e.g. video games and Facebook). -Write our own books and graphic novels including a book on elders (with students interviewing and doing the translation in Slavey). - Hold community-school literacy nights with different themes (Slavey, culture, technology). -Offer professional development on balanced literacy. -Gatherings/ events involving community members in a variety of literacy and cultural activities. -Invite the Chief and Council to Monday meetings. Ask the Chief to mentor students and teach about land claims, role of leadership, etc. Ask the Chief for assistance to involve elders in storytelling with the students. -Explore options of sending students to Fort Providence for rites of passage camps. -Visit or arrange exchanges with other schools to share cultural 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -School counsellor. End of January. -School and students. End of January. -DEA and principal. Next meeting. -Principal. Happening now and ongoing. -School and students. Ongoing. -School and students. February-June. -Principal and DEA with students. Next meeting -Principal and DEA. February. -Principal and DEA. April. -Chief and Principal to meet to plan. Next week -Principal. Spring. -DEC and principals. Ongoing through

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			4. Broader school programming.	experiences. -More hands on resources for science classes including having community members teach skills/classes on for example, how to fix skidoos. -Explore possibility for grade extensions.	communications with DEA Chairs and Chiefs. -Principal. Ongoing. -DEC, DEA, Principal. Soon.
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The Fort Liard Plan for Supporting Student Success

Main Issues	Working Now	Need to be Addressed	What?	How?	Who & When?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -9:00-3:30 school day too short. -No volunteers to run a hot lunch program, do extra curricular activities, supervise homework, or do literacy activities. -Small school student: teacher ratio. -Inadequate school staff. -Limited community capacity. -Poor attendance (about 20 non-attenders). -Inclusive schooling/ 'social passing'. -Poor attitudes about outdoor education. -Lack of discipline/ consequences for breaking rules. -School not valued as a place for learning and opportunities. -Lack of career/ education plans after Grade 12. -Lack of postsecondary school successes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Career counselling (but too early to identify successes). -Crazy days for fun activities. -Monthly assemblies to acknowledge attendance. -Opening the gym in the morning before classes begin. -Fundraising (e.g. cake walks). -A mix of new and long term staff with various skills and interests. -School suggestion boxes asking students for opinions on activities. -More opportunities for postsecondary students. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hamlet and Chief and Council support for education. -Volunteers with a broad range of skills including trades people, professionals, and harvesters. -High tolerance for abuse and violence particularly lateral violence. -Practice and responsibility for Dene laws. -Parenting skills/tools and supports. -Drugs and alcohol education. -Accountability for student attendance. -School and community support for young leaders. 	Address main issues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Integrate traditional culture in meetings. - Have students meet guests to the community. -Put up a garden display at the store to fundraise. -Ask the Student Council to attend DEA meetings. -Post weekly themed messages in Slavey about positive values. -Seek input from the School Council on attendance. -Make 'wake up' posters to recruit 'big mothers/ fathers' volunteers to help get students to school. -Implement a curfew. - Involve absent students in the Take a Kid Trapping program. -Develop a buddy system. -Research motivational incentives for student attendance. -Support computer research to learn about postsecondary options. -Involve interesting career and personal planning guest speakers. 	People attending the forum will bring the plan to an interagency meeting for discussion and implementation including identifying responsibilities.

The Fort Providence Plan for Supporting Student Success

Main Issues	Working Now	Need to be Addressed	What?	How?	Who & When?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Attendance and behaviour issues (e.g. acting up, cranky, sleepy, disruptive in classroom). -Low achievement standards for students, teachers, and parents. -Impact of past education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -On the land programs including rites of passage, hunting trips, collecting medicinal plants, canoe trips to traditional family areas, winter camps, survival/ wilderness First Aid, and the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Multi-year funding especially for cultural/ on-the land programs. -Parent engagement. -Collaboration to promote/ develop a healthy home environment for all children. 	The approach to change is important. It must be gentle and welcoming. We need a S (small steps) M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Get parents involved with the school by initial family sharing/ brainstorming sessions about how to engage others and generate more ideas. -Passing on knowledge to create a 	-DEA and school staff.

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<p>experiences. -Lack of healing and culture within current education practices/system. -Lack of integration of cultural traditions and northern skills in today's curriculum. -Lack of awareness of the importance of early childhood development (0-5 years of age sets the platform for children and their learning). -Lack of strong identity. "We need to walk on that 'good road' of cultural values and knowledge so that young people come to know who they are, where they are going and how to stay connected." -Lack of collaboration and shared responsibility among elders, parents, school staff, DEA and other partners. -Addictions. -Too few teachers and materials (books) for the Slavey language immersion program.</p>	<p>Junior Rangers. -Efforts to balance traditional learning and academic learning. -Good attendance due to on the land and cultural activities. -Dene immersion program in K-3. -Student travel and exposure to the outside world linked to student achievement and positive behaviours (e.g. trips to Europe, Columbia, Mexico, Thailand, Botswana, and elsewhere in Canada). -Programs fitted to students needs and interests (rather than one size fits all). -Fall graduation. -Starting the day with a Dene prayer. -Activities that welcome teachers. -Using 'high tech' in the school.</p>	<p>-Dealing with deep-rooted issues (e.g. shame of being Aboriginal) and promoting self-esteem, identity, and pride. -Serving students with special needs. -Improving interagency communications and working relationships. -Alternative education programs or options for students struggling with the regular academic program.</p>	<p>(momentum) A (all) R (realistic) T (on right Trail) - (SMART) Plan.</p>	<p>sense of belonging. -Making our public places including the school more welcoming and inviting. -Using our local radio to promote language and success. -Conducting more family history research projects. -Making community role model posters that include postsecondary students and elders. -Making a traditional place names map. -Bringing our concerns and ideas to all community leaders. -Working on a junior and senior high school immersion program for credits. -Holding more rites of passage camps. -Revisiting existing plans/goals. -More active student/ individual career plans that fit the student and community needs. -Talking with students and community members to create ideas for program enhancement and change.</p>	
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The Fort Simpson Plan for Supporting Student Success

Main Issues	Working Now	Need to be Addressed	What?	How?	Who & When?
<p>-Poor attendance. -Unhealthy families. -Students struggling/falling behind. -A school system not working for some students. -Lack of postsecondary and career goals. -Inclusive schooling and multi-level classrooms. -Bullying in and outside the school. -Culturally inappropriate curriculum and teaching methods. -Lack of Slavey language use/instruction. -Too few 'hands-on' activities and opportunities to engage students.</p>	<p>-Many smart, motivated, interested students with endless potential, talents, and skills. -Good school infrastructure/ staff/ facilities and educational funding. -Students who attend everyday, are engaged, do well academically and in their different roles as community members. -Former graduates living and working in the community, some with very good jobs. -Schools try to meet complex needs. -Teachers help students. -Home boarding students sign in for study hall. -Exemplary schools for their tone and atmosphere (e.g. "good places</p>	<p>-Lack of staff to offer some extracurricular programs all the time. -Need to find multiple opportunities for parents to interact, be involved, and physically be in the school in meaningful ways. -Need a parents' support group and perhaps a parents' room in both schools. -Need new ways to reach out and communicate with parents. -Need to make room for local culture and history to be integrated into courses/classes. -Need to establish a summer cultural program in partnership with others. -Need to find ways to use multi-media/IT in K-12.</p>	<p>1. Two week on the land cultural camp and orientation for staff and students. 2. Formally gather local history, stories, and information to incorporate into the K-12 Social Studies and other courses.</p>	<p>-To organize the fall hunt, the school principals and LKFN will meet to discuss and plan details (e.g. parent involvement, number and age of student involvement, who will do what, community involvement). - Meet with Margaret Thom to learn from Fort Providence's experience doing rites of passage camps. -The schools need to work out staff costs. -A meeting is needed involving the DEA, LKFN and DDEC to plan the project. -Project research should include detailed information on community dynamics, history, and</p>	<p>LKFN's Chief committed to coordinating an upcoming fall (2011) hunt/ rites of passage with the school, community and Band membership. Parents would help run the camp/orientation. This would take place prior to the beginning of the school year. -DEA and DDEC with LKFN</p>

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<p>-Lack of shared community responsibility for raising and educating children. -Schools not part of the community. -Lack of parent and community involvement in education.</p>	<p>to be," "care about the students," "reflect community values"). -Extracurricular and athletic programs to motivate/help students. -Christmas concert and drama.</p>		<p>3. Include accurate information within the K-12 curriculum that reflects the history of the Dene in the NWT, in the region and locally from a Dene perspective including information on treaties, colonization, decolonization, the residential school experience in the NWT.</p> <p>4. Stronger school-community relations and more young parent engagement.</p> <p>5. Aboriginal language immersion program in all schools for K-12.</p>	<p>current political situation.</p> <p>-A meeting is needed involving the DEA, LKFN and DDEC to coordinate efforts.</p> <p>-Set up opportunities for young parents to tour other schools to expose them to how other places interact and work together. -Explore ways that the Aboriginal leadership/staff can work more actively with the schools (e.g. Band-school partnerships). -Clearly define who is responsible for what (e.g. DEA/DEC power and authority and Aboriginal leadership authority).</p> <p>-A meeting is needed involving the DEA, LKFN and DDEC to discuss immersion programming, implications, availability to students, and logistics.</p>	<p>-DEA and DDEC with LKFN</p> <p>-DEA with DDEC and LKFN</p> <p>-DEA with DDEC and LKFN -LKFN's Chief committed to providing the Band's Aboriginal language funding to the schools in Fort Simpson to use as needed (e.g. combine funds with DEC/DEA Aboriginal language funding to offer Aboriginal language programs at TSS). To follow-up on LKFN's commitments, there should be a DEA-LKFN meeting in February/March.</p>
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			6. Increase literacy Level of students.	-Work to make sure that all children are an appropriate level in reading and writing by the end of Grade 3.	-Schools, DEA and DDEC
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Participants:

1. Grand Chief Sam Gargan, Dehcho First Nations, Fort Simpson
2. Chief Tim Lennie, First Nation, Wrigley
3. Chief Fred Tesou, First Nation, Nahanni Butte
4. Chief Jim Antoine, First Nation, Fort Simpson
5. Chief Joachim Bonnetrouge, First Nation, Fort Providence
6. Chief Isadore Simon, First Nation, Jean Marie River
7. Kevin Menicoche, MLA, Nahendeh
8. Marie Lafferty, Metis Local, Fort Simpson
9. Martina Norwegian, DDEC, Fort Simpson
10. Peter Canadien, DDEC, Fort Providence
11. Yvonne Norwegian, DDEC, Jean Marie River
12. Sharon Kotchea, DDEC, Trout Lake
13. Lisa Moses, DDEC, Wrigley
14. Marlene Konisenta, DDEC, Nahanni Butte
15. Betty Hardisty, DEA, Fort Simpson
16. Margaret Ireland, DEA, Jean Marie River
17. Ruby Jumbo, DEA, Trout Lake
18. Gloria Hardisty, DEA, Wrigley
19. Melanie Louie, DEA, Fort Liard
20. Joan Ekotla, DEA, Nahanni Butte
21. Freda Blyth, DDEC, Fort Simpson
22. Chris Kingsbury, DDEC, Fort Simpson
23. Theresa Bonnetrouge, DDEC, Fort Providence
24. George Urban, DDEC, Kakisa
25. Reed Smith, DDEC, Fort Liard
26. Kent Bratton, DDEC, Wrigley
27. Wayne Ingarfield, DDEC, Nahanni Butte
28. Charles Gargan, youth, Fort Simpson
29. Sylvia Pasqua-Matte, youth, Fort Simpson
30. Ben Vandell, youth, Fort Providence
31. Shyanna Sabourin, youth, Fort Providence
32. Kyla Norwegian, youth, Jean Marie River
33. Alisha Grossette, youth, Jean Marie River
34. Dalton Simba, youth, Kakisa
35. Sheyenne Jumbo, youth, Trout Lake
36. Timothy Pierre, youth, Trout Lake
37. Trent Cli, youth, Wrigley
38. Alisha Moses, youth, Wrigley
39. Monica Berreault, youth, Fort Liard
40. Lori Bertrand, youth, Nahanni Butte
41. Mindy Tsetso, youth, Nahanni Butte

42. Terry Jaffray, DDEC, Fort Simpson
43. Brian Jaffray, DDEC, Fort Simpson
44. Andy Norwegian, DDEC, Fort Simpson
45. Kiatch Nahanni, DDEC, Fort Simpson
46. Nicki Crawley, DDEC, Fort Simpson
47. Minister Jackson Lafferty, Education, Culture and Employment, Yellowknife
48. Dan Daniels, Education, Culture and Employment, Yellowknife
49. Roy Erasmus, Education, Culture and Employment, Yellowknife
50. Rita Mueller, Education, Culture and Employment, Yellowknife
51. Don Morrison, Education, Culture and Employment, Yellowknife
52. Ron Cleary, Education, Culture and Employment, Yellowknife
53. Teresa Watson, Education, Culture and Employment, Yellowknife
54. Linda Kalbun, Education, Culture and Employment, Yellowknife
55. Catherine Boyd, Education, Culture and Employment, Yellowknife
56. Amy Doerkson, Education, Culture and Employment, Yellowknife
57. Sarah Wright-Cardinal, Aurora College, Fort Smith
58. Jeff O'Keefe, Aurora College, Fort Smith
59. David Reid, NWT Teachers' Association, Yellowknife
60. Dennis Nelner, public, Fort Simpson
61. Mary Jane Cazon, Interpreter, Fort Simpson
62. Sarah Tsetso, Interpreter, Fort Simpson
63. Lois Little, Facilitator, Yellowknife