

**Aboriginal Student Achievement Initiative
South Slave Region**

**Minister's and Community Education Forums
K'atl'odehche
April 5-7, 2011**

The Minister's Forum –April 5-6, 2011

The Minister of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) and the South Slave Divisional Education Council (SSDEC) brought together more than 80 educators, education and community leaders, elders, and youth to discuss ways to improve Aboriginal student achievement. All communities in the South Slave were well represented, especially the K'atl'odehche First Nation.

The Leaders' Words

Chief Roy Fabian, K'atl'odehche First Nation, provided an historical overview of the treaty process and the outcomes that have created the gap in the achievements of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. These gaps would not exist if the education system valued Dene skills and knowledge. Colonial processes of education continue to erode Dene language, culture, and relationships with the land. It is a challenge for First Nations to maintain identity and function as self-sufficient people. Colonization has resulted in dependencies. Today people seem to aspire toward dependency and abuse. He encouraged people to really speak out about why the Dene are losing the language and culture. He said that Minister Lafferty understands the phrase strong like two people "because his people developed this concept." "Right now, Dene are not aspiring to be Dene people, to look to the land which is our power."

Chief Fabian asked forum participants to show their support for an immersion program to save the Dene as a distinct group of people. He noted his own failings as Chief for not being active in the school and his failing as a Dene person for not being more active as a role model on Dene language and cultural teachings.

Ann Pischinger, Chair of the South Slave Divisional Education Council, commended the community schools in the region and expressed her hope that everyone will actively work to support Aboriginal student achievement. **Jane Groenewegen**, MLA Hay River South, expressed her support for her colleagues who have more background on education issues. Our education system can be improved with the input of the people at the forum and the hard work of the MLAs and other leaders. **Diana Yeager**, Constituency Assistant spoke on behalf of the Honourable **Paul Delorey**, MLA Hay River North, who is in full support of this initiative because education is foundational to the success of our society. The Honourable **Michael Miltenberger**, MLA Thebacha, referred to the book *Dancing with Dependency* that speaks to the theme raised by Chief Fabian. Education is critical to us all and to breaking dependencies and encouraging full participation in our communities. Language and culture are central to education. **Pearl Bird**, spoke on behalf of Betty Villebrun, President of the NWT Metis Nation, and as a member of the Aboriginal Student Achievement Working Group. She stressed the importance of education and the important role that parents and grandparents have in supporting the success of our children.

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 Minister's Forum discussed these four priorities.

1. Early Childhood and Child Care

Success in the early years

South Slave youth attending the forum said that children need a strong, healthy family to ensure successes in the early years. Mothers need to have good prenatal and postnatal care and education to provide appropriate infant support. Prenatal care should include nutrition and dietary assistance including food vouchers, if needed. Families should have access to traditional foods. Mothers need the active participation of their partner (or community members) to raise children well.

Forum participants from regional centres agreed that the family needs to provide a healthy, stress-free living environment for children to be successful in their early years. Children need to bond with the family and have a positive connection with at least one caregiver. Families need to role model and teach values, provide social/emotional balance, and socialization through eating together and having connections to the

extended family. They need to provide a literacy rich home environment, turn off the TV, and “encourage our kids to slow down and be kids.” Forum participants from regional centres said that the community has a role to play in identifying and supporting families in need, creating more options for support (e.g. parenting skills programs) and encouraging ‘buy-in’ to the supports that are available. The community can help people overcome their discomfort interacting with the school and other organizations and encourage groups to work together.

Early childhood programs

K’atl’odehche’s early childhood programs meet the needs of children and families in that they offer Slavey language and some cultural programming (e.g. drumming), and work to instil cultural and community values in young children and their families. Efforts are also made by Social Services to hold childcare spaces for families in need of these supports. A ‘new’ home visiting program will emphasize literacy for infants and three to four year olds. While K’atl’odehche has quality early childhood programming, families and communities need to be more actively involved in fostering early skills. In many families, TV is used as a babysitter.

Participants said that K’atl’odehche has strong traditional knowledge and language holders who should be more involved and recognized as role models in early childhood programs. Also, more focus is needed on:

- Young brain development and supports for young moms/ families experiencing stress.
- Prenatal and zero to three year olds.
- The important role of fathers in early childhood.
- Assessing existing facilities to determine if there is the capacity to deliver needed programming.
- Working with childcare services so they function as family resource centres.
- Investigating options for offsetting early childhood development/ childcare costs.
- Securing funding to support healthy family development, community involvement, and communication. For example, there is an interagency coordinator who works on nutrition and pre-natal (for 10 hours/ week) but staff are poorly paid and under valued.

Development delay or disability

Forum participants from small communities said that development delay and disability could be prevented or ameliorated with quality early childhood programs, early assessment, and supports to encourage healthy home environments. In the small communities of Lutsel k’e and Fort Resolution, there is a need for:

- Information to get families interested/engaged in early childhood development including the affects of drugs/alcohol use during pregnancy.
- Accessible free daycare/preschool, particularly for parents who are in high school, postsecondary or alternative education/training.
- Screening at birth and yearly medical assessment of all children.
- Proper funding.
- Appropriate facilities.
- Training and adequate funding for early childhood workers.

Forum participants from Lutsel k'e and Fort Resolution said that schools should be included in planning for early childhood programs. Schools should also consider incorporating information on FASD and early childhood development into the health curriculum beginning in Grade 7. They also suggested mandatory courses in Grades 7-12 that give students opportunities to learn basic parenting skills and about child development. Communities need to offer 'child well-being clinics' and overcome confidentiality barriers that prevent information sharing between the health and education agencies. Forum participants from Lutsel k'e and Fort Resolution also suggested home visits to talk about early childhood development and more training on this subject for community health representatives.

Forum participants from Lutsel k'e and Fort Resolution expressed concerns about children apprehended by Social Services and the potential for these children to experience development delay/disability. To avoid development delay, they said that children must be placed with healthy and culturally similar families who provide an environment that is appropriate for the gender of the child. Living conditions must be consistently monitored.

Mandatory full day kindergarten for all five year olds

South Slave youth considered the pros and cons of mandatory kindergarten. On the positive side, they said that a mandatory full-day kindergarten program that doesn't "just double half-day programming but is meaningful for kids" could help young children to:

- Feel more like older kids,
- Be more independent,
- Develop skills and routines necessary for school,
- Have stronger immune system because of exposure to others,
- get more socialization,
- Build stronger literacy skills, and
- Make connections with their language and culture.

Mandatory kindergarten might also be good for parents because they can be assured that their child is in a safe and learning environment. It would be a better alternative to a babysitter and cheaper than childcare.

On the negative side, youth said that mandatory full day kindergarten could be tiring and routines may be difficult for some children. Some young children may not be ready or mature enough to attend a full-day program or find it too overwhelming. Some children may have a better alternative (e.g. grandparents). "Home has a freedom that kindergarten doesn't have." They said that families should have a choice of full day or half day programming and have more opportunities to discuss mandatory versus optional programs.

Forum participants from Lutsel k'e and Fort Resolution said that most parents already believe that kindergarten is mandatory. They said that "full day kindergarten is working now." "Children love kindergarten." They agreed that full day kindergarten should be mandatory in order for young children to develop necessary social skills. While participants from the small communities agreed with the idea of full time mandatory kindergarten, they questioned what a full-day kindergarten looks like. Is it play based? Is it different than Grades 1-12? The kindergarten should be run by a fully funded kindergarten teacher in an appropriate facility / classroom. Resources for the kindergarten should be outside or in addition to the current funding for schools.

Forum participants from Fort Smith said that there is a need to examine the existing kindergarten program to ensure that it is a rich experience for young children. Most agreed that half-day kindergarten should be mandatory and half day optional because for some children, a full day may be too much. Half day mandatory programming would also enable options for parents whose children are not ready for full-time programming or who are comfortable and stimulated in the home environment.

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

Forum participants from K'atl'odehche said that a program for four year olds at no cost to parents is a good proposal if it is play-based and adequately funded. They said that if the choice is between early programs for zero and three and four years olds, programming for the younger group should be a priority. Participants from Lutsel k'e and Fort Resolution said that every community needs funding for a preschool/school readiness program that focuses on Aboriginal language, healthy nutrition, and development. "Lutsel k'e needs a daycare and preschool facility!"

Forum participants from Hay River said that before offering any early childhood program for four year olds there is a need to look at what services already exist in the community in order to avoid overlap in services and respond to the individual needs of children. Some said that four years of age is too young for programming because this time is needed to build family bonds and teach values in the home. Others said that if early childhood is truly an issue, programs should not be optional.

While there were a variety of views on the idea of a structured early childhood program for four year olds, there was agreement that any programming should:

- Have trained early childhood staff. "Being a teacher doesn't qualify you to teach early childhood programs."

- Be well funded.
- Partner with Health and Social Services for speech, OT, and other specialized services.

Participants suggested that the Aurora College education and early childhood training programs need to be culturally appropriate and operate in partnership with high schools and other community agencies.

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

The idea of locating an optional NWT-wide structured early childhood program for four year olds in a community school was a concern for several forum participants. Participants from K'atl'odehche questioned whether the school has the capacity/ infrastructure for a play-based program. Participants from other communities had similar questions given that space is "a huge factor, including space to play outside" and "early childhood programs should not look like a typical school classroom." Others were concerned about the implications of moving early childhood programs under the school umbrella in terms of funding, connections with K-12 programs, and working relationships with school staff. They also said that "if the program is under the school umbrella, all school staff must become aware of the principles/ rationale behind early childhood." If early childhood programs operate from the school, participants suggested connecting these programs with middle high school for students to learn more about early childhood.

2. Student and Family Support

Barriers and challenges preventing school successes

South Slave youth identified 12 main barriers and challenges preventing school successes:

1. Money for school supplies, field trips, indoor shoes, and sports,
2. Schedules for activities,
3. Transportation,
4. Balancing school, work, practices, chores, and homework,
5. Stress at home, dating, and at work,
6. Peer pressure and bullies,
7. Drinking and drugs,
8. Teenage pregnancies,
9. Lack of family support to get up, do homework, and eat nutritious food,
10. Family commitments and responsibilities,
11. Lack of parent contact with the school, awareness of school progress, and/or knowing how to support students, and
12. Violence in the home.

The youth said that when students start skipping school "it spreads throughout the group and is perpetuated by being late then absent and lack of parent contact."

Parents and grandparents attending the forum identified the barriers to school success as lack of community / family involvement and support due to:

- Poor understanding of the schools,
- Lack of parenting skills,
- Gambling,
- Poor communications at all levels,
- Interagency groups not working together,
- Language and cultural differences,
- Inflexibility of programs and curriculum including lack of emphasis on learning local / family history, and
- Limited course options due to lack of funding for schools in small communities.

Poor relationships between the home and school are also barriers. Forum participants said that school staff do a poor job of establishing relationships with parents because they communicate only when students are failing, and expect parents to come to the school rather than going out to the home / community.

Support needed from the home, school, and community

Educators attending the forum in the South Slave said that students need families to value education and to expect their children to attend and succeed in school. Children need healthy home environments that offer proper nutrition, sleep, and routines. Families and the community need to have good communications and relationships with teachers and other school staff. Schools need to be more aware of and responsive to the community and to children's needs.

To support student success, educators said that the community needs to:

- Encourage career and goal setting programming among students, and create volunteer, work experience and extracurricular opportunities for children/ youth.
- Support school attendance (e.g. by businesses not serving youth during school hours).
- Develop a “mindset that doing well in school is a good thing.”
- Be aware of and work to address safety and basic needs, and establish wellness services/ programs to assist students. “We need to have programs for aged 15-21 year olds because right now there are very few, if any programs.” “There needs to be a daycare/ preschool for young parents to bring their children to while they are in school.”
- offer engaging, relevant, and flexible programs to support strong relationships between students and the school.

Helping families to help their children be successful in school

To better help their children succeed at school, South Slave youth said that students need their families to:

- Bond with, and trust them.
- Counsel them to build inner strength and help them deal with stress.
- Encourage a sense of rebellion to “go against the grain and break a bad pattern.”
- Support education.
- Encourage good choices.
- Recognize achievements and perseverance, feel proud of them, and not “always criticize non-success.”
- Collaborate and network to build relationships.
- Have fun and do things together including going out on the land and playing games.
- Instil a strong sense of culture.

To better help their children succeed in school, educators attending the forum said that families need patient and persistent outreach from the school and from other community programs and services. They need the school to never give up on students. Families need honest and simple (plain language) information in a variety of format about their child’s school progress and regular reminders about what the school needs and expects from them. Families need schools to recognize and appreciate that all families look different and require different supports. To build better school-home relationships, educators said that school staff need to understand the historical and current context of the community and the existing situation in the home. Families also need career and postsecondary awareness training and after school homework/ study supports so they can help their children prepare for higher level education. Families need opportunities for modelling involvement in literacy with their children, behaviour management, and conflict resolution. Educators also said that communities and schools

“need to acknowledge and celebrate the families who are healthy and successful in supporting their children’s school success and to do this in culturally appropriate ways.” Also, “families need to be encouraged by others in the community to get involved in education.”

Parents and grandparents agreed that “everyone needs to celebrate success.” Families need interagency (e.g. church, RCMP, health centre, and social workers) involvement to build relationships and find ways to help students succeed at school. They also need:

- Elders to be involved and using the language.
- The school/teachers to provide ongoing communications, “not just at report card time.”
- The community to be involved in the school.
- Family development programs including parenting courses and ways to build healthy families so they can make breakfast, eat together, “get your kids out the door”, walk to school, talk to their children, and help with homework.
- Schools to have programs/services that help students with their homework.

Leaders and elders in the South Slave said that the school needs to be a welcoming, open environment that has positive communications and involvement from the home. “It is important for kids to see their parents involved” in their education. “Parents need to know that their attitude about education affects their kids’ attitude about school.” Schools need a liaison person to involve parents and elders/grandparents. Other supports could include a tutoring hotline, opportunities for knowledge sharing on such issues as early childhood development and time management (e.g. “strategies to free up time to be able to ‘hang out’ with your kids”), and skills forums to discuss issues impacting teens (e.g. parenting workshops, a coffee house or expanding the Health Café). They also suggested that families could better help their students succeed at school if there was more integration of the departments of Health and Social Services and Education, access to specialists, and partnerships and interagency connections among governments, Aboriginal governments and organizations. Leaders and elders also said that families need their students to have access to alternative schooling opportunities and standards of excellence for extracurricular activities (e.g. tied to academics and attendance). Families need to know the importance of maintaining an active physical lifestyle.

3. Aboriginal Language Curriculum and Resource Development

Aboriginal language fluency and strong cultural knowledge

Bilingual participants attending the South Slave forum said that for students to become fluent the language must be used “absolutely everywhere, everyday throughout the home, school, and community, from womb to tomb.” They said that:

- Families need to practice and value the language.
- Schools need to have instruction in Slavey only (no English at all) in Aboriginal language classes and encourage and model Aboriginal language use at all times.

- Communities need to offer culture-based events and address the effects of the residential school experience on language use.

In all environments, support especially from the elders, is needed. “No one should laugh at or ridicule new language learners.”

“We must convey to all Aboriginal children and youth the power that they have as an Aboriginal individual and the power, the gift of knowing and speaking their first language.”

Unilingual participants at the forum said that families must speak the language and encourage children to speak the language early. Community organizations need to provide exposure to language and culture for all members through:

- Immersion exchange programs,
- Promoting ‘word a day calendars’ and local language days,
- Supporting a ‘speaking buddies’ program, and
- Seeking funding for resources/tools/programs.

These participants said that schools need to offer language and culture immersion programs, have elders in the school, and make Aboriginal language mandatory in the school curriculum. They said that Aurora College should have an Aboriginal language component to TEP.

Ways the regular school system can strengthen Aboriginal languages

Youth said that the regular school system can strengthen Aboriginal languages by beginning instruction in early childhood programs or in kindergarten, and having credit-based immersion programs that use new and traditional teaching methods. They said that children need to have Aboriginal teachers who speak the language, elders in the school, and signage in the language. They suggested developing a core group of committed language speakers to mentor youth to “influence the next generation.” They said that it is important to document elders’ perspectives on the culture and values, and to understand why these values are important.

Participants who know two languages but speak only one said that there is a need to develop a doable plan to strengthen Aboriginal languages within the school system. The plan should involve leaders and hold all parties accountable. The plan should build partnerships/connectivity between languages through family oriented, community-based classes, modelling language to children to build pride, and individual computerized language programs. They suggested designing a curriculum template to build basic language skills and to support the curriculum with music (CDs/songs). They recommended preschool/ primary school immersion classes, moving language instruction outside the school, and offering on the land summer language immersion and other seasonal programming. They also suggested capacity building by mentoring new language teachers and succession planning.

Unilingual participants at the forum felt that Aboriginal organizations need to take more ownership of the language and involve the whole community to make the language flourish. “Communities have the power to address language issues” and to reinforce it “everywhere children and youth go.” Head start programs are good examples, particularly in cases where they partner with local schools and get current speakers working with younger/newer speakers. These participants also advised schools to “recognize that current FSL and Rosetta Stone methods are boring.” To attract youth to the language, multimedia exposure is needed (e.g. Dora the Explorer in the Dene language). “We need to explore options for what works.” “We need to steal what works from the literacy initiative (e.g. reading Buddies, guided reading, word wall).” “We need to make language classes ‘cool’ using smart boards, and raising the profile.” “We need to make the languages entertaining and bring Dene legends alive through multimedia and games.” “We need student led projects focusing on the history of the culture.” “We need funding for existing Aboriginal staff to get training in language acquisition.”

Making the NWT K-12 school program more culturally relevant

Bilingual participants at the forum said that the issue of cultural relevance in NWT school programs has been a topic of discussion for the last 30 years but “nothing ever changes.” Changes that will lead to a more culturally relevant school program will only come about when people in the community take control of the education system. “If we want our education system to really change in a meaningful and significant way then the Dene must take back the education of their children and take education back to the land.” “We need to ask what value our current education system gives to Dene children today.”

For the school program to be more culturally relevant, bilingual participants at the South Slave forum suggested that students need to fully understand the history of their own people including the residential schools and the full impacts of this history on education today. Students must have access to a Dene immersion education system for at least the first five years of education (primary and middle school education/grades). “We need to give them (students) constant opportunities to be part of groups of people interested in learning the cultural values and language.” Culturally relevant programming must teach and model protocols, and be set within the context of the community’s traditions and language. Culturally relevant programming is guided by a curriculum. “We must have a Dene curriculum written in Dene, and a Dene program led by the elders.”

Participants advise bringing the school to the land, as this is the best environment for children to learn essential cultural values and beliefs, and a work ethic. “Children must be given the foundation of the Dene values, knowledge, skills, ways of learning and teaching as the basis of their education and to help them survive and thrive.” “They need to be immersed in the everyday activities where they can live and learn the language and cultural skills and values.” They also recommended that on the land learning be supplemented with multi-media culture and language appropriate tools and resources that are of interest to children. Bilingual participants said that the community must give priority to supporting Dene immersion programming, ensuring the language is visible and used at all times, and encouraging elders, the leaders/keepers of culture and values, to part of cultural-based programming. They suggested that elders should be certified as teachers.

Unilingual participants at the forum said that the current Alberta curriculum should be better adapted to the NWT and its regions, and supported by more culturally relevant teaching methods, activities, and learning objectives (e.g. include genealogy that shows linkages to families, traditions, and heritage). “Authentic traditional cultural experiences should be part of the curriculum” as should basic skills (e.g. “teach making bannock rather than egg rolls”). Courses should be semestered in a more compact way in order to support and encourage families to take their children on the land. Consideration should be given to a year round schedule with breaks consistent with cultural events/activities. For example, the school schedule could be shaped around the cultural calendar (e.g. three-four week summer break for fishing, a break for fall hunting and berry picking) and more flexible floating days to accommodate for

example, days off when the fish are running or geese are migrating. Unilingual participants agreed with others that families and the community need to take more ownership and responsibility for language and cultural teachings in and outside the school. They said that there is also a need to identify and recruit people in each community who could teach as well as for alternative pathways for Aboriginal language speakers/traditional knowledge holders to become teachers in our schools.

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

To make the school system better for all Aboriginal students, youth attending the South Slave forum said that traditional and regular teaching methods need to be combined within the regular school system, and the school content needs to be progressive and build on students' skills (e.g. rather than doing the same thing every year). Youth said that schools need to:

- Incorporate language and cultural skills in arts, science, and CTS courses.
- encourage more arts and cultural expression.
- Coach/mentor students who are especially interested and passionate in particular subjects.
- Look at different ways to organize the school year so that both on-the-land and in-class learning experiences are available to all youth.
- Encourage pride in Aboriginal heritage.
- Acknowledge and address racism and stereotyping.
- Make language and culture a 'cool' thing.
- Switch roles from time to time (e.g. have older students teaching younger students and students and elders teaching the teachers).

Participants who know two languages but speak only one said that students must have a reason to learn and use the language. They suggested "100% support for head start programs so children are ready for kindergarten" as well as parenting skills programs to support language acquisition. More opportunities should be available for all students to learn and become fluent in the language (e.g. establish times to teach/learn the language such as at lunch hour). Schools should have elders in residence and training should be provided on how to teach the language. They also suggested:

- Re-evaluating graduation requirements to clarify the path to diplomas and to employment.
- Developing school to work transition programs.
- A standardized curriculum for K-12 with assessment benchmarks for Aboriginal language.
- Year-round school schedules, modular approaches, and sequential credits that allow more flexibility for each student and ensure that language/on the land/other classes don't compete for limited hours/days in the school year.
- Holding the Hay River Track and Field event concurrent with Dene Games.

Unilingual participants at the forum said that early childhood/childcare programs should focus on the Aboriginal language and all classes throughout the school should infuse the Aboriginal language (rather than containing language to a specific class at a specific time). The profile of language should be raised throughout the school and the physical school environment should reflect the local community culture. They also suggested delivering breakfast programs in the language and ensuring stable funding for nutrition programs. School announcements, plays, and special activities should be done in the language. Information on the curriculum and Aboriginal language efforts need to be shared with parents in clear plain language. Unilingual participants said that Education, Culture and Employment needs to:

- Provide resources to better serve students from a minority language group (e.g. Inuktitut).
- Re-examine the formula funding to create a fair base amount that ensures equality across the NWT regardless of school size.
- Support schools/communities to identify and develop teaching talents within the community.

They also suggested that a second language be included in TEP training. Further, DEAs and Aboriginal governments should exercise their power/influence and lobby for teachers' housing.

4. Literacy

Developing strong literacy skills

From a Dene perspective, the family, the school, and the community are interconnected environments. To fragment or consider each environment in isolation of the other is an example of the 'English education system' described by Chief Roy Fabian.

South Slave youth attending the forum said that strong relationships among and within the family, school, and community environments are needed. All three environments need resources and a sincere long-term commitment to literacy. These environments should be a point of reference for identity, value oral language, and support independence. To support literacy development, families need to be role models, encourage youth to go to school, provide a strong cultural foundation, and have books/storybooks in the home. Youth said that to encourage strong literacy skills schools need to provide leadership programs, offer various program streams, have dedicated teachers, and make learning fun. Community members need to visit the school to read. They need to profile literacy/reading functions at non-school functions/gatherings and get books into the home.

Forum participants who work with Aboriginal languages said that strong Aboriginal literacy skills require:

- Early exposure to, and consistent language use in the home and in the primary grades.
- Consistent immersion in the language (rather than switching to English).
- Consistency in explanations and interpretation.
- Ongoing and diverse learning opportunities and supportive learning environments.
- More exposure to the language through posters and signage, and radio programs.
- The language and culture to be intertwined in the activities of daily life in the home, school, and community.
- Practice through interactive and contextual on the land activities.

"People need to be proud of our language and actively use it daily." They said that there is a need for more financial and human resources to support Aboriginal language literacy. They suggested that more authority should be given to the school/DEA/DEC regarding what will be taught (and who can teach). These groups should work together to determine goals/processes (e.g. contractual flexibility) for strengthening Aboriginal language literacy in the schools.

Forum participants who have taken leadership on literacy said that children's literacy skills are developed in supportive, safe environments where others engage and model literacy using traditional and modern tools (e.g. literacy rich homes that share values, beliefs, and skills). Literacy skills are fostered through conversation, reading and storytelling, and pride in language and culture. Parents who have expectations of their children and balance in their family life (e.g. routine, structure, "bring their kids to

school," and "show they care") also support literacy as does celebrating and encouraging success. Literacy skills are also developed through quality preschool, childcare, and after school programs, and high quality instruction/good teachers.

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

Youth attending the South Slave forum said that often parents are working or are too busy to focus on school readiness or to read, teach, or speak to young children. Also, there may be few appropriate books or computers in the home or insufficient competency in reading or technology use. These are main barriers to children becoming capable readers by Grade 3. At school, barriers to becoming a capable reader include lack of IT specialists, inappropriate assessment tools, and large, impersonal classes. Youth said that schools need to recognize different learning styles and provide individualized instruction when needed. Schools need to offer a broader range of reading materials (e.g. magazines, internet, graphic novels, and fiction and non-fiction). Youth stressed the important influence that good student-teacher relationships have on literacy. "Some teachers are ineffective or don't care/connect." "Relationships are important motivators. It is like 'doing it for Mom'." Inconsistent attendance, social issues such as alcohol and drug abuse/addictions, and peer pressure/bullies are also barriers to becoming a capable reader by Grade 3.

Forum participants who work with Aboriginal languages said that barriers to Aboriginal language literacy include lack of curriculum, assessment tools, and standards for language development. They said that schools should be working toward enabling capable speakers by Grade 3 rather than capable readers. Other barriers to Aboriginal language fluency are:

- Lack of fluent speakers.
- A disconnect or separation of the generations.
- Lack of recognition of elders' knowledge and ways to value their role as instructors and teachers.
- Lack of exposure to both male and female instructors who can teach and value gender roles within Aboriginal culture.

Participants who have taken leadership on literacy pointed to issues in the home that prevent children from becoming capable readers by Grade 3. Children are not being taught values, respect, or how to listen and pay attention. Children lack structure and opportunities to interact with other family members. They spend too much time watching TV/ playing video games. They may not be well rested or fed. Parents may lack reading skills or live unhealthy lifestyles. As such children's "brain muscle is not being developed."

Outside the home participants who have taken leadership on literacy said that reading abilities are influenced by lack of access to preschool programming and approaches within the school. They said that schools lack flexibility to respond to individual needs. "We are not allowing the 'box' to fit our children." Teachers need to be flexible, reach out to children, and make literacy fun. Social promotion (moving students onto the next

grade before they are ready), truancy, teacher turn-over and lack of relevant resources in the school are also barriers.

Becoming a capable reader by Grade 3

Participants who do family literacy activities said that to be capable readers by Grade 3 children need to:

- Be immersed in appropriate level books.
- Have supportive reading environments (e.g. “turn off the TV”, “make it fun”).
- Use resources that interest them (e.g. video games and comic books).
- be exposed to role modelling.

Children need to be exposed to storytelling and listening to learn, and encouraged to tell their own stories and to use pictures to do so. Children need to play educational games at home and school, and see their parents involved in reading in the classroom and at home.

Participants who work on school based literacy said that schools must create a safe classroom setting where children feel positive and supported in taking risks in their reading. Parents also need to be supported. They said that parents who have low literacy struggle to help their children, especially when their children’s reading level is stronger than their own. This may affect the parent’s self-esteem and willingness to get involved in their child’s literacy development. “Our education system needs to be far more aware and respectful of the situation in children’s homes and of the struggles/ challenges parents have.”

People who work on school based literacy said that capable readers are often products of head start and multi-literacy learning programs. They are children who have experienced `smart` learning approaches, culturally appropriate reading materials, and “teachers who have access to professional development and support staff to help them strengthen literacy strategies.” In the home, children who are capable readers have been exposed to a home reading program with training or other modelling sessions, the “ready, set, learn” program, and multi-media tools and resources beginning in the early years. In the primary grades (K-3), children who are capable readers have access to a literacy coach “to gain a love of reading, to get joy from reading, to hear storytelling, and have visual, experiential/hands-on learning opportunities.” Capable readers have access to reading materials that are of interest to them.

Participants who work on school based literacy said that high school students should be engaged as assistants/role models to work with preschool and primary school children to encourage reading. They said that strong partnerships among education, health, and social service agencies are required to ensure that children with reading difficulties receive proper interventions. They recommended more access to early educational psychological assessments, occupational therapist, speech/language specialists, and psychologists. Assessment data would help teachers to focus teaching.

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

Forum participants who undertake family literacy activities listed a wide range of actions to improve literacy skills. These included a focus on phonetics, theme teaching, reading buddies, book making, personal dictionaries, pen pals, show and tell, science fair-type projects, different writing styles/genres, debating clubs, book fairs, careers fairs, digital storytelling, computerized reading programs, cooking classes, music programs, play, reading incentives, reading/writing contests, spelling bees, 'word of the week', and word walls. They said that literacy skills can be strengthened by using appropriate level materials, establishing reading routines, and joint home-school literacy strategies. Literacy skills can be fostered by respecting the student's creativity and preferred method of expression and by encouraging students to challenge their own abilities. Schools or other community agencies could make extra learning opportunities available for example, writing weekends for students preparing for college/university (e.g. with peer editing), and job and student shadowing opportunities (e.g. parents could join the class or a younger student could join in the classes of older students).

People who work on school-based literacy said that there should be free or subsidized quality childcare/preschool for all children in all communities. These programs should focus on early literacy. They also said that "schools must be totally honest with parents so that they are aware of their child's strengths and challenges and their reading/writing level. Parents must be kept in the loop and aware of how their child is progressing." Diagnostic tests to show progress over time would be also helpful as would opportunities for all teachers to work in professional learning communities in order to increase awareness of children's strengths and challenges.

Participants working on school-based literacy said that "we have many parents who are suffering with alcoholism and as a result are embarrassed to be out in the community or the school. This is a big problem that is very sensitive and difficult to talk about within the community. There are families really struggling with alcohol, gambling, drug use, lack of parenting skills, and as a result children get mixed messages and are confused and lost." To strengthen opportunities for children to develop strong literacy skills, "we need to highlight the people within our community who are role models and are trying to be healthy and 'walk the talk'. We need to ask these individuals to work with our children and families and to help struggling parents to learn the skills needed." "We also need to ensure that the school is truly at the heart of the community – so much so that it really is a school community where community members do not see a difference between the school and life in the community."

Is the Discussion Paper on the Right Track?

Several forum participants agreed that the discussion paper is on the right track. For example, **Doug Lamalice** said that the ASA discussion paper is on the right track because it shows that people care. It also recognizes that people have come a long way. The discussion paper needs everyone to work together and reflect everyone's points of view. **Andy Cardinal** said that it is positive. It encourages learning and shared

responsibility. He said that people have gained new ideas from this forum. They also know that we have to own our language if we want to go forward with it.

Bess-Ann McKay wants to see positive outcomes from this discussion paper. She is committed to taking the planning questions back to her DEA for discussion and passing their answers onto the Department.

Several forum participants said they want to see the priorities implemented. **Pat Martel** agreed that the discussion paper is best implemented by people working together. He has been in leadership for more than 20 years and knows that the only way to get things done is by working together. **Angie Lantz** from Lutsel k'e has been with the DEA for many years and is proud of students' recent literacy and other successes. She was one of the participants that expressed her concern that the work will be shelved. She recommended that prior to the Minister's presentation of the discussion paper to the Legislative Assembly that a group of people from the communities be brought together to review the submission. **Chief Roy Fabian** said that the GNWT is good at fighting for dogs (a reference to the recent NWT Dog Act), but not so good at fighting for peoples' rights. He said that if the GNWT continues in its current direction the Dene culture and language will die. If the government continues on the colonial path of separating the school, family, and community rather than changing the system to integrate the three, and recognize that for Dene "it is all about the family", the education system will continue to 'miss the boat.' **Julie Lys** said that the discussion paper reflects the idea of partnerships which is a large part the Fort Smith DEA's success and the success of its schools.

South Slave Community Forum – April 7, 2011

Aboriginal Achievement in the South Slave

Curtis Brown and Brent Kaulback of SSDEC highlighted Aboriginal student successes and achievements in the South Slave Region. Culture-based initiatives are one key to success. SSDEC has 14 Aboriginal instructors who along with non-Aboriginal peers, are committed to culture-based education. Examples of the strength of culture-based initiatives are reflected in the JBT jiggers who demonstrate pride in their Metis heritage; implementation of the *Dene Kede* curriculum that encourages students to share their talents and skills; and the K'atl'odeche students who through cooking food for this forum, are learning to prepare and share traditional foods. Aboriginal language instruction is offered in each school. In fact, 700 students receive instruction daily. Smart board resources are used in Aboriginal language instruction.

To support language instruction and culture-based education, SSDEC schools offer some land-based programming and are developing resource materials. Over 180 books have been produced about Dene, Metis, and Cree people to support culture-based education. Currently, SSDEC is producing a Chipewyan dictionary with the people of Fort Resolution, developing web-based language resources, and developing a graphic

novel about the great Dene law maker, Yamoria. SSDEC is one of the partners bringing ALCIP courses to K'atl'odehche in September 2011.

Leadership for Literacy is a second key to closing the achievement gap between Aboriginal and other students. In 2007/08, SSDEC put literacy coaches in each school. The coaches teach, model, and practice literacy. This focus together with ongoing professional development results in literacy successes. Lutsel k'e is just one of the schools in the region that is experiencing real improvements in literacy levels.

A third key to student success is providing alternative and year round programming. The PWK experience of success is evidenced in students dropping back into school in Fort Smith. The Phoenix School is a magnet for students dropping back in. In Hay River, the Storefront School is bringing students back or keeping them in school.

Message from the Keynote Speaker

To set the tone for community plans that support Aboriginal student achievement, community forum participants heard from **Mattie McNeill**, a long-time Dene educator and education leader. Mrs. McNeill said that she was taught to be a Dene person in her home. Reflecting on her long history of learning and teaching, she has concluded that student success is not just about overcoming barriers and challenges but about power. There are many forms of power for example, individual and institutional power, and formal and informal power. Some forms of power are given, some come with personal characteristics or position. Power can be given and taken. It can be absolute, held in balance, or shifting and changing. Today, many of our institutions and communities are looking at how to distribute and share power rather than have a few people or groups hold all the power.

Role models whether they are parents, teachers, or other influential people, are very important because they are people who have power. Most of us like to copy role models. When thinking about power, it is important to ask four questions:

1. Who has power?
2. What kind of power do they have?
3. How did they get power?
4. How do they use their power?

We always have to challenge ourselves to be aware of power and how it circulates. "As Aboriginal people, we believe that education institutions have all the power and we don't have any." There are many opportunities to shift and share power with education institutions. In fact, the change that people desire in their lives will only happen if we shift power out of the hands of institutions, or if people take back power from the institutions.

There are specific challenges when dealing with power within our education system. For example, we have to ask how leadership teams are representing Dene perspectives to our children? How are principals, who have lots of power, using their personal, formal and informal power? For example, principals have lots of power over professional development and role modeling on such important issues as literacy.

As Dene people, we need to make it known that our culture is “more than beads and bannock”. We need to make the things that we value known and make sure that the school represents these values. The real challenge in this is to take ownership. “Instead of saying ‘the school has to...’, we should be saying ‘we have to...’ or ‘I have to...’ Every time we say ‘the school has to ...’, we are giving power to the school. Dene are the only people who can teach the Dene to be Dene.” When we think about our children learning to make moccasins or cook, we always think about programs or workshops. We should be thinking about how to empower people, about how to get people to take back power.

We all want our children to be capable, self-sufficient people. This is a common goal of parents and educators. “If we keep our eye on this prize, we can shift power so it is shared by parents and educators. As parents and educators, we can journey together on the same path toward this common goal and to valuing our kids.” We need to always ask ourselves:

1. How much power do I have?
2. What kinds of power do I have?
3. How did I get this power?
4. How do I use this power?

“We always need to be aware of our power, and recognize the power of the people.”

South Slave Community Plans

The five communities in the South Slave caucused to identify main education issues; efforts that are working for 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 quality of discussion, and the need to continue this conversation after this forum. Community plans follow.

South Slave Summary Report

The K'atl'odehche First Nation Plan for Supporting Student Success

Main Issues	Working Now	Need to be Addressed	What?	How?	Who & When?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Lack of community/parent and leadership involvement. -Technology (which is both a blessing and a curse). -Weak language skills (because it is not being used in the home). -Little passion/commitment for the culture (lots of Dene knowledge, values, cultural ways/beliefs within the community but a lack of funding and passion so no one shares their knowledge and skills). -Control of funding decisions is outside the community. Funding decisions especially for health and education are made in different places. (Health and education are split into different regions.) -The community is not coming together or working together on education. -On the political side, roles and partnership in education is unclear. -Poor communications/information sharing or collaboration on solutions. No time set is aside to present issues and ideas about education. -Prejudices within the community. -Lack of understanding of the difference between spirituality and religion. -The schools are teaching a foreign language and culture and not recognizing the need for students to be fluent in their own language first. The schools need to have meaningful, relevant course content. The Dene "have a treaty right to education but don't get that." -Parents, leaders, and businesses are not working together respectfully to support all students. -Young people don't know how to pay attention/ to really listen. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Some parents do get their kids to school. -Some parents and groups recognize the problems and are trying to make changes. -The system available is great. -Orientation for teachers and on the land programs. -The Storefront school in Hay River. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Parent/community commitment (to consistently wake up students, feed them and get them to school). -Need to start early to help children develop good listening and observation skills. -Daily language use in the home. The home should be an immersion environment. -Parents/families and the community need to teach and support children to learn the language, culture, and values. Parents are the first teachers of the children. -Leadership needs to promote self-responsibility within the community. Leadership needs help developing skills to do this. Everyone has to take responsibility for teaching children about the culture and to speak the language. -Need to address the prejudices that people have against each other. -Cultural orientation for all professionals or others 'from away' is required. There should be a Dene elder in each school. -More on the land learning with elders. -Out of pocket costs to send children to school in Hay River (e.g. recreation fees, gas) are prohibitive. -Aboriginal support workers in schools who are Aboriginal, are needed. -Community education teams that involve the Band, schools, and early childhood programs working together as a group. Community cooperation is needed to address education issues. -Flexibility in funding for the Storefront school. 	<p>The community plan needs to address a range of issues, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -In-service for preschool/childcare staff. -Opportunities for work experience using community resources. -Community input and support for the DEA and decision making. -Interagency teamwork and more integrated approaches. -Understanding/consideration of the ripple effect (e.g. from 'I' to 'we'/community). The language needs to shift from 'they' to 'we', to taking back power and supporting each other. -Creating identity for young people through an understanding of history, a sense of belonging and a connection to the world. -School staff who understand the history of the people and community, and are connected/have relationships with the home/parents. -Parents taking responsibility for teaching the culture and language, understanding the importance of consistent language use, and knowing that culture and language are rooted in the land. -Parents' expectations of their children are very important and help children to grown up to meet these expectations and to have expectations of themselves. -Recognition of the important role of elders' as language and cultural knowledge holders and teachers. -Education cannot be in isolation. Education needs to be transformational. Education is 	<p>The community plan is to get more community voices involved in K'atl'odehche education by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -doing a community survey. -having a community day to present the results of the survey. -identify and share the most important things to do to help our students be successful. -work with the school for planning. -plan assemblies to engage/mobilize the community to support the plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -A survey will be developed by community youth with help from McGill University researchers and local elders. -The Chief and Council will host a meeting at the complex to introduce the survey and promote the survey on the radio and newspaper. -The survey will be open to all over the age of 18. -The researchers will compile the results and the Chief, Council and DEA will present the survey results at a community day gathering. -The DEA will select a leader/coordinator to work with an interagency team to develop a plan to keep the momentum going. -The survey will be start in 1.5 weeks (April 19th). The survey results should be presented to community members likely in the fall.

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<p>-FAE/FASD diagnosis required and teachers with skills who can work with special needs children.</p>		<p>-Recognition of treaty rights when developing curriculum. KFN input is needed when developing curriculum. Dene curriculum requires funding. -Need local control of funding and curriculum. -Dene immersion is required in the schools in order to learn the language and culture. Fluency in the language does not mean use of isolated Dene words. Dene languages are official languages and need to be treated as such. -Spirituality needs to be included and taught in schools. -The focus of the school system needs to shift from an English to a Dene focus. -Guidelines are needed to make technology safely work for the children. -The community needs to address the underlying issues associated with alcohol use (e.g. FASD).</p>	<p>about having power. Education (the school) needs to be part of the family. Educators need to appreciate community members being in the school. -Relationships between /within families; the school and community; and students and the land are key. -The community needs to confront dependency issues and become healthy. -Need to celebrate children and parents (e.g. birthday celebrations at the school).</p>		
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South Slave Summary Report

The Fort Resolution Plan for Supporting Student Success

Main Issues	Working Now	Need to be Addressed	What?	How?	Who & When?
<p>-Sporadic attendance related to lack of family support, the season, grade level, and transportation/ access to school.</p> <p>-Social versus academic promotion (after Grade 12 most students need upgrading).</p> <p>-Social issues linked to inclusive classrooms (differentiated instruction focuses more on lower level students rather than higher achievers).</p> <p>-Lack of sufficient funding (\$50 K O&M funding is inadequate and the fundraising uses human resources that could be better used to support student success).</p> <p>-Individual instruction is required but assistance that is available seems to be focused more on physical rather than mental needs.</p> <p>-Inconsistent preschool program (which is more childcare) so students are unready for kindergarten.</p> <p>-Inconsistent support from all stakeholders (SSDEC, Treaty/Metis Councils, H&SS, College, Gov't Departments).</p> <p>-Holes in cultural programming due to lack of facilities/resources, and exposure to the land and environment beyond the community.</p> <p>-Lack of affordable and available staff housing.</p>	<p>-Graduation ceremony in September "so grads really do graduate."</p> <p>-Fundraising efforts to support needed programming, especially cultural activities.</p> <p>-Strong partnerships with community stakeholders.</p> <p>-Breakfast program offered by staff volunteers.</p> <p>-Dedicated school staff and good integration of new staff.</p> <p>-Ability to retain staff.</p> <p>-Busy school with lots of visitors (e.g. SSDEC, DEA, GNWT).</p> <p>-Community presence in the school (e.g. through DEA challenges and sports), and literacy day/activities.</p> <p>-Communications with parents such as three-way conferences, surveys, open door policy, and community education plan (CEP).</p> <p>-School programming such as CTS and cultural activities to motivate students to stay in school.</p> <p>-Awareness around drinking and driving.</p> <p>-Interaction between community leaders, students and staff (e.g. 'School is Cool' BBQ, monthly assemblies and awards).</p> <p>-Cultural activities through fundraising for moose/caribou hunt, duck hunting in April, moose hide tanning in May, and tri-canoe trip in May.</p> <p>-Strong literacy/numeracy activities through meetings four times a year.</p> <p>-Yearly calendar.</p> <p>-Chipewyan language program led by the students and the dictionary project that involves</p>	<p>-Funding to support longer term solutions, specifically addressing special needs, staffing/human resources to eliminate multi-grade classes and for literacy supports, bus/van to deal with attendance issues, offset housing costs (currently rents are about \$2200/ mo.) to keep teachers, and specialized child psychological counselling.</p> <p>-More Grade 10-12 career programming options, awareness, and supports like the shop that was recently opened.</p> <p>-Community recreation opportunities.</p> <p>-More purpose-based assessment when examining territorial standards (e.g. is Alberta a fair/relevant comparison?).</p> <p>- Communications with parents about consistency, ownership, and importance of early childhood.</p> <p>-Community ownership of the school and early childhood program.</p> <p>-Appropriate languages in the schools/throughout the region (e.g. Hay River only offers French and Slavey).</p> <p>-Leadership in schools to discuss treaties, history, and political views/positions.</p> <p>-Counselling at an earlier level for postsecondary options and career development.</p> <p>-Solid year to year funding for breakfast program.</p> <p>-Adequate funding for technology, to access needed consultants, and for smaller communities (e.g. base plus</p>	<p>1. Share and promote the Community Education Plan.</p>	<p>-Talk to leaders and community members to look at ways to increase school attendance/"get kids to school."</p> <p>-Work with the Hamlet, Band and others to offer incentives such as summer jobs for people who are in school.</p> <p>-Encourage the leadership and community organizations to hold community functions on the weekend so they don't interfere with school.</p> <p>-Promote role models through posters, and involve them in the school as subs and in other roles.</p> <p>-Schedule and work with others to offer job shadowing partnerships for example with the early childhood program and the RCMP.</p> <p>-Communicate with parents in many different ways including three-way conferences, calling home, and letters and looking at ways to get more parents/family members into the school for example, by using the shop.</p> <p>-Schedule a cultural program that includes seasonal camps, hunts and involves corporations and other funding partners as well as community members and possibly other schools (e.g. canoe trips). Other cultural activities might involve drummers, writers, the 'tribe of one', elders, Dene games, and dances. The cultural schedule can include different cultures.</p> <p>-Incorporate Dene laws in the</p>	<p>-DEA and school. By September 2011.</p>

South Slave Summary Report

	<p>elders. -Chipewyan program in the preschool/ childcare. -Youth centre under construction.</p>	<p>formula).</p>	<p>2. The forum delegates will take back the information on the four ASA priorities and the planning questions to share with all stakeholders including leadership and other DEA members.</p>	<p>school and Aboriginal language instruction and conversation into the classroom by embedding it in all activities. -Use available technology to develop an on-line help line for students and families. -Promote and formalize supports for single parents/ older youth missing one or two credits through alternative, flexible programming arrangements between the school and Aurora College and develop support networks (e.g. Mom & Dads Groups). -Have professional development sessions that incorporate language/ culture and traditions including cooking. -Ask leaders to work with the school to offer awareness programs on such issues as drinking, bullying, fire, fire arms use (FAC). -Review and reflect on ASA priorities and share final reports with all stakeholders, and make sure that the ASA priorities are implemented.</p>	<p>-Delegates to the ASA forum. ASAP.</p>
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The Lutsel k'e Plan for Supporting Student Success

Main Issues	Working Now	Need to be Addressed	What?	How?	Who & When?
<p>-Sporadic attendance. -Lack of support and resources for culture and language. -Lack of community history in the school to help young people build identity. -Lack of childcare. -Lack of school readiness/ preparation among young children. -Parents can't get time off work to</p>	<p>-On the land programs supported by the First Nation. On the land programs create greater respect for life and strength in the individual. -Leadership for literacy program, specifically the literacy coach. -Cultural orientation that helps to retain teachers, and builds student-teacher relationships</p>	<p>-Childcare in the school. -Training for childcare workers. -Dedicated childcare facility. -A Head Start program. -Housing for teachers. -Classroom support beyond what is provided by the funding formula in order to have community support and elders in the school. -Address the needs of parents</p>	<p>The community plan will address: -teachers' housing issues. -kindergarten teacher/ partial immersion plan. -storefront/ alternative high school program. -school community guidance counsellor. -childcare.</p>	<p>1. Hold a community meeting to focus on the main issues, namely the funding formula particularly with respect to resources for a kindergarten teacher, alternative/ flexible storefront schooling, a school community counsellor position, and initiating a preschool/ kindergarten immersion program.</p>	<p>-DEA. May 16th</p>

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<p>support cultural programs on the land. -Poor community support/ communications about education among community groups. -Housing issues.</p>	<p>and respect among young people for their culture. -Relationship between the school and early childhood program. -Parental/ community support for the school. Parent/ community meetings result in lots of recommendations. -The community is rich in language, history, and cultural knowledge but it needs to be tapped and financial resources are needed to do this. -Homework club. -Books in the homes and computer buying programs. -Reading incentives (home reading programs). Parents are involved in reading program (through signing off). -Relationships with grandparents who pass on their knowledge to young people including respecting others. -Attendance incentive programs.</p>	<p>who want to be involved ("because they do") but who need support, tools, and equipment to do so. -More homework support. -Funding for alternative programs (like the Storefront school). -School/ community counsellor. -Elder certification (specifying their strengths) to work in the school -School bus for the community. -Help to encourage volunteers. -Breakfast program funding. -Consolidation of funding rather than tedious annual reporting and proposal writing. -More cultural activities in and out of school. -Language taught from K-12. -Immersion programming. -Summer programs for students (e.g. flexible summer school for catching up) and for parents. -More Aboriginal teachers in the classroom. -Youth without much experience on the land feeling left out/ behind.</p>		<p>Following community discussion a plan of action will be developed. The DEA will get involved in the school renovation to ensure that it includes a childcare and a separate kindergarten class.</p> <p>2. Report to the community on the ASA forum and ask for community input/ direction.</p> <p>3. Form an Aboriginal Language and Cultural Committee (ALCC) which will have both DEA and community members. The ALCC will design programs and resources, and work in partnership with the First Nation, the school and Aurora College. The ALCC will work to involve parents and the community in the school.</p> <p>4. Advocate for 'cultural leave' days for GNWT employees by writing letters to the UNW, MLAs, MPs, and others.</p> <p>5. Work together to tackle the issue of getting a bus for the school.</p> <p>6. Make the funding formula and housing for teachers a federal and territorial election issue.</p>	<p>-Delegates to the South Slave ASA. May 16th.</p> <p>-DEA.</p> <p>-DEA, students and other community members.</p> <p>-School and First Nation. May 2011.</p> <p>-DEA and other community members.</p>
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The Fort Smith Plan for Supporting Student Success

Main Issues	Working Now	Need to be Addressed	What?	How?	Who & When?
<p>-Attendance continues to be an issue. - Budget constraints/ restrictions and lack of funding to support creative solutions. The funding formula does not allow for flexibility. -Lack of authority to determine own needs.</p>	<p>-Phoenix School that offers alternative programming, flexible schedule, flexible pace, and a sense of belonging. - The Phoenix School's emphasis on success rather than attendance. The school fits the child, is supportive, and gives students control over their own</p>	<p>-Build bridges not barriers with the home/ families. -Support for creative, 'made in the community' solutions. Allow the community to develop solutions to problems -bottom up, not top down. -Services to support young adults 15+ years including</p>	<p>1. Relationships and Communications: Increase cultural awareness with school staff to build strong relationships and for teachers to develop a better understanding of Dene culture.</p>	<p>-Use cultural days to build relationships. -Investigate ways to fund a liaison/ ombudsperson position. -Liaison person to assist on a personal level to communicate with, and develop relationships with parents and</p>	<p>-DEA/ school/ Aboriginal groups/ College. Planning to begin in the Spring 2011 to roll out in the fall. -Fall 2011 and ongoing.</p>

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Support for the Phoenix School. -Need more Aboriginal teachers. -Need more language and culture in the schools. -Support to assess and support students who are struggling. -The number of educational psychological assessments is too low. -A system-wide problem is fragment approaches to addressing student needs. -Need to increase initiatives that promote home/school communications. -Work with parents to encourage their involvement in the school. Increase the number of informal opportunities for parents to visit/communicate/participate in schooling, and use less 'institutionalized' approaches when dealing with parents. There is a lack of initiatives designed to include parents in the education system. -Make school-home communications more positive and provide ways to support parents/students (e.g. help lines). -Remove barriers inherent in the system. -The system including students feels the pressure to produce results. There is pressure on the schools to do everything including address all the social issues/ concerns. -Need to acknowledge the intimidation factor associated with the history of schooling experienced by parents (e.g. residual effects of residential school). -Need to address issues experienced by youth in grades 7/8 that effect transition into secondary school and impact on their education. -Partnerships in education. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> program. It is producing high numbers of Aboriginal student graduates. -Integrated service delivery approach (e.g. the Health Café). -Head Start Program supports school readiness. -Strong DEAs working closely with and supporting the schools. -Aurora College offers a variety of programs such as TEP which is producing northern teachers. The College offers local expertise and partnerships, and is helpful for parents. -Staff stability (turn-over has declined) means stronger student relationships. -Literacy leadership, literacy kits, and partnerships are working well. Literacy initiatives emphasize what students can do (rather what they can't do). -Reading Buddies. -Making small gains in improving attendance rate but there is still much work to be done. -Support and direction provided by central services to implement professional development and training. -Priorities established and support provided to reach goals (e.g. staff development and training). -Community factors that result in teachers staying in the community over the summer and in their retirement. -System-wide factors that result in individuals being able to fulfill leadership roles after high school. -The variety of healthy activities in the community that support families. -The Western Arctic Leadership Program. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> counselling and job preparation. -Career, guidance and personal counselling. -Ways to engage students particularly at the high school level. -Support for transitions from high school to postsecondary. -Close the service gap for youth between 16-19 years. -All groups working together to find solutions (DEA, community, ECE). -Measure success! Honour different ways of achieving success including different paths to success. -Timely, responsive communication from ECE, especially about funding. 	<p>2. Local control over programming to ensure flexibility to meet student needs by getting higher level recognition and support for community education.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> staff. -Decrease principal's administrative duties to free up time for personal contact with parents/families/students. -Grow and develop student mentorship career planning and programs. -Make an election issue and the subject of a petition, letter writing campaign, and lobby effort. -Seek alternative funding sources to supplement current funding. -Join forces with other schools and agencies to look at ways of meeting local education needs. -Recognize that solutions to Aboriginal student achievement exist outside 'the box', are unique to each community and require funding of all students equally, and program planning to be the responsibility of schools and the DEC. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Principal. Ongoing. -School. Begun in 2011 and continuing. Include lists in handbook prepared in June 2011 and roll-out in the fall. -DEA. Immediately and ongoing. -DEA, Bands, and community organizations. -Immediately/ongoing. -DEA, Bands, and community organizations. Immediately and ongoing. -ECE. Immediately and ongoing.
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South Slave Summary Report

The Hay River Plan for Supporting Student Success

Main Issues	Working Now	Need to be Addressed	What?	How?	Who & When?
<p>-Under-funding. Lower student enrolment means less funding, and fewer teachers.</p> <p>-Reduced ability to run extra curricular programs and less 'energy' in the school overall.</p> <p>-Block funding formula is too prescriptive.</p> <p>-Hay River has specific bussing issues – huge amount of OM budget goes to student transportation.</p> <p>-Student transience, especially in middle school. Teachers spend significant time trying to get students caught up and too much energy used in differentiating for students who are behind.</p> <p>-Affordable childcare for teen parents – transportation is also an issue for this group</p> <p>-Increased curriculum expectations and less teaching time (due to teacher cultural orientation coming from instructional days).</p> <p>-Recommendation to include students in teacher cultural orientation.</p> <p>-Student absenteeism and lack of commitment to schooling from both students and parents. Need to see parents active in students' education.</p> <p>-Primary years are foundational and many students have significant challenges. More OT and speech services are needed.</p> <p>-Success in schooling needs to become part of the community 'culture' – everyone needs to see it as important.</p> <p>-More support for Aboriginal education and cultural activities.</p> <p>-More involvement of elders in the school.</p>	<p>-Early intervention.</p> <p>-Storefront schooling – important that some students be allowed to work at a self determined pace to diminish pressure.</p> <p>-Literacy emphasis.</p> <p>-Preschool for students aged three and four supports successful transition to kindergarten (Ecole Boreale).</p> <p>-Strong and good variety of co-curricular programs.</p> <p>-Strong partnerships especially with health care, counselling, and interagency coordination, but communication protocols within each agency are still problematic.</p> <p>-The Hay River track meet brings students from the whole territory together.</p> <p>-Replicating the Fort. Smith Health Café (the community nurse comes to the school twice a week and students can ask questions on any issue).</p> <p>-New trades centre and program development in partnership is underway.</p> <p>-Working on expanded CTS and fine arts programs options to provide all students with more opportunity to explore and come to understand what they like – this programming also increases attendance.</p> <p>-EBS (Effective Behaviour Support) program is a creative response to student misbehaviour.</p> <p>-Good emphasis on healthy lifestyle but there could be more support.</p> <p>-The high school consistently supports students, including</p>	<p>Still need further support for....</p> <p>-Flexibility within the school system.</p> <p>-How DEC surplus can be / should be used.</p> <p>-Lack of clear communication regarding finances.</p> <p>-Respectful and clear communication between home and school,</p> <p>-School as an environment to foster respectful behaviour and help others.</p> <p>-Need to all move in the same direction with ECE, DEC, DEA, and community partners.</p>	<p>The community plan considers: How much power do I have? What kinds of power do I have? How did I get it? How do I exercise it?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Funding formula: There needs to be a review of the ECE funding formula because it is too restrictive. 2. Lobby MLA's for increased resources for education. 3. Busing 4. Housing 5. More Aboriginal language and culture programming in Head Start/ childcare. 6. Celebrate the successes at the Storefront School. 7. Aboriginal language learning program for adults. 	<p>-Hay River would like ECE to survey the DEC's to learn what aspects of the current funding structure are most frustrating and look at how these can be addressed.</p> <p>-Work with Hay River to explore an established bus route.</p> <p>-Lobby MLAs.</p> <p>-Initiate this in the in Head Start/ childcare.</p> <p>-Host an open house event and have visual displays that name/identify specific things that can be showcased/ celebrated.</p> <p>-Invite community members to come in for coffee/snack, see displays, and interact with students and staff. This event could have a secondary objective of gathering more community support for program including accessing third party funding.</p> <p>-Approach elders to teach and/or work with DCI to organize classes that will be delivered on a schedule that will enable maximal participation. This needs to be pursued in partnership with</p>	<p>-ECE</p> <p>-DEA/SSDEC</p> <p>-DEA</p> <p>-DEC/MACA.</p> <p>-Tali Sound to initiate.</p> <p>-Geoff, Paul, DEA</p> <p>-DEA, DCI, and KFN.</p>

South Slave Summary Report

<p>-Support groups needed for teenage parents. -Parents need help to find the balance in directing and supporting their students and allowing them autonomy. -Bring more groups into the conversation around education partnerships (e.g. justice, social services). -More support for transition from school to work – career development and transition planning.</p>	<p>very challenging students.</p>		<p>8. Role model identification and celebration.</p> <p>9. Improve communication with community leaders, education, and health.</p> <p>10. Improve communication between the school and students.</p> <p>11. School communication with parents.</p> <p>12. Youth Centre: Need to find a 'home' and develop good programming.</p>	<p>the Band office.</p> <p>-Launch a poster series. This is already in process but funding is required. If the series highlights healthy lifestyle role models, funding could be acquired from Health Promotion Fund.</p> <p>-Consider inviting a Hay River councillor to the DEA meeting. There may be a need to have a meeting with a councillor in advance to 'court' participation and create an interest in how meeting regularly will be of mutual benefit.</p> <p>-Carefully consider the content and target audience(s). May want to have different approaches/ media for students of different ages. For some students, consider how to use Facebook and/or Twitter. Revisit ways of communicating with target audience based on what works best.</p> <p>-Find a vehicle for easy two-way communications. Involve Parent Advisory Committees to get the message out.</p>	<p>-ECE (Elaine Stewart) will re-send information on this fund to Hay River school administrators.</p> <p>-Kandis and Sophie will approach Jill Taylor and raise the issue at the next meeting in April/May.</p> <p>-School</p> <p>-Begin this in the new school year, but do the work to make the plan this year. -Tali, Geoff and Chris will work on this with the Hay River ministerial association as well as with the Friendship Centre. Sabrina Broadhead could be an ally to garner support from MACA.</p>
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Participants

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37. Doug Lamalice,	DEA, K'atl'odehche
38. Dennis Drygeese,	DEA, Lutsel k'e and interpreter
39. Angie Lantz,	DEA, Lutsel k'e
40. Emily Saunders,	First Nation, Lutsel k'e

41. Jane Groenwegan, GNWT, Hay River
42. David Reid, NWTTA, Yellowknife
43. Connie Benwell, First Nation, Fort Smith
44. Jeanne Marie Jewell, First Nation, Fort Smith
45. Jake Basil, youth, Lutsel k'e
46. Sarah Basil, elder and interpreter, Lutsel k'e
47. Paul Boucher, youth, Fort Resolution
48. Curtis Brown, SSDEC, Fort Smith
49. Geoff Buerger, SSDEC, Hay River
50. Shelia Cavanagh, SSDEC, Lutsel k'e
51. Al Karasiuk, SSDEC, Fort Smith
52. Brent Kaulback, SSDEC, Fort Smith
53. John Bob Landry, youth, Hay River
54. Greg Look, youth, Hay River
55. Derian Marlowe, youth, Lutsel k'e
56. Brooke Moore, youth, Hay River
57. Jayne Murray, SSDEC, Fort Smith
58. Sheryl Olvera, SSDEC, Fort Smith
59. Ian Patterson, SSDEC, K'atl'odehche
60. Chris Philpotts, SSDEC, Hay River
61. Ann Pischinger, SSDEC, Fort Smith
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64. Dan Summers, SSDEC, Fort Resolution
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