



School District No. 67 Aboriginal Education

110 Green Avenue W.

Penticton, BC V2A 3T1

Vice Principal: Kathy Pierre

Aboriginal Education School Improvement Plans

(Elementary/Middle/Secondary)

ELEMENTARY ~ 2010-11

Aboriginal Education Context:

The School District No. 67 Aboriginal Education Program provides service to 11 elementary schools in Penticton, Summerland, Naramata and Kaleden. The Aboriginal Education Program staff consists of a vice principal, five teachers, one counselor, and eight support workers who work across the district to deliver services to students and schools.

Our enrolment as of September 30, 2010, includes 205 Aboriginal students at the elementary level. The School District No. 67 Aboriginal population consists of on-reserve First Nation students coming from the Penticton Indian Band (approximately 1/5 of the students), Metis, non-status and off-reserve First Nations.

We have a Local Education Agreement (L.E.A.) with the Penticton Indian Band that was signed in September, 2008. In addition, we are currently in the final year of our Enhancement Agreement (E.A). Our E.A. focuses on four goal areas which are intended to improve overall academic achievement. The goals focus on:

1. Improving Aboriginal student success in literacy.
2. Improving Aboriginal student success in numeracy.
3. Improving Aboriginal student dogwood graduation rates and school transition rates.
4. Increasing opportunities for Aboriginal cultural enrichment, visibility and history in our schools.

This year we have implemented three separate inquiry questions each geared to a different level. At the elementary level we are focusing on improving literacy (reading) for Aboriginal students at the elementary level.

INQUIRY QUESTION

Elementary: Will the explicit focus on teaching reading strategies using the Early Intervention Model, 4-5 days/week with at-risk Aboriginal students improve student reading achievement as measured on the Benchmark Assessments?

RATIONALE: What evidence compelled us to ask this question?

The Aboriginal Education Program staff at the elementary level has developed the above question because we would like to determine what impact the Early Literacy Intervention Program has on student reading levels. In addition, we would like to determine if student reading levels will improve if our Aboriginal support workers provide ongoing reading support to participating Aboriginal students during

and beyond the ELI program. The ELI program is based on reading recovery. It provides intensive, individual instruction to help struggling readers accelerate and catch up.

In Teacher Inquiry, March 1991, a teacher from the Fraser-Cascade School District commented about the importance of implementing a reading recovery program for children who are struggling with reading. MacKay states, "We need to offer more expert teaching interactions to children who are not learning to read...If we can intervene early, give the child the necessary skills, and build confidence, then the achievement gap can be narrowed, ensuring academic success for all students (pg 61, BCTF, Mar 1999). We feel the above quote supports our beliefs about why early literacy intervention is so important, and why we need to continue to provide support beyond early literacy intervention.

ACTION PLAN

OBJECTIVES: Specific Steps to answer our question OR More specific questions?

1. *Increase reading levels for Aboriginal students who are struggling with reading in grades 1-3.*
2. *Improve Aboriginal student self confidence as readers.*

STRUCTURES AND STRATEGIES: For all students and our most vulnerable learners.

1. *Provide intensive 1-1 Early Literacy Intervention for approximately 14 weeks, 4 to 5 times per week per student.*
2. *Provide daily back and forth communication with parent/caregiver including the initial meeting to introduce the ELI Program.*
3. *Provide handouts and information on how the parents can support the program at home.*
4. *Meet with and have parents of ELI students observe a lesson on the process used for intervention.*
5. *Implement assessment using PM Benchmarks to determine reading levels at the end of the ELI cycle.*
6. *Provide consistent, on-going communication with teachers, CEAs, administrators, speech and language pathologists, etc. who are involved with students.*
7. *Facilitate referrals to outside agencies when required for vulnerable students who are struggling with social or emotional concerns.*
8. *Generate a list of possible support persons and/or agencies for at-risk Aboriginal students.*
9. *Participate in year end planning meetings in June to provide input on the best placement of vulnerable Aboriginal students for the following grade.*

ASSESSMENT PROCESS & TOOLS: What will we use to measure our success?

We have collected and analyzed the following School District No. 67 data:

1. Attendance
2. ELI Data (Starting level, gains made, retention level beyond ELI, etc.,)
3. Parental contact logs
4. Disciplinary documentation
5. District Wide Reading
6. PM Benchmarks
7. FSA (Grade 4 reading)

Next year and beyond, we will track reading levels to determine the following:

1. Track reading benchmarks for identified at-risk students at each grade level until grade 5 to determine reading strategy retention levels and gains beyond ELI.
2. Study all elementary Aboriginal Education ELI students from the 2010-2011 school year, who have been identified as at-risk (reading) but who have the potential to graduate (not having a significant disability such as FASD, moderate to profound intellectual disability, etc). Track in terms of their benchmark reading levels until they reach grade 5, or perhaps beyond into middle school.

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING: How will we increase our capacity and collaboration?

1. *Dr. Martin Brokenleg Book Club -“Reclaiming Youth At Risk”:*

The Aboriginal Education Program staff did a book study using *Reclaiming Youth at-Risk*. As a staff, we recognized our role in developing good relationships with students and their families and the significance of helping students develop a positive sense of belonging in our schools.

2. *School Achievement Review Committee:*

Several members from the Aboriginal Education Program staff participated in the SD67 School Achievement Review Committee. We looked at data from SD67 on student achievement including Aboriginal student data. In addition, we discussed the idea of a Pyramid of Interventions approach to supporting at-risk learners including possible strategies for students who are struggling with reading beyond ELI.

3. *School District No. 67 School Completion Workshop with Dr. Sharon Jeroski:*

Aboriginal Education staff and the Aboriginal partner groups attended a school completion workshop with Dr. Sharon Jeroski at the Penticton Indian Band Hall. We examined SD67 data and discussed what the data reveals. We discovered that the data tells us that we have two groups of students most at risk for not completing school. These groups include Aboriginal students and students who have behavioral designations.

4. *Smart Reading Classroom Observation:*

Donna MacDonald attended the Smart Reading Observation at Giant’s Head Elementary School in February, 2011.

5. *School District No. 67 Early Literacy Protocol Workshop and LLI Program:*

Donna Macdonald will attend the Beyond Early Literacy Intervention workshop on May 17, 2011 at Carmi School. The workshop will focus on reaching approaching students, Guided Reading in the classroom and leveled literacy intervention.

RESOURCES: What do we currently have and what do we need?

What do we currently have?

1. *Reclaiming Youth at-Risk - Our Hope for the Future”* by Larry K. Brendtro, Dr. Martin Brokenleg and Steve Van Bockern.
2. Teacher Inquiry-Fraser Cascade Teacher research published by the BC Teachers’ Federation.
3. Leveled Early Literacy Intervention books (beginning level books L1-17).

What do we need?

1. Higher leveled Early Literacy Intervention books (beyond L-17).

PARENT INVOLVEMENT: How parents will become partners in our efforts?

We are striving to develop meaningful relationships and effective strategies to encourage the participation of parents to assist us in supporting our vulnerable elementary Aboriginal students:

- ◆ By inviting and including parents in school meetings involving their children.
- ◆ By inviting parents to observe a lesson on the strategies used for intervention.
- ◆ By establishing and maintaining ongoing contact with parents regarding student progress, successes and concerns:
 - By establishing daily back and forth calendar sent home.
 - By encouraging parents to write notes, ask questions or make observations on their children's progress throughout the ELI process.
 - By connecting with parents via phone calls on a regular basis.
- ◆ By providing parents with handout and information on how they can support the ELI Program and their child's reading development at home.

EVIDENCE

KEY FINDINGS: What did we find out?

At the end of each 14 week cycle of Early Literacy Intervention (ELI), students were tested using the Benchmark tests (Nelson). The 2010-2011 cohort consisted of 11 students

- A) Cohort Demographics:
 - a. 6 females and 5 males participated in ELI in 2010-2011.
 - b. 7 of the students were in grade 1 and 4 of the students were in grade 2
- B) Attendance data for the Early Literacy Intervention cohort for 2010-2011:
 - a. 27% (3/11) were absent between 6-10 days this year.
 - b. 18% (2/11) were absent between 11-15 days this year.
 - c. 55% (6/11) were absent more than 16 days this year.
- C) Performance Benchmark after ELI:

Grade	Not yet meeting	Minimally Meeting	Approaching	Fully Meeting	Exceeding
1	0	0	2 (18%)	5 (46%)	0
2	1 (9%)	0	0	3 (27%)	0

The findings indicate that with extra Early Literacy Intervention support 91% (10/11) of the students were able to reach approaching to fully meeting expectations in reading despite obstacles which hinder their progress such as excessive absenteeism, poor to no home support, deprived backgrounds, ADHD, behavioral concerns, etc,. One student fell into the "not yet meeting" expectations for reading after the intervention; however, the student is ESL (speaks his native language fluently).

REFLECTIONS: What did we learn? How did it make a difference?

The data gathered on the “at-risk” elementary Aboriginal students who participated in the Early Literacy Intervention program indicated that substantial gains were made by all students. One student completed the program in the “not yet meeting” category for reading. The majority of these students entered the ELI program significantly behind other students in their respective grades and most had a myriad of complex issues which would likely impinge on overall success in their schooling. Such issues include behavioral/emotional challenges, frequent absences/late arrivals, poor home support, backgrounds lacking in stimulating learning activities, poverty, presence of ADHD, and numerous other personal factors.

With a trained teacher working one on one with these vulnerable children, 4 – 5 days per week, for a period up to 14 weeks in length, constant contact was able to be maintained with students and parents. A back and forth calendar was sent home daily by Mrs. MacDonald with notes and parents were invited to respond by making comments and/or asking questions. This method of communication was highly effective. In addition, if a student was absent or late, Mrs. MacDonald phoned home and often the child would arrive at school shortly.

The greatest amount of progress was seen by students whose parents participated daily in the home reading portion of the program. For those students who do not have sufficient home support, Mrs. MacDonald tried to have the supporting CEA for the Aboriginal students follow up with additional practice when assigned to the corresponding school. All the CEA’s on the elementary Aboriginal had training sessions with Mrs. MacDonald early in the year so that similar language and strategies were used. It is hoped that for the 2011-2012 school year, there will be additional training of CEA’s and more strategic methods made to timetable ELI support for those CEA’s right at the start of the school year.

In summary, the ELI program was highly successful with a group of students who might otherwise, likely ***not*** have made the same degree of progress. Some of the skills taught in the program, particularly the reading strategies, will likely be lifelong skills that can be transferred to more difficult levels of work. In all elementary schools where ELI support took place for the Aboriginal students, principals and teachers expressed their sincerest praise for the program. Unfortunately, with only one ELI teacher, there wasn’t enough time to get to all the students who needed this very vital service. There is also the need to service grades 3-5, in addition to grades 1 and 2 with a late literacy program.

FUTURE PLANNING: Where do we go from here?

To improve literacy with our at-risk Aboriginal students we intend to focus more attention on the following:

- ◆ Continue to monitor student reading levels and track reading benchmarks for identified at-risk students at each grade level until grade 5.

- ◆ Provide ongoing support to students who continue to struggle with reading beyond ELI:
 - Work with Aboriginal Support Workers in the Aboriginal Education Program in September 2011 to teach them strategies they can use to follow-up during and after intervention takes place.
 - Aboriginal Support Workers will provide ongoing support with ELI students in their respective schools before working with other Aboriginal students requiring different kinds of academic support (approximately 20 minutes/ELI student).
 - Maintain data on the same cohort groups commencing in 2010-2011 to track what happens with their reading levels after completing a 14 week intervention cycle.
 - Expand the ELI Program at the elementary level to include an extra ELI trained teacher if funds permit so that we can continue to work with students beyond the primary grades.



School District No. 67 Aboriginal Education

110 Green Avenue W.

Penticton, BC V2A 3T1

Vice Principal: Kathy Pierre

Aboriginal Education School Improvement Plan Middle School ~ (2010-11)

Aboriginal Education Context:

The School District No. 67 Aboriginal Education Program provides support to four middle schools located in Penticton and Summerland. The Aboriginal Education Program staff consists of a vice principal, five teachers, one counselor, and eight support workers who work across the district to deliver services to students and schools.

As of September 30, 2010, we have 183 Aboriginal students at the middle school level. The School District No. 67 Aboriginal population consists of on-reserve First Nation students coming from the Penticton Indian Band (approximately 1/5 of the students), Metis, non-status and off-reserve First Nations.

We have a Local Education Agreement (L.E.A.) with the Penticton Indian Band that was signed in September, 2008. In addition, we are currently in the final year of our Enhancement Agreement (E.A). Our E.A. focuses on four goal areas which are intended to improve overall academic achievement. The goals focus on:

1. Increasing Aboriginal student success in literacy
2. Increasing Aboriginal student success in numeracy.
3. Increasing Aboriginal student Dogwood graduation rates and school transition rates.
4. Increasing opportunities for Aboriginal cultural enrichment, visibility and history in our schools.

This year we have implemented three separate inquiry questions each geared to a different level. At the middle school level we are focusing our attention on improving school transition rates and enhancing opportunities for Aboriginal cultural enrichment and visibility in our schools.

INQUIRY QUESTION

Middle School: If we provide focused support to at-risk Aboriginal students over three years commencing in grade 6 will student attendance and grades improve as they transition through middle school?

RATIONALE: What evidence compelled us to ask this question?

The Aboriginal Education Program staff at the middle school level has developed the above question because we would like to determine what benefits will occur if we implement strategies and supports aimed at reducing excessive absenteeism at the middle school level. Based on attendance data in

2009-10, we discovered that more than 45% of Aboriginal students at the middle school level were missing more than 16 days of school. In addition, we learned that Skaha Lake Middle School and KVR Middle School have the highest rate of absenteeism at the middle school level. Thus, based on the past attendance data we recognize there is a need to focus our attention on implementing strategies to improve Aboriginal student attendance in school. We recognize that poor attendance can result in gaps in learning and students falling behind academically. Unless we do something to improve student attendance in earlier grades, we recognize that vulnerable students are potentially at-risk for dropping out of school at the secondary level.

ACTION PLAN

OBJECTIVES: Specific Steps to answer our question OR More specific questions?

3. *Improve Aboriginal student attendance at the middle school level.*
4. *Increase Aboriginal cultural visibility at the middle school level.*

STRUCTURES AND STRATEGIES: For all students and our most vulnerable learners.

A) Improve Aboriginal student attendance at the middle school level:

1. *Build a support block into schedules for vulnerable students to provide ongoing academic support.*
2. *Establish rapport with parents/guardians.*
3. *Include students and parents in discussions when strategizing how to overcome chronic absenteeism and tardy behavior.*
4. *Establish ongoing communication with classroom teachers, school counselors and administrators regarding targeted students.*
5. *Provide ongoing and consistent CEA support for students in classrooms.*
6. *Establish and provide Ab Ed counseling support when required for social and emotional support.*
7. *Advocate for students with teachers and school administrators.*
8. *Facilitate referrals to outside agencies for additional support when required.*
9. *Make referrals to School Based Teams when required.*

B) Increase Aboriginal cultural visibility at the middle school level:

1. *Facilitate opportunities to host Aboriginal presenters and resource people at school:*

- ◆ The Penticton Indian Band Chief and Council visited Skaha Lake Middle School to show their support to students and promote the value of education.
- ◆ Oonakane Friendship Centre did a series of "Health and Wellness" Workshops at KVR Middle School, McNicoll Middle School and Skaha Lake Middle School.
- ◆ Okanagan Nation Alliance held health and wellness workshops at a Health Fair at Skaha Lake Middle School.

2. Implement Our Elders Are Watching Program:

We are in our second year of our “Elders’ Program”. Vera Gabriel, a respected elder from Penticton Indian Band, attends Skaha Lake Middle School four days a week to work with Aboriginal students. She has launched an afterschool tutorial program for students from the Penticton Indian Band. The tutorial program provides students with academic support twice a week. In addition, Vera has organized a number of mentorship activities for older students to provide support to younger students (stickgames, nail painting, pizza luncheons, etc.).

3. Implement Aboriginal Student Cultural Leadership Opportunities:

- ◆ Remembrance Day School Presentation - several Aboriginal students participated in the school wide ceremony at Skaha Lake Middle School. They spoke about local Aboriginal veterans and their contribution as soldiers.
- ◆ Aboriginal Pow Wow Dance Presentation - a few students shared their knowledge about Pow Wow dancing and Regalia with other middle school students across the district.
- ◆ Bannock and Hot Chocolate Sales - Aboriginal students at SLMS put on several bannock and hot chocolate sales throughout the school year. They raised funds for cultural activities at their school.
- ◆ Go Girls Activity - Aboriginal girls taught others how to make dream catchers.

4. Facilitate Cultural Fieldtrips throughout the school year:

Aboriginal students participated in the following cultural fieldtrips throughout the school year: Indian Tea Harvesting, Pow Wow in Kelowna, Nk’mip Desert Cultural Centre, Speetlum Digging, Spotted Lake, Salmon Release and the Four Food Feast.

5. Provide opportunities for cultural enrichment for Aboriginal students:

Aboriginal students participated in the following in-school activities: Traditional Foods Workshop, Button Blanket Project, Stickgames, Metis Presentation, ONA Fry Project, Healing Circle/smudge as well as Aboriginal crafts.

ASSESSMENT PROCESS & TOOLS: What will we use to measure our success?

We have collected and analyzed the following School District No. 67 data:

1. Attendance
2. Data from the “How Are We Doing Report”
3. Report Card (grades)
4. Anecdotal responses to an informal student survey

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING: How will we increase our capacity and collaboration?

6. Dr. Martin Brokenleg Keynote address:

In August 2009, Dr. Martin Brokenleg was the keynote presenter at the District Pro D. His message emphasized there is hope and we can reclaim youth at-risk by helping students develop a healthy sense of belonging and connection to the world they live in.

7. Dr. Martin Brokenleg Book Club -“Reclaiming Youth At- Risk”:

During the 2008-09 school year, the Aboriginal Education Program staff conducted a book study using *Reclaiming Youth at-Risk*. As a staff, we recognized our role in developing good relationships with students and their families and the significance of helping students develop a positive sense of belonging in our schools.

8. Webinar -“Engaging and Empowering Aboriginal Youth - A Toolkit for Service Providers”:

The Aboriginal Education Program staff at the middle and secondary level attended weekly webinars (Fall 2009) to explore ways to build effective partnerships, integrate cultural identity, engage youth and maintain effective partnerships. Also, representatives from Aboriginal community partner groups, school administrators, teachers and school counselors from across the district participated.

9. School District No. 67 School Completion Workshop with Dr. Sharon Jeroski:

Aboriginal Education Program staff and the local, Aboriginal partner groups attended a school completion workshop with Dr. Sharon Jeroski at the Penticton Indian Band Hall. We examined SD67 data and discussed what the data revealed. We discovered that the data tells us that we have two groups of students most at-risk for not completing school. These groups include Aboriginal students and students who have behavioral designations

10. School District No. 67 and Penticton Indian Band Partnership:

School administrators at SLMS and the Aboriginal Education Program Staff are connecting with the Penticton Indian Band Social Development Committee to provide community and school support for vulnerable students coming from Penticton Indian Band.

RESOURCES: What do we currently have and what do we need?

1. *Reclaiming Youth at-Risk - Our Hope for the Future*” by Larry K. Brendtro, Dr. Martin Brokenleg and Steve Van Bockern.
2. *Engaging and Empowering Aboriginal Youth - A Toolkit for Service Providers*” by Claire V. Crooks, Debbie Chiodo and Darren Thomas.
3. Vera Gabriel - Penticton Indian Band Elder.
4. Anna Tonasket and Bruce Manuel - Restorative Justice Coordinator for South Okanagan Restorative Justice Program.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT: How parents will become partners in our efforts?

We are striving to develop meaningful relationships with parents and effective partnerships with our Aboriginal partner groups to assist us in supporting Aboriginal students and their families in the following ways:

- ◆ By inviting and including parents in school meetings involving their children.
- ◆ By inviting parents to participate in cultural and social events hosted in schools.
- ◆ By establishing and maintaining ongoing contact with parents and Aboriginal community agencies regarding student progress, successes and concerns.

EVIDENCE

KEY FINDINGS: What did we find out?

A) Middle School attendance data up to the end of April 2011 reveals that the Aboriginal students in the 2010-2011 Ab Ed Cohort have missed an excessive amount of school. The cohort consists of 26 vulnerable Aboriginal students from McNicoll, KVR and SLMS. There are 17 males and 9 females.

1. Aboriginal Student Attendance (**Middle School Level**):

- a. Overall → 88% (24/25) of the Aboriginal students in the cohort were absent more than 20 days this year.
- b. Overall → 68% (17/25) of Aboriginal students in the cohort were late in the morning more than 20 days this year.
- c. Absenteeism per school:
 - i. KVR → 100% (10/10) students in the KVR cohort were absent more than 20 days this year. 70% (7/10) were late more than 20 days this year.
 - ii. McNicoll → 100% (7/7) students in the McNicoll cohort were absent more than 20 days this year. 71% (5/7) were late more than 20 days this year.
 - iii. SLMS → 88% (7/8) students in the SLMS cohort were absent more than 20 days this year. 63% (5/8) were late more than 20 days this year.

B) Report Card Data: Middle School Inquiry Cohort 2010-2011:

	Term 1			Term 2			Term 3	
	Letter Grade	"I" Incomplete	"F - Fail"	Letter Grade	"I" Incomplete	"F-fail"	Letter Grade	"I" Incomplete
English	72% (18/25)	24% (6/25)	4% (1/25)	60% (15/25)	40% (10/25)	0	76% (19/25)	24% (6/25)
Math	64% (16/25)	28% (7/25)	8% (2/25)	68% (17/25)	32% (8/25)	0	72% (18/25)	28% (7/25)
Science	68% (17/25)	24% (6/25)	4% (1/25)	68% (17/25)	28% (7/25)	0	68% (17/25)	28% (7/25)
Socials	64% (16/25)	32% (8/25)	0	46% (12/25)	48% (12/25)	0	72% (18/25)	24% (6/25)

The above data reveals that on average 66% (2/3) of the students in the middle school cohort received letter grades and 33% (1/3) were given "incompletes" in the core subject areas in Term 1, 2 and 3.

C) Informal Interviews with Students:

We conducted informal interviews with the students in the cohort to determine how they feel about school and why they miss so much school. The following is a brief summary of some of the comments and thoughts that students expressed:

◆ Aboriginal students comments about why they miss school:

- a. Students indicated that they miss school for the following reasons: Personal illness, babysitting younger siblings or relatives, missing the bus, family issues, no one there to get them off to school, emotional stress (depression), no transportation to school (too far to walk).

- ◆ Aboriginal students comments about supports or strategies they feel help them to be successful in school:
 - a. Teachers who lessen the work load (assignment expectations, fewer questions, etc) when students are feeling overwhelmed.
 - b. When schools provide breakfast programs because it motivates students to come to school on time.
 - c. When teachers are fun and they help.
 - d. When Aboriginal Education staff help them.
 - e. When friends make them feel important and cared about. They come to be with their friends.

NARRATIVE: What successes and/or challenges are not reflected in the data?

Successes not reflected in the data...

1. The positive relationships that students form with school counselors, teachers, aboriginal support staff and school administrators has been influential in helping vulnerable Aboriginal students stay in school. It is evident that the vulnerable students in the cohort have a network of people providing support in school and at the community level.

Challenges not reflected in the data...

1. Factors such as not participating in classes such as PE because of menstruation or poor body image.
2. The negative impact that increased exploration of drugs, alcohol and sex has on student motivation regarding school.
3. The impact of influential relationships such as peer pressure and wanting to fit in.
4. The impact of parents enabling students to miss school for reasons other than personal illness.

REFLECTIONS: What did we learn? How did it make a difference?

The attendance data reveals that attendance is one of our biggest concerns for the cohort of middle school students who participated in the inquiry. We recognize that we are faced with many complex issues in trying to improve attendance for Aboriginal students. We learned that despite excessive absenteeism many of the students in the cohort were doing amazingly well academically. This can likely be attributed to the supports that are provided by classroom teachers, Aboriginal support services and other school supports that are available to middle school students. In addition, we learned that the students like school and that they miss school for reasons beyond their control. Most students indicating that they often miss school for reasons other than personal illness. Next year we will continue to provide focused support to the students identified and we will continue to follow them through to the end of middle school. In addition, we will identify another group of grade 6 students for the 2011-2012 school-year.

FUTURE PLANNING: Where do we go from here?

To improve the school attendance of our vulnerable Aboriginal students, we intend to focus more attention on the following:

- ◆ Continue to provide support from “Our Elder’s Are Watching Program” at Skaha Lake Middle School.
- ◆ Increase visibility in schools in the following ways:
 - Develop signage in the Okanagan Language in schools.
 - Ask schools to acknowledge the traditional territory of the Okanagan First Nation at events.
 - Develop areas for Aboriginal art such as story poles and Aboriginal murals created by Aboriginal students at Skaha Lake Middle School.
 - Create areas for Aboriginal students to showcase cultural artwork and crafts.
 - Increase opportunities for Elders and others as Aboriginal resource people in schools.
 - Expand our “Building Cultural Bridges Program” to include the middle school level.
 - Continue to offer district wide Aboriginal events and activities such as the Pow Wow and Aboriginal theatrical performances annually.
 - Expand cultural workshop opportunities to target vulnerable students with the hope of motivating and improving attendance.
- ◆ Develop and implement strategies to increase parental and Aboriginal community involvement in the following ways:
 - Expand the “Honoring Our Families Program” concept to the middle school level (Skaha Lake Middle School).
 - Expand home/school/community networking by hosting school informational sessions at Aboriginal community facilities such as the Penticton Indian Band Hall and Ooknakane Friendship Centre to provide information to parents and families regarding school initiatives, etc.
 - Invite parents to participate in informational evenings in schools.
 - Expand school and community networking by developing and maintaining partnerships with the Penticton Indian Band and the En’owkin Centre and the Ooknakane Friendship Centre when possible.



School District No. 67 Aboriginal Education

110 Green Avenue W.

Penticton, BC V2A 3T1

Vice Principal: Kathy Pierre

Aboriginal Education School Improvement Plan

SECONDARY ~ 2010-11

Aboriginal Education Context:

School District No. 67 Aboriginal Education Program provides support to three secondary schools located in Penticton and Summerland. The Aboriginal Education Program district staff consists of a vice principal, five teachers, one counselor, and eight support workers who work across the district to deliver services to students and schools.

As of September 30, 2010, we have 284 Aboriginal students at the secondary school level. The School District No. 67 Aboriginal population consists of on-reserve First Nation students coming from the Penticton Indian Band (approximately 1/5 of the students), Metis, non-status and off-reserve First Nations.

We have a Local Education Agreement (L.E.A.) with the Penticton Indian Band that was signed in September, 2008. In addition, we are currently in the final year of our Enhancement Agreement (E.A). Our E.A. focuses on four goal areas which are intended to improve overall academic achievement. The goals focus on:

1. *Increasing Aboriginal student success in literacy.*
2. *Increasing Aboriginal student success in numeracy.*
3. *Increasing Aboriginal student Dogwood graduation rates and school transition rates.*
4. *Increasing opportunities for Aboriginal cultural enrichment, visibility and history in our schools.*

This year we have implemented three separate inquiry questions each geared to a different level. At the secondary school level we are focusing our attention on improving school transition rates, graduation rates and enhancing opportunities for aboriginal cultural enrichment and visibility in our schools.

INQUIRY QUESTION

Secondary School: If we provide focused individual support to at-risk Aboriginal students over 4+ years commencing in grade 9 will Aboriginal student grade transition and graduation rates increase?

RATIONALE: What evidence compelled us to ask this question?

In 2010, the Aboriginal students' six year Dogwood completion rate for SD67 was 60.2%. One of our Enhancement Agreement targets was aimed at improving our six year dogwood completion rate to 65% by June 2010 for Aboriginal students. We were somewhat short on reaching the EA target; however, our Aboriginal graduation rate has shown significant improvement from previous years. In the Fall of 2010, we

attended a school completion workshop with Dr. Sharon Jeroski to examine data from SD67. Based on the data, we learned that students with behavioral designations and Aboriginal students are most at-risk for not completing school. We recognize that many of the Aboriginal students who are struggling to stay connected to school are very capable students with the potential to graduate with a regular dogwood certificate. Thus, we have decided to focus specialized, individual attention on at-risk, Aboriginal students starting in grade 9 who have the potential to graduate with a dogwood certificate. In 2009, the Aboriginal Education Program staff attended a workshop with Dr. Martin Brokenleg. He inspired us to focus our attention on implementing strategies to develop positive relationships that increase a sense of belonging, identity and ownership for our Aboriginal student population. Brokenleg stated, "Children from difficult circumstances need someone to throw them a lifeline since it is very difficult to pull oneself up by one's own boot strings" (ix). Therefore, the Aboriginal Education Program staff at the secondary school level has developed the above question because we recognize that we play an important role in becoming the lifeline for Aboriginal students in our schools. In addition, we would like to determine what benefits will occur if we implement strategies and supports aimed at developing positive relationships and providing focused support to students who are struggling to stay in school. It is our hope that the supports we provide will assist vulnerable students in developing an increase sense of belonging and academic success as they make their journey through secondary school.

ACTION PLAN

OBJECTIVES: Specific Steps to answer our question OR More specific questions?

1. *Improve Aboriginal student grade transition and graduation rates at the secondary school level.*
2. *Increase Aboriginal cultural visibility at the secondary school level.*

STRUCTURES AND STRATEGIES: For all students and our most vulnerable learners:

A) Improve Aboriginal student transition and graduation rates at the secondary school level:

1. *Build a support block into student schedules for vulnerable students to provide ongoing academic support.*
2. *Establish rapport with parents/guardians and ensure they are included in meetings involving their children.*
3. *Include students and parents in discussions when strategizing how to overcome problems that arise throughout the school year.*
4. *Establish ongoing communication with classroom teachers, school counselors and administrators regarding targeted students.*
5. *Provide ongoing and consistent CEA support for students in classrooms and the Aboriginal Education Resource Room.*
6. *Refer students to the Aboriginal Education counselor for social and emotional support when required.*
7. *Advocate for students with teachers and school administrators.*
8. *Facilitate referrals to outside agencies for additional support when required.*
9. *Communicate with outside agencies for family or student support when required.*
10. *Make referrals to School Based Teams and school counselors when required.*
11. *Provide support for course planning and scheduling for students to ensure ongoing academic support and success.*
12. *Inform school staff about the Aboriginal Education Inquiry Project at a school staff meeting.*
13. *Encourage identified students to participate in girls group at Penticton Secondary School and Princess Margaret Secondary School.*

B) Increase Aboriginal cultural visibility at the secondary school level:

1. **Facilitate opportunities to host Aboriginal presenters and resource people at school:**
 - ◆ Prominent Aboriginal leaders from the local Okanagan First Nation visited the Social Justice 11 classroom at PMSS to present on various Aboriginal topics.
 - ◆ Aboriginal students at PMSS did a few cultural presentations in social studies classes at PMSS.
 - ◆ Oonkane Friendship Centre did a series of “Health and Wellness” Workshops at PSS and PMSS.
 - ◆ Elders from the Penticton Indian Band visited the B.C. First Nations Studies 12 class at PSS.
2. **Implement Our Elders Are Watching Program at Princess Margaret Secondary School:**

We are in our second year of our “Elders’ Program”. Regina Gabriel, a respected elder from Penticton Indian Band, attends Princess Margaret Secondary School two days per week to work with Aboriginal students.
3. **Implement Aboriginal Student Cultural Leadership Opportunities:**
 - ◆ Remembrance Day School Presentation - several Aboriginal students participated in the school Remembrance Day presentations at PSS and PMSS.
 - ◆ Secondary Mentorship Program at PMSS - a few leadership students taught stick games to middle and elementary school students. Also, they spoke to middle school students about respect and cultural protocols.
4. **Facilitate Cultural Fieldtrips throughout the school year:**

This year we have been involved in the following fieldtrip activities: Indian Tea Harvesting, Pow Wow, Speetlum Digging, Salmon Release, 4 food feast, Penticton Indian Band Career Fair and the UBCO Career Fair.
5. **Provide opportunities for cultural enrichment for aboriginal students:**

This year we did the following in-school cultural enrichment activities: Traditional Foods Workshop, Stick games, Metis Presentation, Healing Circle/Smudge as well as Aboriginal crafts.

ASSESSMENT PROCESS & TOOLS: What will we use to measure our success?

We have collected and analyzed the following School District No. 67:

1. Attendance.
2. The Six Year Dogwood Completion Rate Data.
3. Anecdotal data developed by Aboriginal Teachers (informal interview of student attitudes and thoughts).

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING: How will we increase our capacity and collaboration?

1. **Dr. Martin Brokenleg Keynote address:**

In August 2009, Dr. Martin Brokenleg was the keynote presenter at the District Pro D. His message emphasized there is hope and we can reclaim youth at-risk by helping students develop a healthy sense of belonging and connection to the world they live in.

2. ***Dr. Martin Brokenleg Book Club - "Reclaiming Youth At Risk":***
During the 2008-09 school year, the Aboriginal Education Program staff did a book study using *Reclaiming Youth at-Risk*. As a staff, we recognized our role in developing good relationships with students and their families and the significance of helping students develop a positive sense of belonging in our schools.
3. ***School Achievement Review Committee:***
In 2010-2011, several members from the Aboriginal Education Program staff participated in the SD67 School Achievement Review Committee. We looked at data from SD67 on student achievement including Aboriginal student data. In addition, we discussed the idea of a Pyramid of Interventions approach to supporting at-risk learners including possible strategies for students who are struggling with reading beyond ELI.
4. ***School District No. 67 School Completion Workshop with Dr. Sharon Jeroski:***
Aboriginal Education Program staff and the local, Aboriginal partner groups attended a school completion workshop with Dr. Sharon Jeroski at the Penticton Indian Band Hall. We examined SD67 data and discussed what the data reveals. We discovered that the data tells us that we have two groups of students most at-risk for not completing school. These groups include Aboriginal students and students who have behavioral designations.
5. ***Webinar - "Engaging and Empowering Aboriginal Youth - A Toolkit for Service Providers":***
The Aboriginal Education Staff at the middle and secondary level attended weekly webinars (Fall 2009) to explore ways to build effective partnerships, integrate cultural identity, engage youth and maintain effective partnerships. Also, representatives from Aboriginal community partner groups, school administrators, teachers and school counselors from across the district participated. Next year we are hoping to use the above toolkit to implement suggestions on strategies provided regarding working with at-risk Aboriginal youth in schools.
6. ***School District No. 67 and Penticton Indian Band Partnership:***
School administrators at PMSS and the Aboriginal Education Staff are connecting with the Penticton Indian Band Social Development Committee to support vulnerable students.

RESOURCES: What do we currently have and what do we need?

1. *Reclaiming Youth at-Risk - Our Hope for the Future* by Larry K. Brendtro, Dr. Martin Brokenleg and Steve Van Bockern.
2. *Engaging and Empowering Aboriginal Youth - A Toolkit for Service Providers* by Claire V. Crooks, Debbie Chiodo and Darren Thomas.
3. Regina Gabriel - Penticton Indian Band Elder.
4. Anna Tonasket and Bruce Manuel - Restorative Justice Coordinator for South Okanagan Restorative Justice Program.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT: How parents will become partners in our efforts?

We are striving to develop meaningful relationships with parents and effective partnerships with our Aboriginal partner groups to assist us in supporting Aboriginal students and their families in the following ways:

- ◆ By inviting and including parents in school meetings involving their children.

- ◆ By inviting parents to participate in cultural and social events hosted in schools.
- ◆ By establishing and maintaining ongoing contact with parents and Aboriginal community agencies regarding student progress, successes and concerns.

EVIDENCE

KEY FINDINGS: What did we find out?

- A) Attendance data reveals that school attendance is a major concern for the cohort of grade 9 students involved in the secondary inquiry.
1. Aboriginal Student Attendance for Princess Margaret Secondary School and Penticton Secondary School (**Secondary Level**):
- d. Overall → 100% (8/8) in the cohort missed more than 90 classes (blocks) this year:
 - iv. 37.5% (3/8) missed between 90-109 classes (blocks) in 2010-2011 school year.
 - v. 12.5% (1/8) missed between 130-149 classes (blocks) in the 2010-2011 school year.
 - vi. 50% (4/8) missed more than 150 classes (blocks) in the 2010-2011 school year.
 - vii. In general, the Aboriginal students had the highest number of classes missed in Math 9 and Science 9 with 50% of the students dropping their Science 9 regular for a self-paced Science 9 course.
 - e. Overall → 50% (4/8) of the students in the cohort missed more than 20 days of school in the 2010-2011 with the majority of the students with high absenteeism coming from Princess Margaret Secondary School.
- D) Data provided by the “How Are We Doing Report” indicates that the Aboriginal student “Six Year Completion Rate” for 2010 was 60.2% showing a significant increase compared to the previous two years.
- E) Anecdotal Comments regarding student thoughts, ideas and attitudes about school and the supports they received at school this year:
- a. Student comments about what they liked about school this year:
 - i. Meeting new friends, cool teachers like Mr. Reid.
 - b. Students comments about what they found difficult about school:
 - i. Completing homework “I don’t do homework”, PE, getting along with some teachers, public speaking, focusing during class, staying on track, showing up on time, peer pressure→not being able to say “No” to influential friends who are taking them away from school.
 - ii. Students comments about who has helped them in a positive way this year.
 - iii. Aboriginal Education staff, Gloria Hoban, Kelly Ferguson, Mr. Foese, Beth W., foster parents, siblings, friends, Ginger, Mr. Dueck, Rhea Dupuis.

- c. Students comments about supports they received this year that made a difference:
 - i. “People like Ginger help me sort out my feelings”; “ Mr. Hyde helps to get me out of trouble, if Mr. Hyde wasn’t here, I would be kicked out”; “School would really be tough without all the support that I have”; “support blocks are good”; “Ab Ed has helped me catch up on homework”; “I like AIM with Kelly and being in the Girls’ Group”; “Doing self-paced math, science and social studies”, “Ab Ed fieldtrips”; “Lana in Socials”.
- d. Students comments about whether they see themselves graduating in four (4) years:
 - i. “Probably”, “Obviously”, “Yes, for sure”, “ya, but I think it’ll be tough”, “No”, “Maybe if I stay out of trouble”, “yes, I hope so”, “Nope...well maybe”.
- e. Significant comments made by students during informal interviews:
 - i. “Ab Ed Support blocks are supportive but they are not helping me”. Several students expressed that they recognize and appreciate all of the supports that is provided; however, it is not going to change their lack of motivation regarding school because the “bad attitude image” and risky behaviors they are currently involved in is more appealing than doing well in school. They acknowledge that school should be important to them and they know it is something they need for their future but the other stuff is getting in their way right now.

NARRATIVE: What successes and/or challenges are not reflected in the data?

Successes not reflected in data...

1. Despite all of the personal challenges that our vulnerable, Aboriginal students are dealing with, they are trying their best to stay in school.
2. The positive relationships that students form with school counselors, teachers, Aboriginal support staff and school administrators has been influential in helping vulnerable Aboriginal students stay in school. It is evident that the vulnerable students in the cohort have a network of people providing supports in school and at the community level.

Challenges not reflected in the data...

1. The impact of mental health concerns: To what extent is mental health supports provided to vulnerable students? What is the frequency and extent of the support? What impact does counseling have on student behavior and attitudes about school and life in general? How can the Ab Ed Program play a bigger role in supporting students who are struggling with mental health issues?
2. The impact of substance abuse: How does drug and alcohol use/abuse outside of school impact student success in school? What impact does it have on their developing brain that becomes a barrier to their desire to learn and make positive decisions?

3. The impact of ineffective relationships and partnerships with Aboriginal parents: How do we develop effective relationships and partnerships with parents in their children's education beyond what we are currently doing? With many of our vulnerable students, there seems to be a disconnection between home and school expectations that sends a conflicting message to students about education. We recognize that parents who have had negative educational experiences need to have their trust in the educational system restored. What can we do about this so that students see their parents and their school working together with similar goals, values and expectations?

REFLECTIONS: What did we learn? How did it make a difference?

The attendance data shows that attendance is one of our biggest concerns for the grade 9 cohort identified. In particular, we noticed that the students from Princess Margaret Secondary School had a higher rate of absenteeism than the students from Penticton Secondary School. As previously stated, this year we have focused our attention on identifying a cohort of students who have the potential to graduate; however, their poor school attendance, behavior and attitude about school is making it difficult for them to be successful (academically). We discovered that many of the students missed classes in their core subject areas with Science 9 and Math 9 having the highest absenteeism. In addition, 67.5% (5/8) of the students in the cohort dropped Science 9 and re-enrolled in a self-paced Science 9 course. In addition, we learned that some students appreciate the supports that are provided by schools; however, they expressed it is not going to change their lack of motivation regarding school because the "bad attitude image" and risky behaviors they are currently involved in is more appealing than doing well in school. It leaves us asking, "What can we do to make school more appealing to students who feel it is cool to maintain a bad attitude image?" Next year we will continue to provide focused support for the students identified and will continue to follow them through to graduation. In addition, we will identify another grade 9 cohort for the 2011-2012 school year. Our goal is to develop trusting and supportive relationships with aboriginal students to improve student engagement (attendance), student sense of belonging, student grade transition, and dogwood completion one student at a time for those identified as being at-risk for not completing school.

FUTURE PLANNING: Where do we go from here?

To increase a sense of belonging for our Aboriginal students, their families and the Aboriginal community we intend to focus our attention on the following:

- ◆ Expand the Aboriginal Education Program Counseling position (funding permitting) to provide increase supports for students who are struggling emotionally and socially.
- ◆ Extend the support services that are already being provided by SD67 Aboriginal Education Program staff by connecting with other school districts to see what they are doing and borrowing ideas to utilize in our schools.

- ◆ Increase visibility in the secondary schools in the following ways:
 - Develop signage in the Okanagan Language in secondary schools.
 - Ask schools to acknowledge the traditional territory of the Okanagan First Nation at events.
 - Create areas for Aboriginal students to showcase cultural artwork and crafts.
 - Increase opportunities for Elders and others as Aboriginal resource people in schools→BC First Nations Studies 12, Social Justice 11, Social Studies, etc.,.
 - Continue to offer district wide Aboriginal events and activities such as the Pow Wow and Aboriginal performances annually.
 - Expand cultural workshop opportunities at the secondary level to target vulnerable students with the hope of motivating and improving attendance.
 - Expand the Aboriginal Novel Project at the secondary level by encouraging English 9 and 10 teachers to include at least one Aboriginal novel in their English course.
 - Increase opportunities for Aboriginal student leadership in schools→Remembrance Day Celebrations, mentorship opportunities with middle or elementary students.

- ◆ Develop and implement strategies to increase parental and Aboriginal community involvement at the secondary level in the following ways:
 - Expand home/school/community networking by having the schools go to the Aboriginal community. For example, go out to the Penticton Indian Band's S & S Café or the Oonakane Friendship Centre to deliver information to parents and families regarding school initiatives, etc,. (For example, graduation requirements, course selection, work experience opportunities).
 - Invite parents to participate in informational evenings in schools (i.e. post secondary, Metis informational sessions, etc.,).
 - Expand school and community networking by developing and maintaining partnerships with the Penticton Indian Band, the South Okanagan Metis Association, the En'owkin Centre and the Oonakane Friendship Centre when possible.