

**Aboriginal Student Achievement Initiative
Sahtu Region**

**Minister's and Community Education Forums
Norman Wells
September 28-30, 2010**

The Minister's Forum – September 28-29, 2010

The Minister of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) and Sahtu Divisional Education Council (SDEC) brought together more than 60 educators, education and community leaders, and elders to discuss ways to improve the achievement of Aboriginal students. For many attending the forum, it was the first time working with others on education issues in their community or in the region.

The Leaders' Words

Leaders in the Sahtu had two main messages in their opening and closing comments - the importance of strengthening Dene language use and the benefits of positive relationships between the home and school.

Grand Chief Frank Andrew is an advocate for strong connections between Dene language and culture in all aspects of life. "Language is what makes the Dene a nation." The Grand Chief said that if the words of the elders are not documented, "we (the Dene) will be gone (and) we won't be Aboriginal people." He is concerned that the culture-based *Dene Kede* school curriculum is not being implemented. He doesn't want to see the work at this forum follow this same path.

The Grand Chief said that parents and the school need to work together to support children to do their best so they can serve others well. It is not the Dene way for people to do their best so they can be better than others. Parents need to make sure that their children attend school everyday, all day. Attendance is the key to success. The Grand Chief Andrew wants to see more music in the schools. Music brings health and healing.

Norman Yakeleya, Sahtu MLA, said that children need nourishment, support, love, and discipline to be good learners. Children need education in their own culture and language. By working together, parents, leaders, and educators can ensure that the children are well educated and know who they are. With education and a strong sense of identity, our children can be successful in modern life.

Beverly Masuzumi, Sahtu District Education Council (DEC) Chair, believes that it takes a village to raise a child. While there are more graduates in the Sahtu than in the past, she said that "not all diplomas are the same." Parents need to get more involved in their children's education and help students choose courses that get them the kind of high school diploma they need.

Attendance is a huge issue in the Sahtu. Absenteeism contributes to the achievement gap between Aboriginal and other students. Ms. Masuzumi said that regardless of where they live and go to school, all students should have equal access to courses and learning opportunities. She also said that role models in Sahtu communities including well-trained Aboriginal teachers need to be recognized.

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 Sahtu Minister's Forum discussed these four priorities.¹

1. Early Childhood and Childcare

Mandatory full-time kindergarten for all five year olds

Overall, mandatory full-time kindergarten for all five year olds was seen as a good way to build a strong foundation for learning. Some benefits identified were:

- Improved opportunities for children to develop early literacy skills,
- Preparation for Grade 1, and
- Childcare and learning supports for parents seeking employment or returning to school.

¹ The focus of the discussion in the Sahtu Region differed slightly from other regions as the Sahtu was the first in the series of six regional ASA forums.

While there was support for mandatory full-time kindergarten for all five year olds, there were concerns. “What would it look like?” “What kind of curriculum would it follow?” “Is it sustainable?” “Is there a commitment to funding?” “Who would be responsible for enforcing attendance and would it involve Social Services?” “Would there be consequences for parents who don’t send their children to school (e.g. fines and enforcement issues)?”

Forum participants worried that young children may mimic negative habits of older students. This was a particular concern if there is no physical separation between facilities for younger and older children. Some were concerned that the ‘mandatory’ nature of kindergarten will further remove children from the land and the culture or undermine the role that parents/ family have in early childhood development.

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

The idea of a structured optional early childhood program for all four-year olds at no cost to parents was supported by Sahtu participants. They qualified their support pending:

- Staffing by qualified, skilled early childhood workers,
- Half day programming,
- Access to appropriate facilities,
- Incorporation of the community language into the program, and
- Culturally appropriate programming.

Forum participants identified the pros and cons of an optional NWT-wide structured early childhood program for all four year olds. On the positive side, a structured early childhood program for four-year olds could lead to immersion programming in the school. It could prepare young children for greater success in kindergarten and improve opportunities for early identification of disabilities. Because childcare options are limited or non-existent in most Sahtu communities, it would give parents a no-cost option for their children, help fill gaps in services, and diminish childcare costs and demands on grandparents. It would also offer new training and employment opportunities for local residents. On the negative side, participants were concerned about adequate and sustainable funding, the availability of trained individuals to run programs, and adequacy of space, particularly if the program is in the school. Some wondered if the sustainability of this program would come at a cost to other programs and whether there would still be a need for a full day kindergarten program. They worried that the program might take funding away or diminish the successes of other early childhood/preschool programs (e.g. Aboriginal Head Start) or diminish resources for K-12 programs.

Some participants pointed out the importance of learning through play in an unstructured environment. Taking children away at such a young age could diminish parent/grandparents’ role and responsibility for educating their children and over

institutionalize/over-school young children. “Parents are the first teachers of their children.”

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

Several forum participants agreed that an optional NWT-wide structured early childhood program for four year olds could be a ‘nice fit’ in the community school. But most agreed that the early childhood program could be located anywhere if it has quality instruction, appropriate space, adequate funding, and is implemented in a way that involves parents.

There were several issues that participants said must be addressed prior to making a decision about locating an early childhood program for four year olds. In particular, responsibility for the program must be made clear and issues related to legislation, costs, liability, student-instructor ratios, staff training/ qualifications, licensing, and space must be addressed.

If the program were located in the school, some efficiencies could be achieved by sharing resources. Locating the program in the school would also allow young mothers/ parents to be in the same place as their young child. It could also provide an opportunity to offer parenting courses that are linked to the school program. But lack of space is an issue for some schools. There is also concern that a school-based program could overburden the existing K-12 program/system if additional funding is not available. It could also cause scheduling problems in small schools. Some forum participants said that locating the program in the school could be disruptive for all groups of learners. Some expressed fear that government is taking over early childhood development without each community having input.

Locating a childcare program for newborns to four year olds in the community school

Childcare allows adults to work, train, and participate in education. Locating a childcare program in the school would be convenient for single moms attending school. But in general, forum participants agreed that the school is not a good place for a childcare program although such a decision depends on the particular situation in each community. They said that the school is too busy and noisy for childcare and safety is an issue. Some forum participants suggested that Aurora College facilities would be a better fit especially if childcare was tied to the early childhood certificate program. Others said that it should be a stand alone program while others spoke of the need to shift the focus to supporting families to care for their children.

Forum participants raised questions about the relative merits of home versus institutionalized learning/ development, and about the independence of programs and childcare boards and school boards. Given the difficulty communities have funding and sustaining childcare programs, they questioned: “what is government prepared to support?” “If there is no cost to parents, who will pay?” Others said that the

government can't fund all of this on its own. Community partnerships and involvement would improve the viability of childcare.

2. Student and Family Support

Barriers and challenges preventing school success

A host of factors impact student successes. In the home and among students themselves, these factors include:

- Lack of parental support and involvement in education,
- Poor attendance,
- Drug and alcohol use,
- Peer pressure,
- Low self-esteem,
- Lack of sleep and poor nutrition, and
- Lack of identity and skills as a Dene person. "Many Aboriginal children/students do not know who they are as an Aboriginal person. They are not strong in their Aboriginal language and cultural ways, history, or identity. They do not have relationships with the land."

In the school, barriers and challenges preventing students from being successful include:

- Social passing,
- Teacher turnover,
- Inadequate funding for diverse programming,
- Poor broad band/connectivity and other technology issues that limit access to distance education/on-line courses,
- Departmental exams/standardized testing,
- Too many students per class/ students falling through cracks in the system,
- Inadequate support for special needs students,
- Students' poor study habits, and
- Cultural issues including lack of cultural awareness among teachers.

A K-12 curriculum based on the Eurocentric (non-Aboriginal) worldview rather than Aboriginal perspectives and lack of culturally relevant, appropriate and responsive K-12 curriculum were also identified barriers. Participants said that the Dene laws and the 10 Commandments are similar but praying/religion in school has been banned. This was also identified as a barrier to student success.

Issues in the home and school impacting student success are compounded by lack of communications between these two environments. Inadequate counselling and specialists services to respond to social problems, diagnose disabilities, and help transitions to further education or employment also impact student success. Other

barriers are conflicts between traditional and modern values/trends, lack of student led extracurricular activities, few positive role models, and few/no local jobs/employment to motivate further education.

Support needed from the home, school, and community

Sahtu forum participants said that students need family support and their total involvement in their children's education and in the school. "Families need to buy-into and support the education system." They need to get involved in, and have open communications with the school and ensure that students attend school regularly. They need to recognize and reward student achievement "along the way not just at graduation."

In the home, families need to provide structure in terms of homework and bed times; have clear expectations of their children; and teach children to be hard workers and independent. Ideally the family home has resources to support education such as computers for learning rather than gaming, high speed internet, and educational books. Family members need to spend quality time together. Parents need to show unconditional love, have open communication with their children, and discipline consistently. Parents need to role model behaviours such as volunteerism, and pass traditional skills on to their children.

To be successful, students need their schools to be welcoming, safe, nurturing environments that promote a sense of belonging and ownership – "a place kids want to be". They need to accept "students for who they are and where they are" and visibly value children's culture and language. Schools should be properly resourced with qualified staff including social and career/guidance counsellors who are oriented to the local culture. Schools need to offer a variety of relevant and culturally appropriate programs (e.g. local history in language arts rather than Shakespeare) that reflect students' needs, use appropriate technology, and provide adequate space/facilities. They need to teach students to be accountable for their own learning. They also need to learn from others' successes (e.g. why Tulita has more grads than other Sahtu schools).

Schools need to acknowledge something positive in every child and reward effort and academic achievement throughout the year (e.g. monthly awards, awards for improved attendance, and extracurricular activities). Schools need to have:

- An active student council,
- Student exchanges/travel programs,
- Tutoring/homework/ study supports,
- A buddy/mentoring system,
- Extracurricular activities for all students, and
- Role models/guest speakers.

Schools need to dialogue with students to get their recommendations for improving attendance. They need to better communicate with the home and the broader community and look for opportunities for cross-cultural sharing.

Community leaders and members can support student successes by promoting education, reinforcing regular attendance, getting involved in the school, and providing career development opportunities, after school jobs, and employment for graduates. Community groups/members should offer financial and volunteer support, youth programs, and extracurricular activities. They need to work with the school to support student wellness for example, through on-the-land programs, self-esteem programs (e.g. with Turtle Concepts), alcohol and drug workshops, and by celebrating local successes (e.g. local lawyers, nurses). Leaders can make themselves available as school resource people (e.g. on self-governance and local history), lobby for funding, and organize exchanges with other communities. They need to network to address school/educational issues and work with community organizations to host education forums to build partnerships. They need to involve youth in all leadership meetings and find ways to involve youth in local councils.

Helping families to help their children be successful in school

Families need to feel and be supported to help their children succeed in school. But first they need to better understand what they can do to help their children be successful, and feel comfortable in/with the school and what their children are exposed to. Families need supports that focus on:

- Parenting and basic life skills,
- Seeking balance between the traditional and modern worlds,
- Creating stability in the home,
- Communications within the home and with the school,
- Having positive expectations of children
- Information about the school system and what it takes to succeed,
- Skills to function in a technological world, and
- Aboriginal language lessons.

Family supports could be offered through peer groups/networks, agency services, parent advisory committees, multi-partner/community approaches, and regular communications and relationships with school staff. All supports need to respect privacy and dignity.

School staff have a role to play in supporting families but they should first learn about the effects that residential schools continue to have on parents and students. School staff can be supportive if they provide consistent and clear messages to parents. They also can be more accessible by participating in community activities, meetings, and events outside the school. They can be aware of, and work with the family to find ways to address the stresses and pressures they face (e.g. financial, meeting basic needs, technology, and transportation issues).

The community can support children's success in school by hosting family activities (e.g. sports, family fun nights) and recognizing families (e.g. family days, appreciation days).

3. Aboriginal Language Curriculum and Resource Development

Aboriginal language fluency and strong cultural knowledge

The home and family have the greatest influence on language use and cultural knowledge. To be fluent in their Aboriginal language and strong in their culture, students need their family to speak the language at home all the time/everyday and practice the culture as a family. These immersion practices need to begin at birth and continue throughout a child's life. Adults need to actively share family history and genealogy, and expose their children to the land, rites of passage celebrations, and other cultural experiences. Elders have a vital and central role in teaching language and culture in the home.

The school has a role and responsibility to support Aboriginal language fluency and cultural knowledge. Supports can be provided through immersion programming particularly at the preschool level, elders in the school, and teachers who can read, write, and speak the language and inspire students to do the same. To support language instruction, a structured and consistently implemented curriculum with resource materials are needed along with trained language instructors and teachers. "Maybe one reason that there aren't many Aboriginal teachers is because there isn't a structured Aboriginal language and culture curriculum."

Forum participants said that instructor and curriculum development should be an ongoing, cooperative enterprise between the community and school and recognize the particular circumstances in each community. Community-based approaches would ensure sensitivity to local dialects so that students are taught "the authentic, rich language" rather than "watered down Westernized versions." Locally developed curriculum and instructors can reflect best practices of supportive learning experiences, integrating technology (e.g. Rosetta Stone), and using the culture based *Dene Kede* curriculum. Schools and communities can work together to provide strong cross-cultural programs for school staff and offer language classes. They can also have special events such as a day for *Dene Kede (Dene Kede Dzene)* and a cultural week (e.g. like Literacy Week) with heritage fairs, Dene games, on the land events, and family oriented language activities.

Community leaders, organizations, and members can promote and role model language use in the home and workplace. Community leaders and groups can work with the school to develop curriculum and language instructors. They can sponsor more cultural activities that bring elders and youth together in supportive learning experiences such as storytelling, Dene history lessons, and developing family trees (that show the connections between different branches of each family). Community leaders and organizations can ensure that early childhood programs are immersion programs that are well supported with language and cultural resource materials for both instructors and students. They can advocate for Aurora College to offer the community-based Aboriginal Language Culture Instructor Program (ALCIP) and community-based Teacher Education Program (TEP). They can advocate for children's programming including cartoons in the Aboriginal language.

Making the NWT K-12 school program more culturally relevant

To make the NWT K-12 school program more culturally relevant, Sahtu forum participants recommended that the curriculum be changed. They said that the current curriculum needs to be influenced by Dene perspectives that are integrated throughout. They advised: “throw out the framework. We need to integrate everything.” They said that the curriculum needs to be “Dene owned because things get taken out/ changed when done by others.” The curriculum needs to be based on the seasons and integrate Dene history, stories, legends, self-government and land claim arrangements, values and expectations, beliefs, culture, spirituality, land-based programming, place names, and Dene language use. “In order for the language to survive we need to give it the same relative importance as English.” “We need to know the history of our own people not only other peoples’ history.” They said that governments need to invest resources to make the curriculum culturally relevant in a way that balances traditional/ cultural ways with the modern world. Ongoing authentic in-service learning for staff is needed to implement the curriculum. Further, more elders should be involved in the school and greater effort should be made to recruit Aboriginal teachers and orient non-local teachers to community needs.

To support language and cultural development, forum participants recommended an immersion program for early childhood programs, better use of technology, tools to assess language proficiency, and more youth-elders cultural camps. They also identified an urgent need to record and document traditional knowledge and history, and elders’ stories. They said that more funding is needed so that families can take their children on the land for long periods of time and speak to them in the Aboriginal language. Some participants agreed that “we need to do something drastic if we want our language back.” Drastic action may mean “closing the school for a couple of years” and the home/ community taking control of education, creating immersion environments, or going back to the land to relearn language and culture. “Language is so important. It can survive if people go out on the land and stay out there. Language is the key to identity.”

Forum participants said that communities need to recognize the cultural resources that they have. The elders are language experts, and should be recognized in the same way as people with PhDs. The communities also need to recognize the “legal strength of our language.”

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

Sahtu forum participants agreed that a focus on language and culture will make the NWT K-12 school system better for all Aboriginal students. They recommended forming a Sahtu education strategy committee to address language and cultural issues within the curriculum. In addition to a curriculum that balances the traditional and modern worlds and integrates the Dene perspective in all courses, they suggested:

- More Aboriginal language advocates and elders in the school;
- Ensuring that language instructors use only the Dene language;

- Ongoing training and more support for staff (e.g. a mentor-buddy system);
- A Slavey version of AAT exams/tests;
- More funding for language and cultural programs; and
- More attention to spirituality within schools (e.g. Dene laws).

To support efforts in the school, forum participants recommended language lessons for everyone in the community so parents and/or others can learn and teach their children.

In more general terms, the NWT K-12 school system could be improved for all NWT Aboriginal students if the school:

- Was “a more interactive place that students want to come to,”
- Had more extracurricular activities,
- Had more enticing or relevant programs,
- Offered tutoring and homework supports, and
- Engaged more community members/organizations in the schools and in interactions with teachers and students.

4. Literacy

Becoming a fluent and capable reader

To become a fluent and capable reader, students need their families to provide a positive, healthy, and safe environment. Adults in the home need to role model and encourage students at a young age to read, listen to and tell stories and legends, sing songs, and participate in and learn traditional activities and games. Adults also need to help children interpret the morals/lessons from traditional stories/legends, which is an important part of Dene literacy. Families need to provide quality early childhood experiences and to have their efforts supported by community programs.

The school can help students become fluent and capable readers when they provide an encouraging, healthy and safe place. They also need to have the resources in place to address special needs (e.g. assessment, speech/language support, educational psychologists). All teachers should be trained and receive ongoing professional development to be “reading teachers” and reading role models. Teachers should have the authority and expertise to implement a range of strategies in the classroom including reading recovery, implicit reading, and teaching literacy across all curriculum areas. Each school should have a literacy coach or a reading specialist to work with teachers and students. Schools should also have appropriate level books and materials. Literacy efforts in the school can be supported with one-on-one reading partners (e.g. adult volunteer, older student, parent), reading buddies between grades, books sent home for daily reading, and time set aside for students to read to teachers/principal and for parents to come into the school to read or listen to students read.

Schools can support literacy development by focusing on Dene literacy skills and knowledge. Dene literacy skills can be highlighted in family literacy days/ evenings, special *Dene Kede* days, and involving elders and parents in school activities.

Communities can help students become fluent and capable readers in several ways. One of the main ways is by supporting Aboriginal language literacy and opportunities to learn and use the language. Support for Aboriginal language literacy can be shown through regularly scheduled traditional activities, a trappers' program, special projects such as building a moose skin boat, storytelling, local contests about Aboriginal history, Slavey signage, terminology workshops to develop the Slavey language to explain modern terms, a Dene dictionary, adult Slavey classes, and newsletters and resources in Slavey including a CD in Slavey on religion and prayer.

Community leaders and groups can use a variety of media to promote the importance of literacy. They can provide incentives to engage families in literacy activities, sponsor community reading challenges/ contests, and encourage use of community/ school libraries.

Barriers and challenges preventing children from becoming capable readers

Several social issues are associated with the barriers and challenges preventing children from becoming capable readers. These issues include instability or lack of wellness in the home and addictions such as gambling. Limited parental involvement in child development, lack of reading and reading materials in the home, and too few quality early childhood education/ programs are other factors. "Some parents struggle with their own literacy which may affect their confidence in reading with their children." "TV, especially cartoons like Dora the Explorer, has a big influence on the little ones."

Forum participants said that lack of and/ or extremely limited access to health and pre-screening services for children (e.g. speech and language, occupational therapy, psychological/ educational psychology assessments) results in unidentified/ undiagnosed learning difficulties. These difficulties can impact on reading skills. Further, there are few strategies/ interventions used in schools to address these difficulties. In the school, most teachers are not trained specifically to teach reading and writing. Further, there are insufficient resources, including classroom assistants/ aides, to implement individual education plans (IEPs).

Community literacy resource centre

Sahtu forum participants wholeheartedly supported the idea of every community having a literacy resource centre. For the most part, the centre was envisioned as a multi-use facility that is "large enough for both quiet study/ research and interactive group activities." The centre should be family oriented like the Tulita Child Development Centre, where children and parents learn together. The centre should have a wide range of resources including computers, printers, fax, books, on-line books, games, puzzles, Slavey language materials, videos/ DVDs and other resources for children and parents. The centre should have scheduled programs. It could be the site

of Aboriginal language courses/instruction, book fairs, book clubs, family literacy training offered by the NWT Literacy Council, a moms and tots program, a back pack program for children and new parents, and storytelling. It could also function as a cultural information, local knowledge or interpretive centre. The centre could be located in the school or another community facility as long as the public has evening and weekend access. Where it is located depends on who will fund and run it.

Ideally the literacy resource centre should be staffed by qualified literacy/library staff who have the skills to engage community members of all ages and abilities in meaningful and effective ways. It should have access to a qualified/trained reading recovery/literacy specialist, a literacy support worker dedicated to assisting families/parents, and literacy volunteers.

Is the Discussion Paper on the Right Track?

Tony Grandjambe stated an unequivocal 'yes' to the question. He said that it is time to take action on these priorities. Members of the forum applauded in agreement.

Lucy Jackson said that inclusive schooling isn't working in the communities. The lack of achievement of students can be seen as discrimination and marginalization of Aboriginal students. She encouraged people to take ownership of their children's education.

Sahtu Community Forum – September 30, 2010

Messages from Keynote Speakers

To set the tone for community plans that support Aboriginal student achievement, the Sahtu community forum heard from **Ethel Blondin-Andrew**, a well respected educator, legislator and Dene leader, and **Terry Fortin**, an education consultant.

Ethel Blondin-Andrew said that when she was young quitting school wasn't an option nor was not caring for the elders. "Today, our moral centre is weaker and many of us are afraid to expect anything of our children. If we don't expect anything, we don't get anything. If you raise your child right, you've done a great job for your community and your country. We (the Dene) can do just as well as anyone else. We aren't any less than others. We need to thrive not just survive. We need to find happiness to thrive. If we could find happiness, we could give ourselves a break from the problems that surround us." She said that if the Dene have education and training, "we can be ready for anything." We need resource centres such as those suggested by ECE that work in both Dene and English.

Ms. Blondin-Andrew said that teaching is a wonderful job but it is tough. Teachers shape the country, self-government, and the community one child at a time. "Educators have to be darn good." They have to respect, love, and encourage excellence. We are all

teachers in one way or another. Every child has a gift. Parents, teachers and leaders have a responsibility to nurture these gifts. Even though we need resources and infrastructure, we can't give up waiting for these things. We also can't give up on young mothers who have children. We need to support each other.

Terry Fortin, an education consultant from Alberta, had several messages to share with forum participants. He said that if a child knows that someone loves them unconditionally, he/she can do anything. Doing your best means that everyone should have a target and others need to 'buy-in' to help individuals achieve these targets. Communities need political leaders to look into the future not just a year down the road. To make a difference, communities need to have educators on side. Leaders and educators need to have strong relationships, work together, and 'walk the talk'. Trust is central to strong relationships. It is important for leadership to take a stand on education because the non-Aboriginal world is aware that First Nations' education is a national issue. Servant leaders, those who serve the community, recognize the gifts that are present in the community. They recognize the power of one and the difference that one person can make.

Taking action on education issues is about taking responsibility and adopting a 'no blame' approach. Communities should avoid being a victim to government money. They should focus on one or two doable actions. There are lots of models and ideas around (e.g. Manitoba and Saskatchewan are doing work on distance high schooling; Alaska has good resources for teacher pre-service and in-service; New Brunswick has done great work on literacy; and Manitoba is keen on indigenous assessment models). Culture and language are good ways to retain students. Mr. Fortin said: "don't be afraid to move the schools to the land."

Sahtu Community Plans

Each community in the Sahtu met to prepare for the Minister's Forum and the Community Forum. Each community came prepared to discuss the main education issues, actions that are working now to support student success, and what needs to be done to support Aboriginal student success. The preparedness of the Sahtu communities, put them in a good position to develop action plans to close the gap between Aboriginal and other student achievement.

The Fort Good Hope Plan for Supporting Student Success

Main Issues	Working Now	Needs to be Addressed	What?	How?	Who & When?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Poor student attendance. -Lack of parental support and involvement. -Inadequate funding for programming for smaller schools and for inclusive schooling (e.g. insufficient staff to offer more course choices or meet needs within multi-grade classrooms, or provide counselling). -Very weak speech and language services. -Lack of funding for older students (e.g. 22+ years). -Lack of childcare spaces. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Breakfast program. -School bus program. -School/community library. -Strong K-6 literacy program. -Teacher retention. -Strong school leadership. -Strong DEA. -Extracurricular activities, travel opportunities, and summer student exchange program. -Good rapport between community and teachers. -Strong interagency support especially from the Band and Yamoga Land Corporation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Absenteeism/low attendance. -Parent involvement and engagement with the school/ education. -Funding based on needs/ programs rather than on FTE/ student numbers. -Aboriginal language and cultural funding for full-time instruction and elders in the school full time. -A culturally appropriate curriculum for all subject areas K-12. -Aboriginal Head Start and/or preschool to bridge the gap between childcare, home, and school environments and to strengthen early literacy. -Community-based adult and alternative learning programs/ opportunities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Develop and implement a plan to increase student attendance and performance. The plan might include: establishing a Parents Advisory Committee (PAC); regularly inviting leaders and elders into the school to make the connections between regular attendance, educational success, and self-government; initiatives to improve attendance and performance; providing progress reports to the community; and supporting parents to take back control in the home. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Regular public education meetings/ forums and communications using a variety of media to make parents and students aware of the bus schedule, the need for students to be ready for the bus, and the impact that one late child has on others; expectations for school attendance and participation in extracurricular activities; community/ school priorities or programs; and attendance and performance progress statistics. -Initiatives to help parents work together on student attendance and performance, strengthening parenting skills, and helping their children to be strong in both the Dene and non-Dene worlds. -Initiatives to inspire students and help them to cope with negative situations and develop life skills. -School-classroom attendance and performance competitions; and awards to recognize improved attendance, effort, and performance. -Interagency meetings and planning to create opportunities for youth to give back and be part of the community and as an incentive to do well in school (e.g. volunteers and job opportunities). -Developing a visual diagram mapping out all the jobs in the community under self-government and the education, training, skills and experience needed to do these jobs. -Advocating for a community-school liaison position to work 	<p>Timeframe: Immediately</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Leadership and other ASA forum participants, and others in the school, DEA, and the PAC (when it is formed). -Community leaders and their agencies need to be role models. - Everyone needs to be accountable and reminded of their responsibilities. -People involved need to be patient because change takes time.

Sahtu Summary Report

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The Colville Lake Plan for Supporting Student Success

Main Issues	Working Now	Needs to be Addressed	What?	How?	Who & When?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Irregular attendance. -Poor/inadequate facilities. -Inadequate parent support. -Poor parent understanding of educational challenges (e.g. lots of blaming). -Inadequate resources for language programming. -Multi-grade classes limit the time available to help each student (e.g. insufficient one-on-one time). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Younger children come to school. -Very successful trapping program. -Strong culture and respect for traditional way of life. -Breakfast/snack program. -DEA support. -Very active, physically healthy and traditional population. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Parent support at home (e.g. speaking the language). -Facilities (e.g. a classroom). -Resources to support on the land activities and using modules for students on the land. -Modifying program delivery to meet needs of all students such as distance education and modules. -Preschool. -Trades programs. -Counselling. -More support staff for multi-grade classes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not developed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not developed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not developed

Sahtu Summary Report

The Norman Wells Plan for Supporting Student Success

Main Issues	Working Now	Needs to be Addressed	What?	How?	Who & When?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Peer pressure within the K-12 environment. -Weak communications with families and lack of family support. -Difficulty supporting special needs students. -Irregular attendance. -Lack of professional services (e.g. speech pathology). -Single parenting issues. -Lack of tutoring supports. -Lack of adequate resources to meet the needs of small high schools. -Discipline issues. -Lack of respect for educators/ education processes. -Addictions. -FASD. -Social passing/ inclusive schooling issues. -Poor quality of Dene language instruction (e.g. no curriculum support). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Strong DEA and a DEA that receives no honoraria/ contributes honoraria to the school. -Matthew Taylor award that recognizes the tragic loss of a local student. -Bringing in outside groups to motivate/enrich activities to build self-esteem (e.g. Turtle Concepts). -Bus system. -Literacy/balanced literacy approach showing good results. -Norman Wells Land Corp. cultural camps and on the land activities. -Extracurricular activities (e.g. soccer, 'take a kid trapping', Christmas fair). -Lots of technology. -Increasing family participation. -Youth and elders centre (e.g. Wii and tea). -Professional development of staff (e.g. for literacy and Math). -Links with Aurora College. -Breakfast programs. -Awards. -EBS (effective behavioural supports). -CTS. -Well equipped school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Revisit the inclusive schooling model. -Scheduled supervised homework support. -Family support, especially for parents of K-5. -Peer-peer tutoring support. -Parental awareness of high school programs. -Early childhood programs. -Different small high school funding formula. -Student health and fitness. -Trained high school guidance counsellors. -Cultural exposure. -More Student Support Assistants (SSAs). -Wellness. -Accountability. -Technical support. -Trades course options. -Arts and music. -ESL –is this a strategy to use? 	<p>Take actions that improve student achievement but do not require additional financial resources. Actions include: changing the school calendar, pooling resources and coordinating efforts to share information and offer more programs; addressing issues associated with the NWT Inclusive Schooling Policy; seeking additional funding where possible; tackling addiction issues; and advocating for more training opportunities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -DEA proposal to SDEC and ECE to change the school calendar to complement traditional activities (so kids can get out on the land). - Participate in partnerships/ interagency meetings to share funding information, increase program options (e.g. involve the Aurora College mobile trades unit), and better access specialist services. -Hold public forums and provide information about the Inclusive Schooling Policy and how to make it work for students. -Seek NWT Literacy Council funding to set up peer/ student tutoring/ mentorships and offer CTS credits to mentors. -Engage the leadership in addressing addictions issues. -Provide training for youth to become leaders within their own natural group (e.g. provide peer support to address addictions). -Submit a proposal and advocate for a community-based TEP to encourage more Aboriginal teachers. -Provide more training opportunities for Aboriginal language teacher assistants or cultural advisors (e.g. use the Targeted Initiative for Older Workers). 	<p>Timeframe: Immediately</p> <p>The DEA with others as required (e.g. school principal, SDEC, ECE, GNWT, Land Corp., and Aurora College).</p>

The Tulita Plan for Supporting Student Success

Main Issues	Working Now	Needs to be Addressed	What?	How?	Who & When?
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Sahtu Summary Report

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Lack of course options/ choices due to inadequate funding, insufficient staff and skills, particularly in music, trades, arts, and home economics. -Irregular attendance. -Challenge of teaching multi-level classrooms. -Insufficient Student Support Assistants (SSAs). -Inadequate childcare/ preschool opportunities. -Not enough help for parents so they can support students' learning (e.g. tutoring). -Under-skilled graduates (still need to upgrade to have options). -Lack of culturally appropriate education beginning in childcare/ preschool and continuing into school. -Limited language acquisition options that start early. -Lack of support for families who have lost their first language. -Lack of spirituality (religion in the school routine and Dene spirituality). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Breakfast program. -Rate of graduation and value of achievement. -College available in the community (but needs to be better used). -Improved literacy (reading is happening everywhere). -Sports programs (school is open from 7:00 am – 11:00 pm). -Feasts and community events (very well-attended). -One-on-one help in the classroom. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Extra help in the classroom. -Broader range of programming/ options made available. -Funding. -Connections with community (so we are all on the same team supporting students). 	<p>The focus of the Tulita plan is attendance. The actions are to: alter the school start time and consider changes in semesters to be coincide with community schedules; improve home-school-community communications and liaison; position courses strategically; offer trades awareness training in a regional centre similar to what is done in the South Slave; survey students; recruit staff able to teach the <i>Dene Kede</i> curriculum; explore an alternative school for students who need more flexibility; continue to have visioning days with the community (e.g. three times a year); and continue the parent friendly, easy to read newsletter (with plain language and lots of pictures) to foster communications with parents and overcome fear about "letters from the school".</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Discuss scheduling changes with the SDEC. Submit a proposal to the Superintendent requesting an amendment to the school calendar. -Phone the home of every child who is not present to open the lines of communication. -Schedule courses like cooking and shop more strategically such as first thing in the morning and right after lunch. -Teach and model 'what taking responsibility looks like' and the benefits of regular, prompt attendance to future/life in the work world. -Identify community leaders and others who can liaise with and speak on behalf of parents/ students (e.g. an advocate for parents/ students). -Advocate for a community-school liaison position to work with students, families, and the school. -Offer a one-week trades awareness program for Grade 9 students (hopefully in Inuvik). -Conduct an anonymous survey of Grade 10-12 students to find out what changes they want to see in the school. -Work with others to infuse the <i>Dene Kede</i> curriculum into daily practices and all school programs. -Recruit local people and school staff with skills to help students build tools/ equipment needed to go on the land. 	<p>Timeframe: Immediately</p> <p>The DEA with others as required (e.g. school principal, SDEC, ECE).</p>
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Sahtu Summary Report

Main Issues	Working Now	Need to be Addressed	What?	How?	Who & When?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Students who are regularly late. -Repetitive curriculum. -Inadequate upper level courses and preparation so students have to upgrade for post-secondary education. -Lack of staff to provide course options. -Lack of qualified preschool preschool/ childcare staff. -Weak communications between school and parents. -Too few students acquiring the Slavey language. -Lack of parental involvement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Foods program/ well-funded Breakfast Program. -Staff who volunteer for extracurricular activities for every age group every day. -After school programs offered by the Recreation Coordinator. -Strong library literacy program. -Elders program funded through DEA. -Good staff retention. -Cultural orientation days. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Slow/ dial-up internet and old computer technology. -Training for support staff and early childhood workers. -More funding. -Qualified guidance counsellor. -More school staff. -More CTS courses/ credits. -Training for staff to deal with FASD and other disabilities. -Liaison/transition support worker. -Qualified tutors to support a buddy system. 	<p>The focus of the Deline plan is to consolidate efforts to support student success and encourage community people to work as one on education, by: including students in decisions about their education; building on previous visioning sessions; and learning through enhanced language/ cultural programs on the land.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Continue to have community visioning sessions that include students. -Form a working group to lead/ oversee/ facilitate action. -Work on coordinating and networking among community resources to better use local assets including taking responsibility for each others' success (e.g. getting each other out of bed!). -Draw on Aboriginal role models (e.g. Rangers, Jordon Tootoo). -Recognize and support single parent families. -Use ESL techniques in the school. -Implement life skills training. -Offer cultural training for newcomers (e.g. follow Alaska models). -Advocate for an education liaison position in the community. -Advocate for a Traditional Knowledge position. -Implement the <i>Dene Kede</i> curriculum. -Celebrate success. -Ensure that teachers/ CAEs are involved in community events. -Engage young adults in the education process through one on one sessions. 	<p>Timeframe: Immediately</p> <p>The DEA with others as required (e.g. school principal, SDEC, ECE).</p>

Participants

1. Beverly Masuzumi, DEA, Fort Good Hope and Sahtu DEC Chair
2. Sharon Tutcho, DEA, Colville Lake
3. Heidi Hodgson-Deschene, DEA, Norman Wells
4. Terry Kunkle, DEA, Tulita
5. Brian Wishart, SDEC, Deline
6. Shannon Barnett-Aikman, SDEC, Norman Wells
7. Ethel Blondin-Andrew, elder, Norman Wells
8. Peter Menacho, Land Corporation, Deline
9. Joe Grandjambe, Land Corporation, Fort Good Hope
10. Charles McNeeley, Land Corporation, Fort Good Hope
11. Chief Raymond Tutcho, First Nation, Deline
12. Chief Arthur Tobac, First Nation, Fort Good Hope
13. Sister Joan Liss, DEA, Fort Good Hope
14. Kevin O'Keefe, SDCE, Colville Lake
15. Jesse Campbell, SDEC, Tulita
16. Seamus Quigg, SDEC, Norman Wells
17. Gordon Sutton, SDEC, Fort Good Hope
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19. Grand Chief Frank Andrew, First Nation, Tulita
20. Angela Grandjambe, DEA, Fort Good Hope
21. Lorraine Kuer, SDEC, Tulita
22. David Reid, NWTTA, Yellowknife
23. Gordon Yakeleya, Land Corporation, Tulita
24. Dudley C. Johnson, Town, Norman Wells
25. Freda Taniton, DEA, Deline
26. Brenda Baton, DEA, Deline
27. Lucy Jackson, elder, Fort Good Hope
28. Diane Doctor, DEA, Tulita
29. Wilfred Lennie, DEA, Tulita
30. Dolphus Baton, elder, Deline
31. Cathy Mackeinzo, DEA, Deline
32. Harvey Pierrot, Land Corporation, Fort Good Hope
33. Pam Gray, DEA, Norman Wells
34. Maddi Gray, student, Norman Wells
35. Siobhan Quigg, student, Norman Wells
36. Dakota Miller, student, Norman Wells
37. Laura Wall, student, Norman Wells
38. Connor Kimmin, student, Norman Wells
39. Nathaniel Gregon, student, Norma Wells
40. Drayton Walker, student, Norman Wells
41. Lynn Turo, student, Norman Wells

42. Steve Rose, SDEC, Norman Wells
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48. Alphonsine McNeeley, Interpreter, Fort Good Hope
49. Lois Little, Facilitator, Yellowknife
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51. Terry Fortin, Guest, Edmonton
52. Jackson Lafferty, ECE, Yellowknife
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55. Roy Erasmus, ECE, Yellowknife
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57. Rita Mueller, ECE, Yellowknife
58. Marja Van Nieuwenhuyzen, Aurora College, Inuvik
59. Doug Robertson, Aurora College, Inuvik
60. Janet Grinsted, ECE, Yellowknife
61. Catherine Boyd, ECE, Yellowknife
62. Linda Kalbun, ECE, Yellowknife
63. Ron Cleary, ECE, Yellowknife