

Aboriginal Student Achievement Initiative

**Yellowknife, Ndilo and Dettah
Minister's and Community Education Forums
Dettah
January 18-20, 2011**

Minister's Forum – January 18-19, 2011

The Minister of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) and Yellowknife, Ndilo, and Dettah education bodies brought together more than 60 educators, education and community leaders, elders, and youth to discuss ways to improve Aboriginal student achievement. For many attending the forum, it was the first time that people working on education in the three communities had come together to talk about this issue.

The Leaders' Words

Chief Eddie Sangris, Yellowknives Dene First Nation, Dettah, described the vision of his people as one of a healthy, sovereign nation. Education is key to achieving this vision. Chief Sangris wants the Aboriginal Student Achievement Initiative to consider ways to build and strengthen education. "Someday our students will be our leaders. We need to build on the successes and strengths of each other. We need to consider how we can help and how our students can help, to facilitate positive social change, good education, and strong economic systems that honour YKDFN values. The Chief Drygeese Territory is full of opportunities."

Chief Ted Tsetta, Yellowknives Dene First Nation, Ndilo, said that education gives people more opportunities and chances in life. In the past, the Wiilideh people lived by harvesting. Today, the people need to have traditional skills and knowledge as well as skills to live well in the world. This balance is difficult to achieve. "We all need to work together to keep traditions alive. The Wiilideh people have occupied these lands for thousands of years and have taught each other how to survive. We need to continue these teachings but we also need to teach youth the skills to become doctors and lawyers so they have more opportunities to survive and contribute. By working together, we can ensure that our students have opportunities to live well in the 21st century and to know and be proud of their traditions."

Robert Hawkins, MLA Yellowknife Centre, said that students need to be inspired and motivated to learn. To inspire learning, we need to know what young people value and what is important to them. Connections to the land and people inspire students to learn. Cultural learning inspires youth because everyone wants to know who they are. These connections give students the energy to learn and be successful.

Bob Bromley, MLA Weledeh, acknowledged the wealth of experience and commitment to education assembled at the forum. "Our children and youth are a sacred trust. Our students are our future." The priorities set out in the discussion paper are also priorities in Wiilideh. By working together these priorities can be addressed.

Wendy Bisaro, MLA Frame Lake, said that it is important to work together at all levels and across the whole system. By combining efforts, we can make a difference.

Blake Lyons, Yellowknife District Education #1, explained that Aboriginal language and culture based education are top strategic priorities within the District because they promote positive identity and participation. The District has a large number of Aboriginal students (34% of the student population) and works hard to strengthen

relationships with Aboriginal families and communities. Families and educators need to work together to support student achievement. The family is important both for teaching the language and culture in the home, and ensuring that children are well-prepared to go to school every day. Educators are key to ensuring that our youth are able to compete in the world today.

Mary Vane, Chair of Yellowknife Catholic Schools (YCS), said that Aboriginal student success is a high priority but attendance remains a significant challenge. Once a pattern of poor attendance and skipping school begins, it is difficult to break. YCS has community liaison workers in the schools that make connections with the home to improve school-home partnerships and alter attendance patterns. YCS has piloted late start times and implemented the Leadership Resiliency Program. The Program is having positive results in terms of improved self-esteem, connections and involvement in the school, and more students seeing themselves as leaders. YCS also has a mentorship program because it is well known that if youth know that someone believes in them, they can be successful. A strong adult support system, literacy, and numeracy are also keys to student success.

Mrs. Vane said that there is a need to strengthen the career planning program so that students can set goals and be successful. There is also a need to think 'outside the box' and give regions the permission to create programs to meet student needs, especially in literacy. "We need to recognize that the path to success is different for each student. One size does not fit all. We need to hear from our youth and show them that we are proud of them."

Natasha Landry, Chair of the Dettah DEA, said that all students at the community school scored within an acceptable range in the AATs. The school runs several successful culture based programs. It has an edible garden project, published a book, and runs a food program. The school works hard to support its students. "But we all need to work together at all levels to make sure that our students are supported and successful."

Cecilia Beaulieu, Chair of the Ndilo Education Committee, said that the Aboriginal Student Achievement Initiative and the Ndilo Education Committee share the same goal. "By working on this goal, we are beginning to make a difference in the lives of our children but there are many challenges." Some challenges are related to the residual effects of residential schools, colonization, racism, and poverty. These experiences create hardships that affect our children and their achievement at school. We need a vision that enables everyone to work together through these hardships to support our students on their journey to success.

Suzette Montreuil, Chair of the commission scolaire francophone, said that the stories of Francophone and Aboriginal students are not the same but there are similar lessons in these experiences. She spoke of her own struggles as a Francophone parent trying to teach her children French in an environment where English is prevalent. A French immersion early childhood program gave her the help she needed. To promote, protect, revive, and ensure the future of Aboriginal languages, at least two things are needed - the ability of generations to pass on the language and good early childhood programs in the language.

Aboriginal Student Achievement (ASA) Priorities

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

1. Early Childhood and Childcare:

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

2. Student and Family Support:

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

3. Aboriginal Language Curriculum and Resource Development:

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

4. Literacy:

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

Participants at the Minister's Forum discussed these priorities.

1. Early Childhood and Child Care

Success in the early years

Youth attending the forum said that to be successful in the early years their families should teach, sing, organize extended family indoor/outdoor physical activities and games, ensure a healthy diet, interact around toys/play, and tell stories that teach values. They said that early childhood programs and service providers need to facilitate interaction with other children, share skills, develop basic literacy (e.g. letters and numbers), teach proper behaviour, establish routines and habits, and model personal hygiene. Community groups/members should host celebrations, offer cultural activities, programs, and facilities, and “keep an eye out” for children and youth.

Elders and leaders said that families need to teach language and cultural skills and knowledge so that children are successful in their early years. Parents/grandparents agreed that families need to speak to their children from a very early age. “Too many students are entering school without language skills.” Families need to know that TV is not acceptable for young children. They need to meet children’s basic needs and ensure that children are immunized. Elders and leaders said that early childhood programs and service providers need to reinforce language and culture. There needs to be more support for Aboriginal Head Start. The community needs to offer childcare for two and three year olds and encourage parenting skills. Self-government regimes need to influence/control education. Parents/grandparents said that early childhood programs and service providers need to be connected to Public Health for early assessment for children by two years of age at the latest to determine any necessary interventions. Public Health should work with community wellness offices to build connections with families and overcome perceptions/problems that families are intimidated by Health and Social Services interventions.

Early childhood programs

Youth described some early childhood programs available for children in Yellowknife, Ndilo, and Dettah. They said that there is very little in Dettah and Ndilo for young children. Elders and leaders said that Aboriginal Head Start prepares children for kindergarten, and helps children to do well in school. More quality Aboriginal Head Start programs are needed. They also said that existing programs can/should be involved in helping smaller/newer programs and that funding for small programs should be available and easy to access.

Parents/grandparents described how existing early childhood programs meet or don’t meet needs. In Ndilo, the Head Start program is based on the school year as is the Dettah preschool. YKDFN offers the Sakai summer day-camp for older children. Mildred Hall has a free full-day preschool program, albeit short-term. YCS offers the Four Plus program which provides access to OT and Public Health but like the Yellowknife Family Centre, are available only upon referral. Overall, children who are able to take advantage of early childhood programs are seeing success but “too many

children are being missed.” Ndilo and Dettah also find that Public Health visits are too inconsistent.

People with little experience with early childhood programs commented on traditional child rearing roles and responsibilities. In the past, parents played an essential role in educating and supporting their daughters who were expecting children. Nurses made home visits to young mothers. These practices have changed. Today, people rely on programs. People with little experience with early childhood programs are aware of the evidenced based ‘Healthy Families program’, the many different childcare situations such as formal childcare centres, day homes, and informal babysitting, and the toy lending library. They said that although there are some community parenting programs there is a need for many more as well as more pre-natal programs and FASD awareness and prevention programs.

There is also a need for more regulation of early childhood/childcare programs and greater access to programs for everyone who could benefit from them. There are many single parent families who require and rely on early childhood and childcare programs. “Parents need to know that whatever early childhood programs they have available to them within the community are of the highest quality and will provide their children with a stimulating, nurturing learning environment.”

They also suggested reducing the ratio of early childhood spaces/workers. “We cannot stress enough the absolute need and importance of having trained early childhood and primary teachers in all communities. These programs need to instil a love of reading, speaking and literacy skills in young children from early in their lives.” There is also a need for more emphasis on literacy, numeracy, and social skill development in early childhood programs. They suggested diminishing the curriculum content in K-Grade 3 to immerse children in literacy and numeracy development and play/social skill development.

Staff, administrators, and advocates of early childhood programs identified programs that are working as: early learning of the language (French experience), Four Plus, the Toy Lending Library, Aboriginal Head Start, and the rich resources from the NWT Literacy Council (although these resources are not always used). Aboriginal Head Start programs in Fort Smith, Hay River Reserve, Fort Providence, Inuvik, Paulatuk, Fort McPherson, and Ndilo follow six components set out by Health Canada. The programs have been running for a long time (e.g. 14 years). Aboriginal Head Start is unique to each community based on local needs but the focus is on parent involvement and local decision making. The pupil-teacher funding ratio is 1:8. Some programs are licensed but this is not mandatory. Head Start programs often have waiting lists. They screen children using standardized tools. Aboriginal Head Start targets four year olds but in some communities three year olds are served. While Aboriginal Head Start benefits children significantly, there is a need to:

- Increase the number of days it is offered;
- Better meet Aboriginal language needs; and
- Complement these programs with additional early childhood programs because demand exceeds capacity.

Parents pay to access the Four Plus program. It meets the needs of a targeted population, which in most cases, requires a referral. It does not meet Aboriginal language or cultural needs. The preschool program (ESJS) is open to all. Parents pay to access the program but not all parents can afford to send their children to preschool. The GPS 15 day program for babies to four years of age is offered through a partnership with the school's four year old program. Parents also pay to access this program. Qualified instructors particularly those with strong Aboriginal language skills, are difficult to find. Both the Four Plus and French Immersion Preschool data show that the programs are doing a good job of preparing young children for kindergarten.

In addition to issues of demand, capacity, cost, and language/culture appropriateness, forum participants identified other reasons that early childhood programs may not be meeting needs of young children and their families. These reasons include:

- Inconsistent funding for family literacy programs for children younger than three years of age.
- Decreased/ inadequate/nonexistent childcare which suggests inadequate funding for rent and staff.
- Decreased/inadequate/nonexistent training of providers including on-the-job training (which means that programs need to have twice as many employees).
- Lack of universal early childhood programs regardless of socio-economic status.
- Lack of support for parents to develop complementary skills to continue stimulation at home.

Development delay or disability

Elders and leaders identified several factors that could prevent high rates of development delay or disability among young children. These factors included:

- A healthy family environment.
- Parent involvement.
- Easy to set up early childhood programs that involve parents.
- Community awareness of disability issues.
- Early intervention screening.

To prevent development delay or disability, parents and grandparents said that:

- Family centres are needed in every community that provide programs that help parents of young children, especially Aboriginal parents.
- Preschool programs should be free.
- Preschool should be more strongly linked to K-12.
- Consistent standards are needed for all early childhood programs.

They also suggested a review of preschool program results and a public information campaign to inform parents of important development milestones. People with little experience with early childhood programs suggested keeping children with development delays or who are struggling in kindergarten for two years to help them catch up and build a more solid foundation for Grade 1.

Staff, administrators, and advocates of early childhood programs agreed that family resource centres are needed to develop/support parenting skills. An example of such a facility is the Yellowknife Family Centre that emphasizes parental development. Family resource centres could address environmental/contextual issues, provide family literacy programming, encourage good maternal/paternal (family) health, and support the components of 'rich' childhood experience (e.g. play, health, food security, other primary needs, language exposure/engagement, books, and reading). Family centres could be supported by Public Health, Health and Social Services, and others.

Mandatory full day kindergarten for all five year olds

Youth attending the forum said that mandatory full day kindergarten for all five year olds may mean that all children will begin Grade 1 at the appropriate level. However, they were concerned that some children may be too young/not ready for kindergarten or would get too tired attending a full day program. Elders and leaders were unsure about a mandatory full day kindergarten program. Parents/grandparents were unable to reach agreement as to whether mandatory kindergarten should be full or half-day. People with little experience with early childhood programs said declining K-12 school enrolment creates an opportunity to use school space to host early childhood programs. They suggested that the issue may be one of ensuring that all NWT children have access to high quality, stimulating early childhood programs rather than making kindergarten mandatory. They said that if a child is in a stimulating early childhood or family environment, they may not need to be in kindergarten. However, they did agree that

there are many children who could and would benefit from a nurturing environment that a kindergarten class could provide.

Staff, administrators, and advocates of early childhood programs agreed that many children would be ready for a mandatory full day program but some children are physically unready. As such, a graduated schedule was recommended. Further, they said that mandatory programming must be quality programming, emphasize language and culture, and have qualified preschool/early childhood staff that are paid competitive wages and benefits. Mandatory kindergarten programming would require a mechanism that enables a working relationship with existing community-based programs such as Aboriginal Head Start and childcare centres.

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

Elders, leaders, and parents/grandparents attending the forum agreed with the idea of a structured early childhood program for all four year olds at no cost to parents if the program was fully funded, run by fully qualified staff, and guided by a curriculum. They said that it is important to keep parents and community members involved even if they “don’t necessarily have the qualifications.” People with little experience with early childhood programs said that there is a real need for a free early childhood program like a junior kindergarten or Aboriginal head start program. The key is to ensure that the program is available and free to all, and engages parents. Given the costs involved, some forum participants said that a program for all four-year olds with a fee/cost based on the financial need/situation of the parent(s) might be considered.

Youth said that an optional NWT wide structured early childhood program would provide more focused learning than childcare and would equalize learning opportunities among children. They said that some children may not be ready to attend a program or that it would be difficult “getting them out the door,” especially if the program was offered in the morning.

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

Staff, administrators, and advocates of early childhood programs said that there are many advantages to making early childhood programs a responsibility of ECE/schools including facilitating transition from preschool to school and sharing professional development between the school and preschool. At the same time, there is the view that if there are early childhood programs in the community that are working, they shouldn’t be tampered with. These forum participants identified several issues associated with the proposal including appropriate facilities (e.g. lots of space is required), access to qualified staff and training, and physical resources. “Teachers may require early childhood training in addition to teacher qualifications.” There are also funding issues given that the *Early Childhood Development Framework* funding arrangement differs from those with schools. Management and accountability issues are also a concern. “If ECE directs that it should be called a kindergarten regardless of age, then it should be under the school administration,” although there were mixed opinions

on this. Further, all school staff must recognize and give credibility to the preschool program.

2. Student and Family Support

Barriers and challenges preventing school successes

Youth identified many barriers and challenges that prevent students from being successful in school. School-based barriers include:

- Relationships with teachers (e.g. teachers who are not cooperative and/or encouraging).
- Fear of teachers.
- Classroom environment/organization.
- Few opportunities to be creative/meaningless activities/feeling bored/not finding anything students are interested in.
- Material that is too difficult.

They also identified personal barriers such as not feeling successful, developmental challenges, low self-esteem, poor social skills, group/peer pressure, and lack of coping skills to 'push through' bumps or challenges. Youth said that the things that encourage success are:

- Expecting and encouraging excellence;
- Irregular incentives;
- Milestone celebrations;
- Roles models and their values; and
- Extracurricular activities.

Elders and leaders also identified several barriers to school successes. In school, the course format and course selection can pose barriers that could be overcome with more emphasis on a modular format. A modular format would require changes to the funding formula. The amount of homework that students are responsible for at home and the different levels of assistance available may also be barriers. Racism and bullying in the school environment are also barriers as are feelings that "our own community school is not as good as the schools up-town." Outside the school, poverty and the inability to meet basic needs are main barriers to students' ability to cover the high cost of some learning tools (e.g. computers, scientific/graphing calculators). The home environment can also create barriers. For example, low education levels, poor English literacy skills/levels, poor educational experiences among family members, and lack of home support can translate into limited academic support in the home and discomfort working with the schools. "Prior negative experiences such as in residential school, contribute to many if not all, of the barriers." This can be exacerbated by lack of ways to foster genuine connections between schools, students, and the home, and lack of understanding of the purpose of the senior high program among students and parents.

Better communications regarding the logistics of senior high school (e.g. course selection, living arrangements) are needed. Elders and leaders suggested that schools designate a 'go to' person for students and parents to contact. Other barriers include feelings of hopelessness/lack of confidence, direct and indirect exposure to traumatic experiences, development delays (e.g. due to FASD), substance abuse including among younger children, distractions in downtown Yellowknife, difficult transitions between the smaller community school and larger 'city' schools, and lack of community-based interagency supports.

Support needed from the home, school, and community

Parents/grandparents said that families need to provide safe environments, make sure basic needs are met, provide structured study time, and communicate regularly with the school in order for students to be successful at school. Families need to be more proactive advocates and partners in education. They said that substance abuse issues need to be addressed by families, the school, and the community.

Parents/grandparents said that schools need to do a system-wide review of education "because trust has been broken and treaties are not being honoured." Schools should be more inclusive and "look at the person not the race. Don't judge kids from First Nation families." Teachers and students need to learn the history of First Nation peoples. "First Nation students need to have fair opportunity to join sports teams, and go to Arctic Winter Games." Schools need to properly assess students and teach based on the assessment, and teach appropriate skills so students can compete when they leave the NWT. Schools should be more accountable to parents and communicate consistently with them. "Schools shouldn't be telling parents what to do. They need to listen to First Nation people." Schools need to have counsellors that students can trust and who educate students on the harmful effects of drugs and alcohol. They need to have peer mentorship programs designed to keep students in school. Parents/grandparents said that ECE needs to provide funding so that YKDFN can deliver its own extracurricular and homework programs, and staff a community liaison position. "The Government keeps asking what we want but they are not doing anything about it. Follow-up!"

Educators said that families are responsible for ensuring that a child's basic needs are met. All children need to have the necessary food, clothing, shelter, care, safety, and love. Many children are exposed to non-stop TV as well as over exposure to video/technology games, which also serve as childcare. This is unhealthy and damaging and hinders sleep and social and verbal skill development. Educators said that as a result of these circumstances, some children are not interacting and developing in healthy ways. Educators said that families need to be able to balance how much TV and other technology children are exposed to. Education is needed for parents so they can moderate their children's use of and exposure to TV, internet/computer, and video games. Families also need to feel that they are part of the school and have an important place/role in it. Families need to teach, support, and role model being prepared for and at school on-time everyday. This should be an expectation from parents, the school, and community.

Educators said that the school needs to be warm, welcoming, and inviting to all parents and to the community at large, and provide as many opportunities as possible for parents and the community to be involved. School-community relationships are essential but this is a two-way process. Communications from the school (e.g. report cards), student progress/achievement reports, and newsletters need to be relayed in a way that families can understand. Schools need to set realistic learning expectations based on individual student needs/abilities and provide children with opportunities to learn healthy decision making skills. Staff need to understand where their students are coming from, what challenges and issues they have at home as well as the cultural, social, and community context and history of their students (e.g. students who live in poverty or family crisis). Schools need to feed hungry/needy students and be funded to do so.

Educators said that there should be family resource centres in all NWT communities that provide services, programs, and parental skills training and supports. Also, the community leadership could take responsibility for fundraising/funding school-based food programs. Community events and activities (including issuance of IBA cheques) need to be better coordinated with the schools to avoid negative impacts to attendance and the health and wellness of families and children. Educators said that the community needs to advocate for partnerships and coordinated, interagency approaches to support children's learning.

Helping families to help their children be successful in school

Education leaders said that there is a wide spectrum of needs and strengths within children and their families. As such, family services/programs should be flexible so they can be accessible when needed, promote resiliency, and support children's success in school. Families need communication from the school regarding their role and responsibilities in order to help their children succeed. School community liaison staff are key to school-home communications. Families also need to engender a sense of self/identity in their children and encourage them to consider options and possibilities for the future. Families need ways/venues to share experiences with other parents and network to support their children (e.g. 'extended' or 'expanded' family concept). Education leaders also said that "we need to recognize, support, and appreciate families who are succeeding."

3. Aboriginal Language Curriculum and Resource Development

Aboriginal language fluency and strong cultural knowledge

To be fluent in their Aboriginal language and strong in their culture, youth attending the forum said that families need to teach through experiences on the land:

- Language basics (e.g. common sounds, stories, and words),
- Family history and stories, and
- Traditions and values.

Youth said that schools need to offer a choice of languages, and teach in context rather than through worksheets, (e.g. through more beading and sewing). “We go out on the land but there is no focus on language. We need to go past the simple words to know how to use the language. Maybe we need to spend four months on the land learning the language.” Schools need to teach understanding not repetition and “stop doing the same things over and over and be progressive.” Youth said that schools should “take the understanding further. We want to learn about our identity.” Schools need to teach beliefs, values, discipline, respect, and purpose “because it encourages the desire to know more. We always need to consider everyone as our relatives and acknowledge that all Aboriginal people are connected. We need to treat everyone as family.” Within the community, youth want to see more celebration of language, acknowledgement of variations within individuals and cultures, and gatherings to share knowledge and traditions. “Whether you know them or not, they’re still your family.”

Unilingual forum participants agreed that students need their family to “actually speak the language at home” with the intent of developing fluency. Children need exposure to language from an early age. Families need to give children the opportunity, reason, and resources to use the language (e.g. language-culture camps). Families should involve the elders and schools need to offer an intensive or immersion Wiiledeh language program that involves elders. Schools need to create awareness of the language (e.g. use language labels/signage at school) and hire language teachers. Some language teachers could be paired with regular classroom teachers (e.g. team teaching).

Unilingual forum participants said that adults in the community need to schedule opportunities for people to learn the Wiilideh language, for example through:

- Community language classes.
- Language games, activities, and other collaborative efforts (e.g. a Wiilideh Day).
- Exposure to the larger community of speakers.
- “On the land” immersion camps.
- Incorporating it into activities that attract youth (e.g. handgames).

They suggested that ECE support a teacher education program for local people with strong language skills.

Bilingual forum participants said that for students to become fluent in their Aboriginal language and strong in their culture immediate action is needed because “we’re losing fluent speakers (grandparents).” Language immersion must begin early in the family, school, and community. There needs to be pride in the language and role models including parents who use the language in day to day activities rather than in isolation of ‘real life’. The community, schools, and government need to fund language programming and promote reasons for learning the language (e.g. to know Yellowknives Dene history and culture). Schools need to offer the language more than 30 min/day. They also need to deliver “intensive *Dene Kede* similar to intensive French” and have more resources to support delivery including the technology that students use. Programs also need to be available to help young parents learn the language so they can teach their children.

People who understand more than one language but speak only one said that the family must expose children to the language when they are babies. They should model it and encourage opportunities to speak it. "It would be ideal if fluent parents only spoke their first language in the home and no English." Parents need to be language advocates and lobby and demand that the language be taught in the schools and used throughout the community. Everyone must see the relevance of having and using the Aboriginal language. It must be made real, authentic, and meaningful to students and other language learners. This can be done through family trees, land use/place names, and other historical/cultural projects. These forum participants stressed the need for children and families to understand that language learning takes time, constant practice and exposure, and patience. Many parents also need to find opportunities to learn the language themselves.

People who understand more than one language but speak only one said that schools need to teach students to read, write, and speak the language using interesting and interactive lessons, and multi-media technology that is of interest to students. There should be formal language instruction. In the community, children and other language learners need to be encouraged and supported in positive ways rather than teased or put down. There needs to be exposure to the language everywhere - on radio, posters/print, plays/drama, daily conversation, and music.

Ways the regular school system can strengthen Aboriginal languages

Youth said that the school system focuses more on culture than language teachings - "what happens now is mostly culture, not language." They said that at school, there are on-the-land activities, 40 minute language classes four out of six days per week, and "singing *O Canada* in Dogrib." Youth said they need their schools to provide:

- More variety and less repetitive activities;
- More focus on writing at an earlier age;
- Topics that are of interest and at grade level; and
- Signs in Dogrib.

In the community, youth suggested that more publicity, events (e.g. drum dances), interaction with and travel to neighbouring communities (e.g. Dettah), and community-based programs and social groups especially for the girls (e.g. sewing circles, sharing values) would help strengthen Aboriginal languages. They suggested more interdisciplinary approaches (e.g. learning language with hand games). They also said that the "home and school need to work together for the child."

To strengthen Aboriginal languages, unilingual forum participants recommended following an immersion model with trained teachers supported by a more robust/active Teacher Education Program (TEP) and Aboriginal Language Certificate Instructors Program (ALCIP). They suggested that the immersion model be made appropriate for an urban setting and sensitive to different learning styles. Leading up to immersion programs, they suggested:

- Second language classes especially in K-6 and high school,

- Labelling/signage in the language in the schools,
- School announcements in the language,
- Use of technology (e.g. Smart Board technology, pre-recorded books),
- Music classes in the language, and
- Engaging 'language experts' in the school.

Bilingual forum participants also recommended immersion-based programming to create an environment where "students aren't afraid to make mistakes and to keep trying." They suggested smaller class sizes, having elders present in the classroom with language instructors, and more oral conversation. They also suggested that some school programs could be dropped or extended over a longer period of time in order to focus on intensive language learning.

People who understand more than one language but speak only one also recommended early, middle, and late immersion programs, "like the French immersion programs." They said that childcare and preschool programs should be full immersion programs. Children and youth "need to be exposed to the language as much as possible." They also recommended:

- "Recruiting Aboriginal language speakers so that students are constantly exposed to the language by proficient speakers."
- 'Team teaching' (a proficient language speaker with a regular classroom teacher).
- 'Ready made language lessons and/or applications' to help students learn the language anyplace, anytime (e.g. iPod download applications, Rosetta Stone language CDs/programs).

To support language instruction in the schools, it was recommended that:

- The Aboriginal language training program should be reinstated.
- Classes be made smaller to improve Aboriginal language speaker/teacher ratios.
- Changes be made to the school structure and calendar to emphasize Aboriginal language learning.

Others said that "we can't only rely on the schools to teach the language. It must be a community effort." They suggested teaching adults and children/youth together rather than separating children and adults.

Making the NWT K-12 school program more culturally relevant

To be more culturally relevant, unilingual forum participants said that schools need to make better use of *Dene Kede*, integrate *Dene Kede* at the high school level, establish milestones by grade, and provide teachers with professional development to improve delivery of *Dene Kede*. Some said that the primary objectives of *Dene Kede* should be part of the school culture (e.g. Dene laws) and incorporated into other curriculum areas (e.g.

math and language arts). Others suggested developing a new cultural curriculum following the social studies model. Some unilingual participants said that an Aboriginal language classroom, greater support for Aboriginal school staff, and funding for communities to consistently work with schools on cultural teachings are needed. They encouraged the Aboriginal leadership to use their political influence to strengthen Aboriginal culture in the school. School boards must have a YKDFN representative and YKDFN boards should have a school representative. Unilingual forum participants also said that Aurora College and school boards should establish cultural and language orientation training for staff.

Bilingual forum participants agreed that more direction should be given to schools to help teachers become more culturally aware so they can deliver the curriculum in ways that are respectful to the Dene, Dene laws, and values. Some suggested that ECE should alter the curriculum to better reflect the north and rather than following the Alberta curriculum. They said that cultural relevance would be enhanced with more equitable treatment of Aboriginal people within the school. Wage inequality within the education system must be addressed. "There are Aboriginal people with specialized skills that need to be the ones to teach the students but they are not paid appropriately."

People who understand more than one language but speak only one said that the school's culture, physical layout, and atmosphere must reflect cultural values and be warm and inviting to all Aboriginal students. Teachers must embrace, support, and be interested in the culture and language of the students they teach. Culturally relevant lessons, teacher resources, activities, and programs must be developed and used. They also suggested that the credits for the current Northern Studies 10 course be increased from three to five, to show the importance of this course. They also suggested examination of the number of required courses and increasing the number that are directly related to students' culture and language.

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

Unilingual forum participants said that the K-Grade 12 school system would be better for all NWT Aboriginal students with stronger communications with the youth, and between all partners, particularly schools and parents, and more collaboration among YKDFN, YCS, YK #1, and CSF. Others said that K-12 schooling in Dettah would improve the school system. Some said that the education system would be improved:

- With greater attention to life management skills (e.g. feelings, decision making, coping, and leadership).
- If schools were more integrated in the community.
- With well-trained teachers who are sensitive to racism.
- By celebrating success and local and territorial role models.
- If schools were welcoming to all students and parents.

Bilingual forum participants said that an Aboriginal language curriculum with resources, and a properly funded Teaching and Learning Centre in Yellowknife would make the school system better for all Aboriginal students. They said that teachers

should have an intensive (e.g. two weeks) training session in culture before beginning work in local schools. Forum participants who understand more than one language but speak only one said that more celebration, recognition, and focus on Aboriginal language and culture within the schools would positively affect students. They would feel a sense of pride in being Aboriginal and have more self-confidence and self-esteem. They also suggested learning from others. "We need to realize that as Aboriginal people we aren't the only group of people struggling to keep their first language alive. Let's look for opportunities to share and learn from other language/culture groups tackling the same issue." "We must not 'mix-up' or confuse ethnic minorities and FNM (First Nations and Metis) people of Canada. We must maintain a FNM focus." They also said that schools need to have access to elders and other cultural leaders at all times (e.g. on staff permanently). They suggested creating an 'elders in training' program to build the capacity of future elders and cultural advocates who are willing and wanting to work in the schools. They also advised looking for potential partnerships with other organizations. For example, the community could take over and run certain school programs. Other suggestions included introducing career counselling in lower grades, having trained Aboriginal counsellors to help work with a wide variety of students and families, and education policies and laws/legislation that recognize that it is the parents' and community's responsibility to educate the children and govern the K-12 education system rather than the GNWT's responsibility. "This understanding needs to be promoted within a self-governing context."

Forum participants were asked for their opinion as to whether it is possible to develop an Aboriginal language curriculum by 2013. Several participants said that it has to be done because instructors need guidance and students need "to get beyond colours and numbers."

4. Literacy

Developing strong literacy skills

The youth attending the forum made a poster showing all the tools that they use to build literacy skills (e.g. iTunes, You Tube, Google, Bebo). Youth described literacy as a 'social network'. They described "First Nation literacy as a land literacy. What we can see 'written' on the land in terms of weather and animal behaviour, and about traditional knowledge and survival skills. It is like an open book. Everything is there – the history, the knowledge, the culture, Dene laws."

People who work on Aboriginal language literacy said that strong literacy skills are developed when family members talk to each other, encourage and support language use, and turn off the TV and video games. To support strong literacy skills, schools need to provide quality language programming and activities (e.g. songs, drama, and video). The community needs to encourage local programs to promote literacy and provide adequate funding and resources to do so.

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

People who work on Aboriginal language literacy identified several barriers and challenges preventing children from becoming capable readers by Grade 3. These include:

- Parents who do not speak the language;
- Few resources to learn to read the language and even fewer resources available with audio support;
- Land-based programs that are too expensive, inconsistent, or short term; and
- Lack of language promotion.

They said that families don't see the value in speaking the language anymore and there is less access to the extended family who use the language (e.g. "grandma and grandpa don't live with the family anymore"). Also, there are few opportunities in the community to practice the language everyday and few people who know how to approach/teach the language effectively.

Becoming a capable reader by Grade 3

People who work on school-based literacy recommended several actions to ensure that all children are capable readers by Grade 3:

- Funding to train assessment staff.
- Assessments prior to kindergarten by people trained to use assessment tools.
- Yearly assessment of all students.
- Guided reading programs in all schools using materials that reflect local history, traditions, and realities.

Forum participants who work on school-based literacy said that all teachers including TEP graduates should receive on-going training to teach reading. Further, mentorships involving teachers trained in teaching reading and those who aren't, should be established in all schools. "We need more consistent training opportunities rather than half or full day training here and there." They said that schools/boards should seek permission from ECE to diminish 'other' curriculum expectations to focus on teaching all K-3 students fundamental literacy skills. Some participants suggested that intensive literacy based approaches should focus on four years olds to Grade 2. They also said that more opportunities need to be available for parents to volunteer in implementing school-based reading strategies. Strategies could:

- Use new technology to stimulate the different reading interests of boys and girls.
- Have literacy / reading activities for parents to do with their children instead of traditional homework assignments.
- Involve community-based family resource centres that offer integrated, inter-agency programs/services or family / household libraries.

- Incorporate more reading activities in after school and extracurricular programs such as community book clubs and incentives for family reading programs.
- Involve parent training for reading in the home.
- Engage Aboriginal role models and experts (e.g. 'living library').

People who have taken leadership on literacy recommended focusing on attendance and restructuring school programs to allow for 'fun time' with qualified teachers to work on literacy skills. They said that teachers need to be experts on teaching students to read. "Literacy must be the focus for schools and districts. Staff must buy-in." Individual assessments are needed to determine appropriate literacy strategies and to provide help for families to understand 'what literacy looks like in the home'. They suggested funded librarian positions, travelling libraries, family resource centres and home reading programs as sources of help for parents. They also advised improvements in monitoring assessments and interventions, stronger communications with parents, and home-school-community partnerships to support literacy (e.g. use community groups to be the liaison between the home and schools).

People who work on Aboriginal language literacy suggested involving elders in all teachings of Aboriginal language including immersion programs and Aboriginal language use promotion. "Literacy is more than reading and writing. It is also understanding on-the-land literacy (how to/experiential learning)." Political will/support and resources/ funding are needed to promote healthy lifestyles and confidence to use the language, and to help parents teach Aboriginal language literacy. Other forum participants suggested assessing students' learning styles, improving attendance, helping students complete their homework (e.g. through study halls), and greater support for multi-grades in smaller schools (e.g. so students get the instruction/attention they need).

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

Forum participants who work on school-based literacy said that “at the high school level, teachers/staff need to understand that many students benefit from and enjoy being read to. As well, boys and girls often are interested in different reading material and learn in different ways.” School must educate all K-12 teachers about their role as literacy teachers. “Teaching literacy is everyone’s responsibility, not just English or Aboriginal Language Arts teachers’ responsibility.” Teachers must have the skills to teach reading and writing. Each school should have a literacy expert/coach that can assess students and help teach/model literacy teaching strategies to all teachers and support staff. Long term, permanent funding should be in place to support full-time literacy experts/coaches in all schools. “Changes to the funding formula and perspective on small schools are needed because they have to do the same things (and number of things) as the bigger schools but with fewer staff.” There is also a need to work more closely with Aurora College to ensure that literacy training is part of TEP.

Participants who work on school-based literacy said schools can reorganize schedules to focus on reading (e.g. through sustained ‘silent reading’ time blocked off every day, a student reading log program, and ‘buddy’ reading programs even at the senior secondary level). Schools can teach content through literacy based approaches. They can use strategies to develop oral literacy skills and encourage students to be attentive and respectful listeners. Developing oral literacy skills is a way to teach traditional values, history, legends, land/place names, and information about the environment. The pupil-teacher ratio can be kept low in the primary grades in recognition of the need to focus on speech and language acquisition which are the foundational pieces of literacy. Schools can minimize the ‘grade mentality’.

Families and communities can help strengthen literacy by limiting the amount of ‘screen technology’ usage “because it only develops limited skills rather than the entire breadth of literacy skills.” There should be no computers in early childhood programs. Community reading programs could be offered during March/spring/ summer/ Christmas breaks. Communities, parents, and schools could cooperate to seek funding for students to create books in their areas of interests (e.g. on hand games), for book in a bag programs, celebrate literacy successes, and help smaller communities get more books into their schools/libraries. People who work on school-based literacy said that although it is important to have programs in place to help parents and community adults learn to read, the main focus must be on teaching all our current and future K-12 students how to read.

People who have taken leadership on literacy suggested:

- A free program for four years olds who need intervention as identified through other agencies or by parents;
- Improved linkages between OT, Public Health, RCMP, H&SS services and schools; and

- Alternative programs to address the needs of older students (e.g. 13-19) who are not attending school (possibly due to low literacy levels).

People who work on Aboriginal language literacy said that it is necessary to build capacity and engage language specialists / teachers for their expertise (e.g. Goyatiko) to use language and literacy resources effectively. They advised creating a Teaching and Learning Centre (TLC) for the Yellowknife region and making Aboriginal language programs mandatory (similar to French programs). Other forum participants said that learning must be relevant and interesting, and involve stories, open dialogue, and role models. They recommended educating students to be a completely literate person, able to work/have a work ethic, and live a purposeful life.

Is the Discussion Paper on the Right Track?

Forum participants seemed to agree that the discussion paper is on the right track but they had several questions. **Jayden James**, a youth participant, said that the discussion paper is seeking equality between Aboriginal and other students. This is very important. She said that anything that gets us to that point is good and it seems that the four priorities do that. **Cecilia Beaulieu** asked about next steps after all the regional forums are completed. **Yvonne Careen** questioned “why if Aboriginal student achievement is urgent, why isn’t it going ahead?”

Yellowknife, Ndilo and Dettah Community Forum – January 20, 2011

Message from the Keynote Speaker

To set the tone for community plans that support Aboriginal student achievement, forum participants heard from **Bill Erasmus**, National Chief of the Dene Nation. He said that the system is not working for Aboriginal people. The treaty provides for free education for First Nation peoples. “The popular assumption is that the federal and territorial governments are responsible for our education but this arrangement was never agreed to by the people and there is no agreement to this effect.” So Aboriginal people have an education system that follows the Alberta curriculum and which was imposed on them. There is a need to come to terms with the legality of this situation. The legacy of residential schools removed parental responsibility. Governance, more specifically self-government, is the way that First Nations have tried to correct this situation. There is a need to understand the history and how it plays out in the north and in the education system. If we deal with these historical relationships, we can find a common understanding to move forward.

National Chief Erasmus said that it is necessary to demonstrate commitment to the education of our children. He sees the Ndilo school as an example of the commitment that is needed. The school tries to make parents aware that their children have to go to bed early, be well fed, and regularly go to school. When the school and parents are committed to working together, there are positive results. But the child also has to make a commitment. This happens as a result of a child’s commitment to his/her parents on what the child wants to do in the future and learn. Communications between parents and children are important. Absenteeism is a huge problem because this commitment isn’t there.

Community control is a significant issue. We know that communities need to better understand the education system and what children are being taught. Communities need to go through an exercise to consider how they can influence and control education, and how they can be involved and influence the curriculum so it reflects the people and their needs. National Chief Erasmus agreed that we need to think outside the box to find ways that Aboriginal people can see themselves in the education system. We need to monitor the status of Aboriginal students from the beginning to the end of their formal education. We need to have more concise research about what we are dealing with including accurate numbers of students who are returning to their communities and being successful in their lives. We also need to think politically about how to bring the Aboriginal Student Achievement Initiative to the Legislative Assembly so that the GNWT will make an ongoing commitment to supporting Aboriginal student success. Further, we need to think about combining the two Yellowknife school boards so there is better use of resources.

Yellowknife, Ndilo, and Dettah Community Plans

The communities caucused to identify main education issues; efforts that are working for the success of Aboriginal students; issues that need to be addressed to support Aboriginal student success; and develop plans for supporting Aboriginal student achievement. Many participants commented on the quality of discussion, and the need to continue these conversations after the forum. Community plans follow.

Yellowknife Summary Report

The Yellowknives Dene First Nation (Ndilo) Plan for Supporting Student Success

Main Issues*	Working Now*	Need to be Addressed*	What?	How?	Who & When?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -A clear sense of what education means- what does it look like? -Too many barriers for families who want to be in the schools. -More opportunities for parents/ grandparents to be aware and involved in education and in the school. -Parental skills to discipline their children. -Parents/ family members trusted as counsellors. -Funding restrictions. -Teaching students as a whole rather than as individuals. -Racism. -Bullying in school. -Good and harmful information/ influences from technology. -Unstable home life (inadequate nutrition and sleep). -Imbalance between traditional/ cultural and modern learning. -Lack of a First Nation education plan and funding to support it. -Lack of a DEA in Ndilo and a DEC for Dettah and Ndilo. -Yellowknife schools not teaching the history of the Yellowknife Dene so students lack identity and knowledge of the people. -No Wiilideh language immersion program in the schools. -Lack of parent language lessons/immersion to support language usage at home. -Students 'pushed through the system'. -Inaccurate statistics on Aboriginal students dropping out and 'slipping through' the system. -Lack of recognition of cultural instructors, elders and Aboriginal language instructors as qualified staff with language skills/ proficiency, traditional knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -In Dettah, children respect the drum because of their experiences with drumming. -Aboriginal Head Start Preschool program in Ndilo is very successful. -In Dettah the school literacy/ reading priority is a success. -The Dettah youth council is helping youth build leadership skills and feel successful. -There are examples of how YKDFN contributes funds and services in a variety of ways to support the people. -The strength of the Dene laws. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -We need to ask students/ youth especially high school students what they want/ need/ wish for. -We need our own doctors, lawyers, and other highly educated people who will lead and build our capacity. -We all need to work together rather than separately and have a process or forum to bring all services (education, political, community), funds, and programs together in one coordinated way. This includes the Chiefs and Council working together, not against each other. -We need to work consistently with our children. -The Chiefs and Council need to identify a person to coordinate/ lead education services/ programs (e.g. a Councillor could be identified to pull together all education services/ programs/ funds (e.g. a Director of Education). -ECE needs to contribute funds to help the community develop a coordinated education plan so that IBA funds are used for needed services/ programs. -In Yellowknife, there are four DEAs competing for education funds including for ALCBE funds. YCS/ YK1 get significant funding. This could be changed. -The way Aboriginal Language and Culture Based funding for Dettah/ Ndilo is allocated is unfair. The funding needs to come directly to the communities to support Wiilideh language programs. -Guidance counselling is needed. -The school in Dettah needs to 	<p>Ndilo</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Form an Interagency Committee (recreation, school, health/ social, Chekoa, youth/ youth council) to develop a plan and actively seek funding to help our children; increase communications between adults/ youth; coordinate efforts to get funding/ access more resources; and increase opportunities for children and parents/ families to interact together as a community. -Improve high school attendance including youth being tired, late, and not engaging in school to instil a sense of strength and discipline in children and youth; get more community members involved/ working/ volunteering in the school; and put the best people in school positions (regardless of their culture). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Develop a community plan to share information about what's happening for youth now and identify more activities. -The Interagency Committee can brainstorm how to involve/ target/ engage the children/ families who are less likely to participate. -Share data on who/ how many students are accessing programs. -Access funding to make sporting and other activities more affordable and accessible. -Identify families with attendance issues and work with them to get their children into school. -Involve a 'role model' family member(s) in discussions to provide support, starting with families most likely to experience success. -Advocate for counselling opportunities. -Find out what students are interested in. -Regularly phone/ visit families. -Facilitate family members sitting in the classrooms with their children to ensure that they are attending, involved and able to understand the interaction between teacher and student (e.g. body language). -Issue more newsletters/ communications with the home promoting actions to get students to school and boost awareness among the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Roy Erasmus will assemble an interagency committee involving Recreation (Stacy Sundberg), Education (Jenny Goldney), Chekoa (Jennifer Drygeese), NEC (Cecilia Beaulieu), Wellness (Alice Abel), CEO (John Carter), elder (Philip Liske) and youth (TBA). First meeting within two weeks (before February 4th). -DEA to identify someone/ group other than the school to work with parents (e.g. an interagency group in order to create a 'wrap-around' effect.) The school should be responsible for newsletters and other communications. ASAP.

Yellowknife Summary Report

<p>and cultural skills. -No year-round schooling that includes summer language and cultural immersion. -No consideration of changes to the school calendar and time of school day to better meet students' needs. -Inadequate NWT-wide discussion about residential school to awaken parents to their responsibility as the main teachers and educators of their children. -No tutors to assist students academically and in the language and culture. -Few parent role models.</p>		<p>teach Wiilideh to the children. -Education needs to be a two way process. -There is resistance to moving the education system away from ECE, the school boards, government. -Drug and alcohol use is increasing among young people. -There is a need for after school programming that involves our teachers.</p>	<p>-Negotiate for a Yellowknives Dene First Nation member seat on each of the Yellowknife District Education #1 and Yellowknife Catholic Schools boards to represent the students and communities of Ndilo and Dettah.</p> <p>-Improve Aboriginal language and culture resources to deal with perceptions that <i>Dene Kede</i> is too general, not implemented in a Dene way, and to ensure that <i>Dene Kede</i> is implemented 'where you are at' rather than waiting (there is no perfect time).</p>	<p>community and families.</p> <p>-Organize a petition to establish a Ndilo DEA. -Set up meeting with the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment to submit the petition for a Ndilo DEA. -Review ECE's funding formula; work toward one Yellowknife school board to minimize competition; form a Ndilo DEA; and ultimately form a Treaty 8 District Education Council involving Dettah, Ndilo, Lutsel k'e, and Fort Resolution.</p> <p>-Change the activities that take place at cultural camps to include more storytelling in the Wiilideh language so students hear the language. -Compile a list of resources, elders/elder's specialities, projects, print and other materials.</p>	<p>-Band Council and/or a member of the interagency group (mentioned above). ASAP</p> <p>-Interagency committee. 2011</p>
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**Issues, successes and needs may extend beyond Ndilo to include Dettah and Yellowknife.*

Yellowknife Summary Report

				counselling to provide support/information.
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**Issues, successes and needs may extend beyond Dettah to include Ndilo and Yellowknife.*

The Yellowknife Catholic Schools Plan for Supporting Student Success

Main Issues	Working Now	Need to be Addressed	What?	How?	Who & When?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Attendance. -Social issues impacting attendance (drugs, alcohol, poverty, residential school/lack of parenting skills). -Literacy/numeracy. -Low Aboriginal community and parent involvement. -Parent comfort at school. -Poor language skills. -Inadequate high school program options. -Curriculum changes and inadequate in-service to support initiatives. -Too few skilled Aboriginal language teachers. -Lack of Aboriginal language curriculum. -Too few opportunities for youth to be involved in cultural activities. -Need for more extracurricular activities. -Student transience. -Language development especially prior to school. -Poor literacy preparation for school. -Lack of school readiness including costs and accountability. -Lack of early identification of speech/ hearing and other needs. -Lack of Aboriginal leadership opportunities for younger Aboriginal students (although this is getting better). -FASD. -Lack of parenting experience and negative impacts to school. -Generational effects of residential school. -Teaching styles not matching 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Do Edaezhe program – Leadership Resiliency Program mentorship, CLS. -Mentorship program pre-Do Edaezhe. -Trips, out of school and leadership opportunities. -Cultural professional development for staff and elders in the classroom. -Staff attitudinal change – staff advocating for students. -Greater staff awareness of cultural impacts. -Cultural awareness highlighted in strategic plan. -Aboriginal graduate celebrations. -Teamwork. -High school – late start, credit recovery, exemption criteria. -Higher expectations. -Community partnerships for speech, OT. -Dogrib language program. -Culture camp. -Grade 10 spiritual retreat. -Extracurricular activities such as jigging, drumming, fiddling. -Opportunities for Aboriginal students to display leadership especially ‘on the land’. -Storytelling by elders (traditional knowledge) and telling history through stories. -Tlich/Dogrib materials/ books produced by YCS. -Interventions to address academic areas/ early interventions. -Aboriginal groups in schools (e.g. Tribe of One, Turtle Concepts, Richard Van Camp). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Improve communications with community leaders and parents. -Find ways to get Aboriginal people involved. -Provide resources to support parents. -Relationship building with Aboriginal parents (calling home for special events, family lunches) and other ways to connect with parents. -Increase attendance at parent/teacher interviews. -Find ways to engage Aboriginal students. -Find ways to advocate for those without home support or other advocates. -Recognize the potential of ‘all’ students. -Establish a formal intervention program that is formally funded for preschool-K to 12. -Explore late start at the elementary level. -Offer parenting workshops. -Establish a ‘formal’ Aboriginal role model program (Sept. 11 - Do Edaezhe program). -Build on ECE role model posters to include other occupations, not just those requiring university education. -Increase opportunities for ‘wrap around services’. -Continue to celebrate Aboriginal culture and the success of Aboriginal students. 	<p>Create an Aboriginal Student Achievement Steering Committee modelled after the French Steering Committee to create partnerships to initiative, broad, consistent initiatives to be recommended and implemented.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Create Terms of Reference. -Gather data to inform decisions. -Consider initiating at a location other than the school such activities as cultural events (feasts, drum dance, author showcase, art event) with each school hosting one culture based activity with the goal of inviting parents to attend and participate, and continuing the poster project highlighting Aboriginal graduates, recognizing the range of ‘successes’, and acknowledging the person/people who acted as mentor/advocate of the student. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Representatives from: 3 school boards (trustees, ALBCE coordinator), Dettah DEA, Ndilo education committee, Dettah Band Council, Ndilo Band Council, elder representation, youth rep (from each stakeholder group), NWTTA. Dianne Lafferty will follow-up with groups to secure participation. Immediately.

Yellowknife Summary Report

<p>learning styles. -Teachers lacking understanding of Aboriginal cultures. -Difficulty connecting curriculum outcomes with cultural aspects of the program.</p>			
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The Yellowknife Education District #1 Plan for Supporting Student Success

Main Issues	Working Now	Need to be Addressed	What?	How?	Who & When?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Declining in attendance from Grade 3 to 6 and 6-9 with a corresponding decline in achievement (over last five years). -Transience of students in some schools. -Sporadic parent participation in the schools. -Working parents limits ability to participate in school and take children to extracurricular activities. -Difficulty maintaining parent contact (e.g. internet access, phones) in some schools. -Lack of funding to offer Aboriginal language programming in every school. -Variable student readiness for kindergarten. -Too few Aboriginal staff and role models. -Lack of fluent Aboriginal language teachers. -Lifestyle/health issues (e.g. fitness, obesity, nutrition, medical problems, motivation, lateness). -Turn-over of social workers for children in care and negative perceptions of school involvement in care decisions. -16-18 year olds with no permanent residence. -Care and cultural issues overburden teachers. -No Aboriginal language curriculum. -Culture not incorporated into high school courses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Aboriginal culture camps (staff may participate). -Professional development/ orientation for new staff at the beginning of the year (started three years ago). -Two day session for leadership at beginning of the year (started four years ago). -Professional learning communities -High school English incorporating Aboriginal culture with curriculum outcomes; Fine Arts integrating Aboriginal culture. -High school Dreamcatchers club. -<i>Dene Kede</i> outcomes on report card for K-8. -Social studies curriculum includes more links to <i>Dene Kede</i>. -Outdoor education classroom options for all classes. -Aboriginal Parent Advisory Committee. -High school transitional counsellor for incoming Grade 9s. -District office <i>Dene Kede</i> facilitator, Aboriginal Education Coordinator. -Use of community resources. -Folder on first class K-8 lesson plans. -Monthly grade specific/ district wide camp (each grade has specific topic/ theme that follows a framework with outcomes and resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Early literacy skills in childcare and preschool. -Mandatory kindergarten. -Free preschool. -Quality childcare programming. -Cooperation with ECE Advanced Education for young parents taking upgrading to include childcare and parenting as part of the support. -Database and access to Aboriginal community resources. -Aurora College to train more Aboriginal teachers. -Recruit more Aboriginal teachers. -Parent mentorship program. -Elders in residence. -Aboriginal writer and artists in residence. -Increase funding for alternative high school programming. -Better use of existing role models. -Better sharing of locally developed resources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Emphasize literacy in K-3 (e.g. concentration on language and math and delay start of other subjects) to increase English literacy and numeracy skills, and staff and parent 'buy-in'. -Find better ways to connect with the parents of Aboriginal students to improve communications/ relationships, address barriers, involve parents, and improve students' self-esteem. -Design opportunities for youth to be engaged in the school to improve student engagement, student awareness, a stronger sense of team, and encourage strengths based approaches that encourage/ support student confidence. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Meet with ECE to discuss concept/ curriculum change. -Meet with district staff to discuss logistics and impacts. -Establish a plan to involve and inform parents (could be part of district plan). -Recruit parents in fall and spring with a feast with the Aboriginal Advisory Committee. -Provide childcare to allow parents to meet with school staff. -Establish a more personal communications system with parents (e.g. person to person contact, invitations, positive staff phone calls to the home). -If possible, invite parents to provide leadership in cultural activities prior to looking for resource people who require payment. -Establish a 'youth room' in each school for workshops, and guest speakers on careers. -Have role models in the schools on a regular basis. -Establish peer support/ mentorship opportunities in schools. -Provide more opportunities for Aboriginal students to participate in travel groups. -Seek out and encourage Aboriginal students (based on interest inventories) to get 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Superintendents and ECE followed by Board and district staff. ASAP (February-March 2011). -Aboriginal Education Coordinator with other staff as appropriate. -All staff will establish more personal contact. October 2011 and when appropriate. Youth group with school principal, Counsellor, PST, LRP facilitator, and students (helping to fund raise for travel). September 2011

Yellowknife Summary Report

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Lack of appropriate cultural resources. -Teachers unfamiliar with <i>Dene Kede</i> curriculum format. -Need to revisit /renew <i>Dene Kede</i> to better integrate (e.g. a framework/ curriculum/ program). -Need a Grade 10-12 <i>Dene Kede</i> framework. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> developed). -District committee with language and culture reps from each school. -District strategic goals/ direction on Aboriginal education. -Publishing relevant cultural materials. -Honour ceremony for grads. -Aboriginal Advisory Committee annual feast. -Changes in assessment (accountability) to value what is measured and measure what is valued. -Student specific attendance and performance monitoring. 		<p>Other possible actions are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Partner with the community (e.g. mall, library) regarding denying student entrance during the school day. -Two high schools in Yellowknife to explore opportunities for collaboration on late start time. -Increase /infuse Aboriginal materials (books, novel) into subject areas. -Provide opportunities to create support materials to accompany Aboriginal resources. 	<p>involved in activities based on individual strengths.</p>	
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The Commission scolaire Francophone Plan for Supporting Student Success

Main Issues	Working Now	Need to be Addressed	What?	How?	Who & When?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Not a lot of links between Aboriginal and Francophone cultures. -Limited Aboriginal specific resources. -High school program challenged by limited space/ facilities/ specialized areas. -Contradiction between the court proceedings and ASA initiatives (e.g. childcare space and preschool). -Role of family in Aboriginal student achievement affects attendance. -Health issues within the family impact student success. -Residential school legacy and family violence impact addictions and mental health of students. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Working with YK 1 and YCS to provide cultural programs. -Have set aside PY funding for cultural programming. -Identifying Aboriginal culture and history video and library resources. -Added a component to Northern Studies to link Aboriginal and Francophone cultures/histories. -Good student success rates overall including Aboriginal students. -Priority on language/ culture and impact on self-esteem. -Successes being celebrated (Aboriginal Graduation ceremony at the Yellowknife River). -A shift in thinking towards why students are learning. -Each generation developing a greater appreciation for education. -Awareness of issues around residential schools facilitates healing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Need to find ways for H&SS and ECE to work together. -Need to understand mental health issues as affecting all of us. -Need to better support families on mental/physical health issues. -Need to re-examine the paths towards graduation (what does a diploma mean? who does it include?). -Need to bridge Aboriginal and French languages. -Need help implementing <i>Dene Kede</i> without losing focus on Francophone perspective. -Need more focus on Aboriginal wisdom and philosophy. -“How to honour what we’ve done on Dene land?” 	<p><i>included with other Yellowknife plans</i></p>	<p><i>included with other Yellowknife plans</i></p>	<p><i>included with other Yellowknife plans</i></p>

Participants

Yellowknife Education District #1 (YK 1)

1. Pat Tesky
2. Paul Bennett
3. Shirley Zouboules
4. Sharon Oldford
5. Deborah Maguire
6. Angela James
7. Lea Lamoureux
8. Metro Hukulak
9. Mattie MacNeil
10. Doreen Cleary
11. Blake Lyons
12. Natasha Landry
13. Cecilia Beaulieu
14. Reanna Erasmus
15. Berna Martin

Yellowknife Catholic Schools (YCS)

16. Mary Vane
17. Barb MacDonald
18. Claudia Parker
19. John Bowden
20. Dianne Lafferty
21. Simone Gessler
22. Melody Parker
23. Coleen McDonald

Commission Scolaire Francophone

24. Suzette Montreuil
25. Yvonne Careen

Aurora College

- 26. Alison Barr
- 27. Jane Arychuk

Aboriginal Leadership

- 28. Chief Eddie Sangris
- 29. Chief Ted Tsetta
- 30. Bill Erasmus

Yellowknives Dene First Nation Staff and Members

- 31. Jonas Sangris
- 32. Eddie Sikyea
- 33. Bobby Drygeese
- 34. Jennifer Drygeese
- 35. Jeannette Goldney
- 36. PJ Goulet
- 37. Phil Liske
- 38. Lena Drygeese
- 39. Mary Rose Sundberg

Youth

- 40. Jayden James
- 41. Zhalani Drygeese
- 42. Jeff

Yellowknife MLAs

- 43. Bob Bromley
- 44. Wendy Bisaro
- 45. Robert Hawkins

Education Culture and Employment

- 46. Jackson Lafferty
- 47. Roy Erasmus
- 48. Gloria Iatridis
- 49. Rita Mueller
- 50. Kathleen Mullin
- 51. Gladys Norwegian
- 52. Linda Kalbun
- 53. Teresa Watson

- 54. Ron Cleary
- 55. Adrian Richards
- 56. John Stewart
- 57. Pat Sullivan
- 58. Wendy McPherson
- 59. Amy Doerkson
- 60. Ashley Green
- 61. Julia Mott

ASAWG

- 62. Marlene Villebrun, H&SS
- 63. David Reid, NWTTA

Other

- 64. Yacub Adam
- 65. Lois Little, Facilitator