



Skaha Lake Middle School

110 Green Avenue West

Penticton, BC V2A 3T1

Principal: Dave Brunelle

Vice Principal: Travis Bond

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN (2009-10)

School Context:

Skaha Lake is in its eleventh year as a middle school and has an enrolment of 426 students. Our grade 6, 7 and 8 teams are culturally diverse with a large First Nations and Sikh population that enroll 18 class divisions of advisory groupings. Skaha Lake Middle School has 26 teaching staff, and 18 support staff.

The Skaha Lake School learning community is proud of our facility and enjoys the involvement of an active PAC that supports our school culture and life with a variety of exciting and unique initiatives. Examples include our Shark Tank, Shark Sculpture, Shark Quilt, Shark Painting, Shark Logo and theme, PAC sponsored Class Support Funds, numerous fun family events, a full range of sports programs, displays, concerts and drama productions.

Our current Shark and feeder school students and families (at Parkway, Kaleden, Wiltse and West Bench schools), continue to be supported and involved through a variety of transition activities and are an integral part of life in "the Shark Tank."

SLMS is situated on Green Avenue East and sits adjacent to Princess Margaret Secondary School.

INQUIRY QUESTION

As aboriginal students experience an increased sense of belonging and cultural identity at our school, will we see improved academic achievement and student attendance?

RATIONALE:

Historically, Skaha Lake Middle School has a high population of students with aboriginal ancestry and particularly from the Penticton Indian Band. There has not been a purposeful focus on addressing the cultural needs within the school environment as a whole and therefore a disconnect exists between aboriginal students, their families and the school community. The staff attended a keynote address by Dr. Martin Brokenleg during our summer 2009 Professional Development and we were inspired by his message that as well as "teaching the mind" that we have a responsibility to "teach the heart". Dr. Brokenleg explains that a sense of belonging is crucial to create a connectedness that allows for academic success. The staff at Skaha Lake Middle School recognizes that if we are to improve the school completion rates for our aboriginal learners, then those students need to show success at the middle level. We are also beginning to understand the impact of the residential school system and the trust that has been lost with the public school system. We have come to realize we need to change our approach to what builds success for aboriginal learners and create a partnership between the school, our students and their families and the aboriginal community as a whole.

ACTION PLAN

STRUCTURES AND STRATEGIES:

Dr. Martin Brokenleg Keynote Address:

In August of 2009, Dr. Brokenleg was the keynote speaker at our summer pro-d. Dr. Brokenleg spoke of the challenges facing many First Nations students and families. The overwhelming message that we got from the keynote speaker was the value of hope and the importance of reaching out to our most at risk students.

Teacher Inquiry Training:

During our school based summer pro-d, School District No. 67 teachers, Teresa Fry and Bev Kreiger presented on the "Teacher Inquiry" model. In Teacher Inquiry, a group of educators develop a question that they would like to investigate. The question is thoughtfully designed and is to satisfy a professional curiosity. Over a period of months, data is collected and strategies are implemented to move towards answering the inquiry question.

Team Leaders- Facilitator Training:

At SLMS, all team leaders and both administrators were trained as Teacher Inquiry facilitators.

Webinar - "Engaging and Empowering Aboriginal Youth- A Tool Kit for Service Providers":

The SLMS Aboriginal Education teacher, principal, and vice-principal, attended a weekly webinar looking into the background of First Nations culture. The webinar was informative and provided an opportunity to better understand the unique and complex background of our First Nations students. It also introduced us to the inter-generational effects of the Residential School System.

DVD - "Where the Children Are - Healing the Legacy of the Residential School":

As a whole staff, we viewed the DVD "Where the Children Are- Healing the Legacy of the Residential School" focusing on the intergenerational effects of the Residential School system. This informative DVD was a documentary about the residential school system and discusses the impact on First Nations families.

Dr. Brokenleg Book Club - "Reclaiming Youth At Risk- Our Hope for the Future" :

Twenty-two participants including teachers, CEA's, administrators and members from the PIB met three times to read and discussed the author's research as well as how it pertained to our own situation.

SD67/PIB Partnership Group Developed:

Regularly scheduled meetings using a School-based Team model are being held to discuss initiatives being newly implemented and the successes that have resulted. We also discuss how we can support our at-risk aboriginal students at the school and community level.

The SD67/PIB Partnership Group is composed of Princess Margaret, Skaha Lake and West Bench staff and members of PIB Social Development, Education and Health Committees.

Inquiry Group Formed:

Group composed of: Classroom teachers, CEA's, Aboriginal Education Teacher, School Counselor, District Aboriginal Education Administrator, SLMS Principal and Vice-Principal.

The Inquiry Group joined the Aboriginal Enhancement Schools Network (AESN). Part of the mandate of the AESN is to address the strategies set forth by the local Enhancement Agreement. The two strategies we are addressing at Skaha Lake Middle School are:

- 1) To improve the schooling success rate for learners of aboriginal ancestry.
- 2) To increase the awareness and appreciation of Aboriginal history and culture by both the Aboriginal and general populations of students.

“Elders” Program:

Vera Gabriel, a Penticton Indian Band Elder comes to Skaha Lake Middle School four times a week for four hours each day to work with our aboriginal youth in the classrooms, the Aboriginal Education Support Room and in the halls and common area during unstructured times at school. The Aboriginal Education Support team meets with Vera on a regular basis.

Structured End of Year Interviews of Aboriginal Students:

Interviews were conducted for our First Nations Students by Todd Manuel (Penticton Secondary/District School Completion Helping Teacher). The following questions were asked to grade level groups of students:

- What is working for you in school?
- What is not?
- What has helped you to stay in school? (enabled you)
- What has hindered you?
- End Question: What has happened at school that has created hope for your life?

Interviews were recorded and the Inquiry Group will analyze responses and information and determine strategies to address the findings.

RESOURCES:

- “Reclaiming Youth At Risk- Our Hope for the Future” by Larry K. Brendtro, Dr. Martin Brokenleg and Steve Van Bockern
- “Engaging and Empowering Aboriginal Youth - A Toolkit for Service Providers” by Claire V. Crooks, Debbie Chiodo and Darren Thomas
- DVD - “Where the Children Are - Healing the Legacy of the Residential School” by the Legacy of Hope Foundation
- Vera Gabriel - PIB elder
- Judith King - District Helping Teacher
- Matthew Barran - Youth and Family worker - PIB
- Ana Tonasket - Restorative Justice Coordinator for South Okanagan Restorative Justice Program
- Bruce Manuel - Corrections Liaison Officer for South Okanagan Restorative Justice Program
- Todd Manuel - Penticton Secondary Teacher/Helping Teacher School Completion

EVIDENCE

KEY FINDINGS:

Our Inquiry Group collected and analyzed the following data:

- Attendance
- Report card marks
- Honour and Effort roll
- Office referrals
- Surveys (Ministry Satisfaction/SOS-Q/District grade 6 and 7 Reading Survey)
- FSA's (grade 7)
- DMA's (grade 8)
- Whole Class Reading Assessments (grades 6-8)
- Accelerated Reader/Star Reader results (grades 6-8)
- Structured interviews with Aboriginal students in grade groupings

The data trends confirmed that our aboriginal students make up a significant population of our at-risk learners. Although reading assessments indicated slightly lower success rates for aboriginal students than the rest of the population, it was in the area of numeracy where the data indicated a large disparity. The DMA used at the grade 8 level indicated that 55% of all Skaha Lake grade 8 students fully met or exceeded expectations; only 42% of Skaha Lake Aboriginal grade 8 students fully met or exceeded expectations. The data is more alarming using FSA results. FSA data indicated that 62% of all Skaha Lake grade 7 students fully met or exceeded expectations; only 29% of Skaha Lake Aboriginal grade 8 students fully met or exceeded expectations.

The other data that we found alarming was attendance rates. On average our aboriginal students are absent 30% more than the overall population. Aboriginal students are late for school almost double the overall school population.

REFLECTION AND SUMMARY

REFLECTIONS:

To increase the sense of belonging of our First Nation students, their families and the community by:

- Expand the “Elders” program
- Welcome signage in Okanagan language
- Greetings and acknowledgement of Okanagan territory on morning announcements
- Partnership with local artists and En’owkin Centre to have more Okanagan artwork displayed in the school
- Multi-cultural festival/fairs with dancing, food, beading, legend telling, Okanagan traditional dwellings, games and sports and music
- Indigenous use of local plants

For staff to better understand our aboriginal students:

- Aboriginal culture
- The inter-generational effects of residential schools
- Our local Enhancement Agreement
- To support aboriginal students’ sense of belonging by changing our thinking on what the achievement gap is to focusing on what is causing the achievement gap

To address our concerns regarding our aboriginal learners’ absentee/tardy rates and very low math scores:

- Work with SD67/PIB Partnership Committee to come up with strategies where we can improve attendance/tardy rates
- Look at changes to our timetable. Currently math is taught school-wide first class of the morning. The data suggests that this is when many of our First Nations students are absent or tardy

School Planning Council:

Name (Principal): _____

Name (Parent): _____

Name (Parent): _____

Name (Parent): _____