



Selkirk Elementary School Review Report February 2015

Selkirk Elementary School
February 2015

School Principal: Peter Gubbe
Vice-principal: Cathy Dunham

Date of Review: February 17/18, 2015

School Review Team:

Tarie Castellarin, Intermediate Curriculum Consultant
Simon Blakesley, Director of Student Achievement/Systems Accountability
Ashraf Mahmoud, Coordinator, Data Analysis
Darren Hays, Principal, F.H. Collins Secondary School
Riana Robinson, Principal, Hidden Valley Elementary School

Meetings with the School included:

- **Students**
- **Teachers and School Support Staff**
- **School Administration**
- **School Council**

School Context

Selkirk Elementary School is located in Riverdale, Whitehorse. Built in 1959 (with an addition constructed in 1974) the building and grounds are well maintained and in excellent condition. Facilities are well used by the community on evenings, weekends and holidays. An all-weather play area includes climbing equipment, swings and big toys, a fenced outdoor basketball court, a wooded play area, two soccer pitches and baseball diamonds.

Indoor facilities include a large gym with stage, a well-equipped adjoining music room/theatre, an up to date computer lab and library, dental care office and a number of small meeting rooms to provide counselling and support programs for students. The Learning Together Program for parents with their preschool children serves over 70 families. A weekly evening Whole Child Recreational Program for students and families begun in 2010 continues to see increasing attendance.

Most of the 218 K-7 students live within a 2 km radius of the school. While the multicultural composition of the school's student population is growing, the largest representation is from FN communities: the number of students of FN ancestry is approaching 50%. A teaching and administrative staff of 19.9 FTE has been scheduled for the 2014/2015 academic year along with 8.5 Educational Assistants, 1.0 Remedial Tutors, two .5 Reading Recovery teachers, a full time Administrative Assistant and a part time Library clerk.

Selkirk possesses many strengths within its culturally diverse community. Music, dramatic presenting skills and choreographed dance and experiential programs are among strengths.

There is a focus on virtues education and recognition of positive social attributes within daily routines and through the school's shining star assemblies. Student exhibit strengths in instructional technology as an integral part of their work. Staff strengths include a solid commitment to the ongoing building of relationships and capacity between and among students, staff and parents and to the ongoing improvement of teaching, learning and student achievement.

Data profile

Enrolment and IEP numbers for Selkirk 2014-2015

Grade	Sep-2014	Jan-2015	Diff	Total IEP
K	16	17	1	
1	20	20	0	
2	33	34	1	
3	18	19	1	
4	23	26	3	
5	30	32	2	
6	29	29	0	
7	42	41	-1	
	211	218	7	30 (14%)

Learning Together program

By Jan 31, 2015, total of **134** Early Learners (age 1 to 3 years old) were enrolled in the Part-Time Learning Together program.

Attendance

The Annual Average absence days for Selkirk Elementary School 2013-2014, 2012/2013 and 2011/2012

RU	School	2013/2014	2012/2013	2011/2012
U	Selkirk Elementary School	17	14	15
	Yukon	20	19	20

Kindergarten EYE & Boehm 2014 Spring Results

EYE Spring 2014

EYE Spring 2014	ASE			SOC			COG			LNG			PHYFINE			PHYGROSS		
School	NC	CI	NI	NC	CI	NI	NC	CI	NI	NC	CI	NI	NC	CI	NI	NC	CI	NI
Selkirk Elementary School	94%	6%	0%	94%	6%	0%	88%	12%	0%	88%	12%	0%	94%	6%	0%	53%	47%	0%

EYE Spring 2014		Responsive Tiered Instruction (RTI) Category		
School	Students	NC	CI	NI
Selkirk Elementary School	17	70%	24%	6%

Boehm Spring 2014

School	Students	NC	CI	NI
Selkirk Elementary School	18	11%	33%	56%

- ASE_DL *Developmental level for Awareness of Self and Environment*
- SOC_DL *Developmental level for Social Skills and Approaches to Learning*
- COG_DL *Developmental level for Cognitive Skills*
- LNG_DL *Developmental level for Language and Communication*
- PHYFINE_DL *Developmental level for Physical Development - Fine Motor*
- PHYGROSS_DL *Developmental level for Physical Development - Gross Motor*

Code	Description
NC	No Concern
CI	Classroom Intervention
NI	Needs Investigation
NA	Not able to take the test or Absent

2013-14 Foundation Skills Assessment Results

Grade 4

Grade 4	Performance Level Unknown		Not Yet Meeting		Meeting or exceeding	
Reading		%		%		%
Students		3		37		60

Grade 4	Performance Level Unknown		Not Yet Meeting		Meeting or exceeding	
Writing		%		%		%
Students		7		20		74

Grade 4	Performance Level Unknown		Not Yet Meeting		Meeting or exceeding	
Numeracy		%		%		%
Students		10		37		54

Grade 7

Grade 7	Performance Level Unknown		Not Yet Meeting		Meeting or exceeding	
Reading		%		%		%
Students		16		16		68

Grade 7	Performance Level Unknown		Not Yet Meeting		Meeting or exceeding	
Writing		%		%		%
Students		19		29		52

Grade 7	Performance Level Unknown		Not Yet Meeting		Meeting or exceeding	
Numeracy		%		%		%
Students		16		29		55

Norms and Culture:

Characteristics:

Continuously improving schools are socially and culturally inclusive with high expectations for each learner. A focus on continuous improvement is evident.

Observations of the Team:

- The majority of staff members at SES provide collegial support to each other and exhibit a willingness to work together as they try new things for the benefit of their students. Teachers commented on the dedicated efforts of Educational Assistants, and School Council recognizes the hard work of the staff and appreciates their dedication
- There is a positive, congenial atmosphere in the staffroom. There is minimal turnover on the part of the teaching staff, and there are many long-serving educational assistants. This aspect contributes to the stability and consistency at the school
- The atmosphere at SES is positive, cheerful, multi-cultural, and bright. For example, students in the SETT (Selkirk Elementary Technical team) send a positive message as they greet visitors to the school each morning by opening doors for them
- Self-regulation strategies are employed as one means to promote a calmer learning environment, and some teachers commented that the effects were noticeable. This said, the team wondered whether the multiple pages during instructional time served to impede the school's efforts in this regard
- The school is neat, clean and very well-maintained, particularly in newer areas of the school. With respect to facilities, students in the primary area expressed concerns that their bathrooms are not clean and would benefit from an upgrade
- There are numerous visual displays of student work, art, and positive messages exhibited throughout the school
- Students shared with the team that they feel supported by their teachers and can go to them if they have problems or concerns that they need to talk about
- The team noted that there appears to be a certain level of fatigue on the part of the staff. This was also commented upon by the School Council. While this may be attributable to the time of year, the team felt by the end of the review that this may be the result of the multiple implementation of initiatives at the school
- Related to the above, the team also heard from some teachers that there may be hesitation towards sharing "grow-to" areas as this may be perceived by some staff that they may not be doing enough or as effective enough a job as they could be. This perception may limit reflection and the identification of areas of future growth

- Staff observed that values education was taught as a stand-alone subject five years ago, but since then has been woven in to daily teaching. Staff shared that it was perhaps time again to revisit values education with a whole-school teaching approach in order to provide focus
- The team heard the desire to increase First Nations involvement and programming at SES, understanding there are challenges of providing meaningful activities where there is a large number of different First Nations represented in the school's population. School Council and staff continue to make efforts to increase involvement and ensure the school is relevant and responsive to the school community
- The majority of school staff feel that they work together alongside administration and provide support to each other as they work with their students, though the team did hear from some staff that there is a perception of resistance to feedback and passive resistance given to decisions made by the entire staff on the part of other staff members

Recommendations for moving forward:

- In addition to regular staff meeting acknowledgments, take the time to celebrate both small and big gains, taking stock of accomplishments and recognizing them (and the staff behind them) on a regular basis in order to maintain momentum in a busy environment
- Work to reframe reflection on practice in a positive light as distinct from the perception of not doing enough, given the numerous initiatives that the school has instituted over the past number of years
- Consider calmer, quieter alternatives to bells and buzzers (music perhaps?), and review the frequency of whole-school announcements during instructional time as a means of reinforcing self-regulation throughout the school
- Take steps to balance the responsibilities and workload of staff members in order to avoid burnout or the perception of inequality amongst staff
- Related to the above, be cognizant that the implementation of a wide number of strategies targeted to multiple populations may be contributing to a feeling of “implementation burnout” whereby there is uncertainty with regards to what is working (or not), and to what extent. Do not consider implementing new strategies until those currently in place have been assessed as a team and decisions made regarding their effectiveness
- Continue the efforts to strengthen and increase First Nations programming for students in ways that are hands-on, experiential, and relevant to all participating students. Work with

the Department to explore ways that Intensive French language strategies may be integrated into First Nations language approaches

- Consider re-instituting a values-based education approach throughout the school. As done in previous years, using assemblies as a way to transmit and model values-based education may be helpful

School and Community

Characteristics: In continuously improving schools build a shared commitment to success for each learner. The school collaborates with parents, students, school council, First Nations and community to support student learning. Ongoing parent/community involvement is embedded in school culture and the school communicates about progress and challenges in multiple ways.

Observations of the Team:

- The school has made strong efforts to continue to nurture the Selkirk Family Night (based on the Whole Child Project started 4 years ago) as a means of building bridges between the school and the community. It was noted by review team members that Tuesday-night participation has grown from around 25 to upwards of 65 students and parents attending together
- Related to the above point, the offerings provided at Family Night have expanded to include violin lessons, “games and grub” in addition to the open gym and computer lab sessions
- The digital signage at the front of the school has continued to be a successful strategy in the quest to ensure that the Riverdale community is informed of the school’s news and events, and to encourage community participation in school events. The school also showcases student projects and work in the newspaper and local media
- The team heard from the School Council representative that, while they do not directly engage in the school growth planning process, they are supportive of the school’s efforts overall, and appreciate the work being done to include community in the school
- Overall, the staff at SES continue to make a very strong effort to reach out to the community: for example, one teacher makes individual home visits to families with whom the school would like to foster a closer connection

- There appear to be high levels of student volunteerism at SES. Opportunities have been created for students to assist and contribute to school events and initiatives in many positive ways
- Staff members spoke highly of their students: while there are students with challenges, staff have received community feedback that SES students represent the school well when attending events or are on field trips
- The team heard from some staff that, as a school community, there may be disconnections whereby some staff do not know what their peers are working on, and that they would appreciate closing these gaps in knowledge

Recommendations for moving forward:

- Continue to make the positive, dedicated efforts to reach out to the school community along with the development of alternative strategies to continue the positive trend in parental involvement
- Consider more whole-school staff activities that provide the opportunity for staff to share their work and their efforts to work together as a team
- Related to the above point, ensure that staff have the opportunity to share successes, that these are celebrated, and that staff are recognized by their peers for their work and efforts
- Examine with all staff current collaboration practices to identify areas where there may be gaps that inhibit PLC groups from working and planning together as effectively as they could

School Organization

Characteristics: Continuously improving schools organize structures, actions, and interventions to ensure success for each learner. Work in the school is coherent and aligned to focus on improvement. Actions and interventions include effectively differentiating resources, time and professional development to get results. The Department supports the school and makes connections across the Territory to build capacity.

Observations of the Team:

- Staff work to provide proactive and thorough supervision coverage on the playground areas around the school, and in lunch rooms at noon. While this has contributed to a calmer and safer playground and school atmosphere, some students did comment that they find the treed adventure playground somewhat less supervised and that, at times, bullying may occur there

- The school has worked to build grade-level groupings and structures in the attempt to meet a wide diversity of student needs, and has reduced cross-grade groupings when these were shown to have less effect
- School Council is aware that there are a wide range of complex counselling needs at the school and appreciates the responsiveness of staff to help address these demands to the extent possible with current resources
- Blended learning approaches are being explored as a means of addressing a wide range of student learning needs in the upper-elementary levels, as is a “learning commons” approach being applied to the library
- The team observed that there is a wide range of high-quality student programming that includes not only sports but also music (e.g. Suzuki violin) and other activities in order to offer a broad range of activities
- The staff have worked to develop consistent systems for marking and to provide cohesive literacy support: The Daily 5, the 6+1 writing traits, and approaches from Sandra Herbst (with modification based on staff judgment) are consistent, specific approaches aimed at improving literacy levels
- It was the overall view of the staff that the Thursday morning School Based Team (SBT) meetings were effective and efficiently run, though attendance by Department of Education specialists was less frequent than in previous years
- The team heard from staff in the middle and intermediate levels that timetabling at the school is a concern: staff feel that the schedule is too “chopped up” into multiple short blocks of time, creating few opportunities for whole-class or deeper learning to be engaged in. The team also heard from some staff that there may be a perceived reluctance to opening up dialogue around timetabling due to lack of time
- Related to scheduling, the team heard of the merits of the Intensive French program and its successful implementation over the past 3 years. This said, the team also heard from teachers and students that there is a level of antipathy towards post-intensive French in that it requires some students to miss out on experiential activities and contributes to the short, choppy schedule mentioned above
- The PLC model has been modified to reduce the number of teams from 3 down to two (primary and intermediate) as a means to more effectively organize and carry out this

work. The team heard that staff utilize this activity to reflect, research, and adjust practice. This said, the team noted that some staff feel there is a gap or disconnect between these groups and as a result do not know what the other PLC is working on. It was suggested by some staff that the Intermediate PLC needs more guidance in their work

Recommendations for moving forward:

- Continue to explore innovative ways of meeting the diverse needs of the students at Selkirk School
- Continue the solid efforts being made with regards to high quality programming at the school and the targeted efforts being made in support of literacy across the grades through experiential literacy
- Discuss as a staff and explore solution-focused ways to refine the school schedule in order to create larger blocks of sustained learning time and reduce the movement of students in an environment where self-regulation and deeper learning is being fostered
- Related to the above, explore ways that Intensive French could become more experiential in nature as a means of reducing the perception on the part of students that they are having to ‘give something up’ to take Intensive French
- Seek ways to bridge the two PLC working groups in order to ensure that their work is linked together. Ensure that both groups are focused and communicate effectively with each other what they are working on
- Give thought as to how the treed adventure playground behind the school may be supervised in ways that keep it a safe, enjoyable nature-space for children

School Processes and Progress

Characteristics: Continuously improving schools take responsibility for improving outcomes for students. They use evidence to guide decisions and actions and have processes in place to collectively monitor progress and make adjustments in key areas of their work. They demonstrate improvement over time – for individual students, groups of students, and the school.

Observations of the Team:

- The team noted that there appears to be an increased interest and prevalence of the use of data and its analysis as a means of identifying student needs and informing instruction, though was unsure as to the extent to which data informs the work of all staff

- Related to the above, the team heard that the school staff have refined and narrowed the number of data sets used to help inform student achievement and to guide instruction. This appears to have simplified and focused the efforts of data-informed instruction
- Since the previous review, many initiatives have been implemented (or are being considered) to improve outcomes and build relationships with students: experiential learning, project-based learning, self-regulation, violins, being but a few. The team commends these efforts but is concerned that there may be a level of fatigue and an uncertainty as to which initiatives are having an effect, and to what degree
- The school staff appears to know their students well and are aware of which students/groupings require additional and ongoing support. For example, ELL students receive literacy support through a targeted .5FTE teacher assignment
- As a new initiative, the team heard from staff that Intensive French is viewed by the school to be successful as a means of improving students' communication proficiency in French
- Staff members recognize that a variety of approaches should be considered when attempting to address a wide range of student learning needs: for example, blended learning is being considered as one model to provide broader levels of student-centered learning and engagement
- The team heard from some upper-intermediate students that, at times, there may be too much review of previously-taught content, and that more challenge and new content would be appreciated

Recommendations for moving forward:

- Continue the work already being done to support the refinement/alignment between school goals and the relevant data sets being used to understand students and their progress
- Prepare in advance of the May 2015 PD day, where an analysis of the school's initiatives and their outcomes over the past three years is planned, as a means to take stock of the school's activities, celebrate successes, and plan ahead for the next 3 years

- Continue to explore, grow, and monitor blended learning as an approach to pedagogy that may enhance learning for students
- Explore further and identify ways to address the concern on the part of some intermediate students that they are not as challenged by new learning as they would like to be

In conclusion

The team appreciated and enjoyed its time at Selkirk Elementary School. The environment is bright, cheerful, and has a focus on learning. It is evident that the school is making progress with respect to creating stronger ties with its community, and will continue to seek ways to increase involvement. Progress also appears to be made with respect to the use of data as a means of informing instruction at the school, and is encouraged to continue to distribute this work through the school. There have been many initiatives implemented at Selkirk Elementary since the last review, and the team now feels it is time for the school to assess what is working and to what degree prior to initiating new ideas or programs.

Practices to share:

- The efforts made and strategies taken to increase parental participation in the Tuesday Family Nights
- The inclusion of students in the work done at the school (i.e. the SETT team)
- The inclusion of high-quality musical training for students as a means of promoting engagement

Recommendation to Department

- Review with the school how the allocation of staffing and EAs is determined in order to avoid perceptions of ambiguity or inequality
- Work with the school to examine whether an intensive approach (as employed in French) may be helpful in the teaching of Southern Tutchone