



Selkirk School Review Report

School Selkirk

Date:

School Principal: Peter Gubbe

Vice-Principal: Simon Blakesley

Date of Review: February 6-8, 2012

School Review Team:

Ruby Busse, Vice Principal Johnson Elementary

Darren Hays, Principal, F.H. Collins Secondary School

Julia Joe, CELC Selkirk First Nation Eliza Van Bibber School

Mike Woods, Superintendent, Area 1

Judy Arnold, Director, DOE

Meetings with the School included:

- The School Growth Planning Team
- Staff
- Meeting with students
- Meeting with School Council representatives
- Classroom visits

School Context

Selkirk Elementary School is located in Riverdale, Whitehorse. Most of the 216 K-7 students who attend Selkirk live within a 2 km radius of the school. While the multicultural complexion of the school's student population of 198 is growing as immigration to Yukon increases, the largest representation is from FN communities, with the number of students of FN ancestry approaching 50%. The building and grounds are well maintained and in excellent condition and school facilities are well used by the community on evenings, weekends and holidays. Indoor facilities include a large gym with stage and well equipped adjoining music room/theatre, an up to date computer lab and library with Promethean board, a dental care office and a number of small meeting rooms to provide counselling and a variety of support programs for students. An Early Learning Project for parents with their preschool children piloted in May 2010 now has over 70 families enrolled, and a weekly evening Whole Child Recreational Program for students and families piloted in January 2011 has also been well attended and will be continued in 2011/2012.

The Selkirk staff is committed to the ongoing improvement of teaching, learning and student achievement and to the ongoing building of relationships and capacity among students, staff and parents within our school community of learners.

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 atmosphere at Selkirk is warm and welcoming, staff and students are friendly and positive. Student work and the art on the walls in the halls reflects the focus on learning, creativity, and the multi-cultural community at the school;
- Staff members are clearly student centered, and see their work a journey that they are on together to improve outcomes for students;
- The focus on social responsibility is a strength, and the values within the Virtues Project have become part of the school culture,
 - Staff also suggested the need to strategically maintain and enhance the approach so that it is consistently positive and restorative,
 - Students indicated that there was some bullying at the school;
- There is an increasing emphasis on academic growth while acknowledging the continuing need to work on the social/emotional development of the students in order to create the conditions for learning for all;
- The First Nations students at the school represent a number of First Nations and both the Team and school staff noted the need to have a Yukon First Nations Education Support Worker (ESW or CELC) to assist the students and function as a liaison with First Nations parents;
- Staff expressed an interest in further embedding Yukon First Nations cultural perspectives in curricular areas.

Recommendations for moving forward:

- Maintain and enhance the focus on social responsibility and virtues. Ensure that the approach to behavioural challenges is consistent and remains focused on restitution and learning, not punishment;
- Continue to celebrate the multicultural nature of the school and the diversity of approaches that will be needed to support learning;
- Work with First Nations Programs and Partnerships Unit to explore ways to have an ESW and Elders at the school;
- Work with the Department and other agencies to develop a strategy to welcome and support immigrant students and their families.

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 staff is enthusiastic and appreciates working as a team at the school, comments were made that trust among staff and administration is growing and this facilitates risk taking as problems are approached;
- Staff uses a Professional Learning Community (PLC) approach to work in school improvement areas. The PLCs are loosely structured in grade groupings]However, staff would appreciate more collaborative time to deepen the work and build consistency and teamwork across the grades;
- The School Council is supportive of the school and the work of staff and the leadership team. Communications between the school and School Council is open, honest and focused on a collaborative approach to solving problems, making decisions and establishing directions,
 - The relationship between School Council and school administration is strong and dates back to the previous administration,
 - The relationship between the School Council and student government is ongoing and a very positive standing item on School Council agenda;
- Staff and school council acknowledged the need to reach out to the diverse parent community and were eager to engage more parents in the work of the school and celebrate successes with the broader community,
 - The new outdoor signage is an excellent way to open communications with the Riverdale community;
- The recent implementation of the Whole Child Program is another excellent way to have students and parents engage with the school in an activity focused way that also provides support to families;
- Early Childhood program, “Learning Together” is a wonderful opportunity for pre-school children to come out and interact socially with one another. However, staff was interested finding ways to have more children who would attend Selkirk involved;
- At the time of the review, the School Council was interested in exploring the intensive French approach for the school;
- The student government at the school is an excellent way to provide leadership opportunities for students. However, it appeared that the students were not involved in the development of the growth plan.

Recommendations for moving forward:

- Maintain and enhance the positive relationships among staff and with School Council;
- Work with the Department and the First Nations Programs and Partnerships Unit to further develop strategies to reach out to all parents;
- Engage the broader community in the dialogue about the potential for the implementation of intensive French;
- Explore ways to get the good news about the work of the school out in the community.

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:

- Students have opportunities to be involved in a variety of sports, clubs, cultural activities and music;
- The school is working hard to match instruction to student levels and is using flexible student/teacher groupings to maximize resources and learning,
 - There are guided reading groups at all levels,
 - The use of performance standards and formative assessment was evident in some classrooms. Student self-assessment appears to be developing. However, it was unclear to the Team whether there was a consistent, balanced approach to literacy development across the school;
- The school maintains Individual student tracking sheets that provide performance information to help teachers know students and develop strategies to support learning;
- Transitions for students to secondary school are well handled,
 - The tracking sheets and notes from year-end meetings with FH Collins go with students as they transition to grade 8. The notes provide an excellent approach to transitions that includes academic as well as social/emotional and cultural information;
- The school makes good use of support staff, remedial tutors and educational assistants to support academic, social/emotional and behavioural development;
- The school has informal breakfast and lunch programs for students;
- Grade group Respect assemblies and monthly Shining Star assemblies provide opportunities to reinforce school values and to celebrate student participation and successes,
 - The Team was very impressed with the behaviour of the students and quality of presentations at the assembly;
- In some classrooms there appears to be a need for continued focus on positive behaviour management and the development of approaches to learning that engage students,
 - At the time of the review, there appeared to be an over reliance on worksheets with a “fill in the blanks” approach in some subject areas and it was unclear how an experiential or active learning approach was embedded in curricula;
- The staff suggested implementing ELL tutoring and summer programs at Selkirk.

Recommendations for moving forward:

- Explore creative ways to organize and timetable the school academically which may include mixing up the configuration of classes at the school to facilitate more interaction across the grades and further facilitate teachers having time to collaborate;
- Strengthen the work in literacy to focus on a balanced approach that consistently includes the use of formative assessment, the creation of assessment criteria and student self-assessment and flexible groupings at all levels,
 - Along with the focus on vulnerable learners, ensure that capable students are challenged;

- Expand on an experiential or active learning approach to address Prescribed Learning Outcomes (PLOs) and integrate literacy development across the curriculum. (The new Nelson Reading series embeds BC social studies and science outcomes);
- Build on the PLC work but consider the need to collaborate both within grade groupings and across all grade levels. This creates a continuum of understanding and supports consistency in the development of strategies;
- Work with the Department to,
 - Address the needs of the growing ELL population and the need for appropriate programming,
 - Develop a strategy to address the complex counselling needs at the school. Along with current work with Mental Health, Children with Disabilities, Kwanlin Dun, CATS, Skookum Jim, and private referrals, this may include interdepartmental cooperation and the sharing of coordinated services;
- Continue to use the pyramid of intervention and the school-based team approach to quickly identify student needs. This is particularly important in the early grades;
- Continue to build on the excellent use of latest technology for students learning. Also consider increasing the number of promethean boards at the school or moving the current board as the current location makes it difficult for some classroom teachers to use.
- Ensure there is a consistent policy around the use of personal devices smart phones, Ipads, etc. for students and staff.

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:

- Staff expressed concern about literacy and numeracy skills particularly at the intermediate level. Staff also expressed concern over the number of absences and lates at the school. There are also significant inconsistencies in relation to student performance among data sets i.e. YATS, report card marks and school wide writes,
- Staff were interested in using data but wanted it to portray student achievement in user friendly language;
- The staff and School Council expressed a desire to have a closer connection with the area superintendent to build understanding and a stronger team approach to support student learning;
- The school reviews a wide variety of evidence in the development of the school growth plan;
- The Team suggests that the current school growth plan requires simplification,
 - Approaching the process as an action research question may be helpful.

Recommendations for moving forward:

- Work with staff to look at inconsistencies related to student performance among assessment tools,
 - Consider eliminating some of the school determined data sets,
 - Explore reasons behind the apparent struggles that students have with mathematics (Is it reading skills or concepts that are challenging?);
- When looking at the variety of performance data, determine what measures will be used to assess progress over time and establish targets;
- To simplify the planning document, consider basing discussions about school growth and the school growth plan on this question: What are we going to do differently or continue to implement in order to improve outcomes for our students?
 - The plan does not need to include everything the school is doing,
 - Limit goals and objectives to a manageable and trackable number.

Conclusions:

Selkirk school has an increasingly diverse population of students and works hard to create a positive learning environment, address individual needs and connect with School Council and community. The school is encouraged to continue exploring the use of consistent research-based creative and innovative approaches to learning in order to further improve outcomes for all students.

Practices to share:

- Early Learning Initiative
- The Whole Child Program
- Student government and its connection to the School Council
- Social responsibility and virtues programs
- Individual student tracking sheets that support transitions to secondary school