



2015-2016 AESN TRANSITIONS CASE STUDY

District: SD60 Peace River North

Schools: District Inquiry Involving the following schools:

- North Peace Senior Secondary
- Energetic Learning Campus
- Bert Bowes Middle School
- Dr. Kearney Middle School
- Prespatou School

Inquiry Team Members:

NPSS: Carleen Andrews

NPSS: Moneca Conway

NPSS: Torben Graham

ELC: Candace Bigfoot

ELC: Ashley Merwin

BB: Kelty Pratt

DK: Barb Wagner

Prespatou: Kris Isenor

Kim Boettcher

Pat Jansen

As well as all members of Aboriginal Council including Elders from each Aboriginal Community

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Our focus for this year: Our focus was to increase secondary school success for our Aboriginal students. Increase Grade-to-Grade Transition Rates and increase Six Year Completion Rates for Aboriginal Students. Increase confidence and develop a growth mindset in our Aboriginal students so that they are able to set goals and take charge of their own journey.

Scanning: We did the following:

- Reviewed Ministry of Education grade to grade transition data
- Reviewed Ministry of Education six year completion statistics
- Reviewed our grade 9 core course completion statistics
- Met with our Aboriginal Support Workers, Elders and Aboriginal Council to listen to their views on how the students are doing, what supports they believe are needed, how we can collectively work together to increase success: motivation/achievement/sense of belonging
- Met with the students in both small groups and individually to interview, chat with and listen to their views on learning about how the school can support their efforts, using our Learning Journey format

The Four Key Questions are embedded in our Learning Journeys. Upon reviewing the student Learning Journeys, we have noticed the following about the experiences of our learners:

- Students must have a key adult at their school site to advocate for them in the school environment.
 - *SD60 System Response:* we have encouraged and supported our Aboriginal Student Support Workers (ASSW) to assume a larger role in the Aboriginal Transition Program – students trust these workers, we have highly educated ASSWs who work hard with the students to complete their academic core classes while showing a deep understanding of the social and emotional health of the students. At all sites, we are also expanding the network for students by providing more opportunities for counselors, teachers and itinerants to interact with students in different ways – through hikes, job site visits, Learning from the Elders course, tutorials.
- Students would like to learn more about their culture within the school system and receive credit toward graduation.
 - *SD60 System Response:* we have an approved BAA course called Learning from the Elders where students receive credit for the traditional knowledge they gain from working with the Elders in their community. We look for other ways to link curriculum with traditional learning: English selections/projects, math example where a student was able to demonstrate the learning outcomes by explaining the math that is useful when he lays a trap line, when he travels the trap line, when he harvests from the line, and when he prepares the furs.
- Our school system needs to work harder at developing deeper relationships with the students' families – both on reserve and off reserve.
 - *SD60 System Response:* effort has been taken by both senior secondary schools to provide opportunities for school personnel to develop relationships with the extended families of the students: going for meetings to the community centers on reserves, meeting the band education coordinators monthly, intergenerational Kindergarten/Grade 10 Exchange where little students work monthly with big students.
- Our career department staff work closely with our Aboriginal Transition Coaches and ASSW so the students do seem to realize, by grade 10, 'where they are going' with their learning. We have found the students to be very honest in describing the areas of challenge as well as the areas of strength. Sometimes, they need to ask specific questions about career entry – prerequisites, what institutions might be offering their career program and what they might do already in grade 10 and 11 to prepare for their applications to post-secondary.
 - *SD60 System Response:* We try very hard to monitor the achievement of our students and use an online student information system called ASSESS where all our Aboriginal Student Support Workers are able to see notes from teachers that let them know when a student is falling behind so that students can attend a Tier 2 tutorial, come for extra help and/or require some sort of advocacy.
 - *SD60 System Response:* Next year, we need to have meetings with small groups and the Work Experience person and the counselors to make sure they all understand any prerequisite needs they may have.
- Students tend to 'blame' themselves for coursework not going well...they often say they need to study more, attend class more. While some of that may be true, our Aboriginal Transition Coaches are also charged with advocating for more Aboriginal content in required assignments/teaching, for access to technology, for alternate ways for students to show their understanding, for quality versus quantity of assignment.

- *SD60 System Response:* We have set up different computers for different needs in the ASSW room so that these systems are available where the students feel the most comfortable – of course, students may access technology in almost any other area of the school but we have now included these devices in the ASSW rooms, as well - three ipads would be helpful for students to record their thinking with iMovie and Book Creator. Infusing Aboriginal content and understandings into the curriculum is ongoing and all itinerants and instructional coaches must demonstrate that they offer demonstration lessons using these materials and links to Aboriginal Ways of Knowing. Our literacy coach is currently working with the Aboriginal Cultural ASSW to co-teach lessons using the Seven Teachings.

We sincerely try to build a growth mindset in our students where they feel confident and empowered. Bringing attention to their achievements is important...next year, we wish to have an extra honouring ceremony for graduating students of Aboriginal ancestry. We also provide different ways for students to get together with other students to learn in hands on ways --- both with peers and with students in different age groups. Also, we attempt to include our Elders in as many schools as possible, and NPSS has been very pro-active in working with us on the Learning with the Elders coursework, hoping to expand next year. Recognizing that learning must be relevant to all students, we need to be more explicit with students in helping them understand what they need for different career choices – an ongoing process

Focus: We chose this focus as our Aboriginal learners begin a slight downward trend between grade 9 and grade 10. We were also finding that many students were entering grade 10, through 'promotion with intervention' with some gaps in their learning and were finding it difficult to be successful in grade 10. Our tutorials targeting Math and English are very well attended, students are building a relationship with their after school tutorial teachers and will often bring along another friend.

The changes we are hoping to see: increased achievement in core content areas in grade 9 and through to grade 12, increased Grade to Grade Transition Rates, increased sense of belonging at our senior secondary sites, increased 6 Year Completion Rate, and above all an increase in confidence and outlook to the future.

Hunch:

- While we had added an Aboriginal Coach to the student's advocacy network on school site, we still had to expand the circle to include counselors, ASSWs and communities.
- Still need to infuse more Aboriginal content and Ways of Knowing to encourage a feeling of acceptance, pride and sense of belonging.
- By providing time to meet at a school site. We had offered our time to families however many Aboriginal families did not feel comfortable at these sites. Our high schools are incorporating more Aboriginal artwork and artifacts in their foyers and other locations throughout the schools. but the high school Aboriginal education group went to our local reserves for one meeting in each community and hope to do more onsite visits.

New professional learning:

- Some members of our district team attended a First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC) conference and others attended the AESN/NOII Conference in May, 2016.
- 8th Fire Video Series
- Aboriginal Worldview resource

All information was used to deepen our understanding of Aboriginal worldview and culture. We found helpful ideas on how to connect new curriculum and core competencies with Aboriginal content and Ways of Knowing. We have especially used the Personal & Cultural Identity Competency to work with our diverse student population including our Aboriginal learners.

Taking action:

- Aboriginal Transition Coaches in five secondary sites
- Widening of the circle of support to more effectively include ASSWs, school counselors, Learning Assistance Teachers (LAT) and School Leadership teams in student contact
- Connecting more deeply and more often with families
- Finding more relevant connections between curriculum and traditional culture

Please see APPENDIX 3 for impact descriptions from three of our school sites.

Checking: Overall, we are slowly increasing our Grade-to-Grade Transition Rates, which means that we are able to work with more students because more are making it into the next grade, closer to Graduation! We have also increased our Six Year Completion Rate (there are very few students not receiving Dogwood Grad Certificates when they graduate). Please see Appendix 1 and 2 below.

As well, students are achieving better results in their core courses which may be a positive correlation to the following strategies we have tried: providing relevant credits for traditional learning, making a bigger effort to meet with Elders on reserve, offering Tier 2 tutorial support in Math and English and increasing the number of adults in our secondary schools who are making connections with our students and working with classroom teachers to better understand the Aboriginal learner.

Reflections/Advice: Each year, we gain a deeper understanding of the Aboriginal learner in our system within School District No. 60. We work collaboratively with the Aboriginal Education Center and have assumed a collective responsibility for both Aboriginal students and their families to build success and hope for a bright future.

We must continue all efforts and increase our communication with Aboriginal families, building a stronger community tie. The ASSW position is integral to the success of the students as they connect on a more personal level and the Aboriginal Transition Coach role must be a teacher willing to advocate for students and to work with classroom teachers to develop curriculum, lessons and assessments that are respectful to culture and student needs.

We must use ALL professional development opportunities to infuse Aboriginal culture and tradition into the new curriculum.

We must monitor and respond with timely interventions when needed. This means that we need to be aware of the progress of our students so record keeping must be consistent in our student information system (ASSESS).

APPENDIX 1

Percent of SD60 Aboriginal Students Making Successful Transitions to a Higher Grade

2011/12	Grade 9	73%
2012/13	Grade 9	77%
2013/14	Grade 9	85%
2014/15	Grade 9	89%
2011/12	Grade 10	65%
2012/13	Grade 10	77%
2013/14	Grade 10	77%
2014/15	Grade 10	73%
2011/12	Grade 11	61%
2012/13	Grade 11	74%
2013/14	Grade 11	70%
2014/15	Grade 11	84%

APPENDIX 2

SD60 Six Year Completion Rates for Aboriginal Students:

2011/12	47.4%
2012/13	43.8%
2013/14	33.8%
2014/15	54.9%

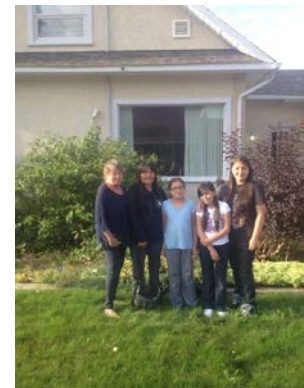
APPENDIX 3

ABORIGINAL TRANSITION COACHES

OUR IMPACT

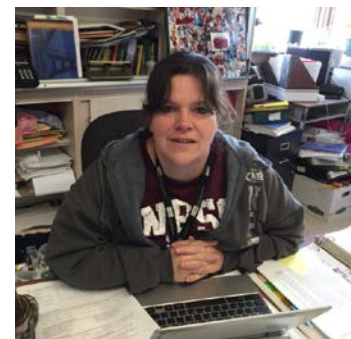
Site One: North Peace Senior Secondary

- Embedding Aboriginal culture and perspectives into classrooms grades 10-12, Ms. Andrews
- Math tutorial support with Mr. Graham
- ASSWs working closely with students to help them with academic support, ASSWs Moneca and Jodi
- ASSWs working closely with students to complete their projects for electives credits – BAA Learning from the Elders, ASSWs Moneca and Jodi



“My focus as a Transition Coach has been to build capacity with teachers and work towards embedding Aboriginal perspectives into the curriculum in a meaningful and authentic manner.” These are Brenda's comments regarding our work/collaboration around embedding Talking Circle into the classroom/curriculum.” *Carleen Andrews, Aboriginal Transition Coach, NPSS*

“A stressful year in the Senior Alternate left me searching for ways to rebuild a feeling of connection and belonging for students and staff in the program. During my Growth Plan conversations, Carleen encouraged me to investigate First Nations teachings and practices as community as a central theme in traditional holistic healing. As a result, we incorporated Circle Talks into the Senior Alternate program and the benefits have been far reaching. In addition to



developing community, belonging and empathy, we now have students who are wanting to learn more and share those teachings with their peers.” *Brenda Birley, Senior Alternate Teacher*

Site Two: Energetic Learning Campus

- Grade 10 Big Buddies visit monthly with Kindergarten Little Buddies building rapport, positive and personal cultural identities
- Coach working closely with teachers and students to encourage positive progress in academics and in developing a positive cultural identity

These pictures were taken after the first Big Buddy/Little Buddy visit.

“Students at the ELC have volunteered to be a part of our Big Buddy program with Kindergarten students from Central School. All but two students are from my Aboriginal Transitions cohort. Creating positive personal and cultural identities (for both our big and little buddies) is the goal! Visits are on the third Wednesday of each month from 1:30-2:30. WOW. What a great afternoon! I can't wait to see what the year brings! My big buddies were just thrilled after today!”

Ashley Beerling, Aboriginal Coach, ELC



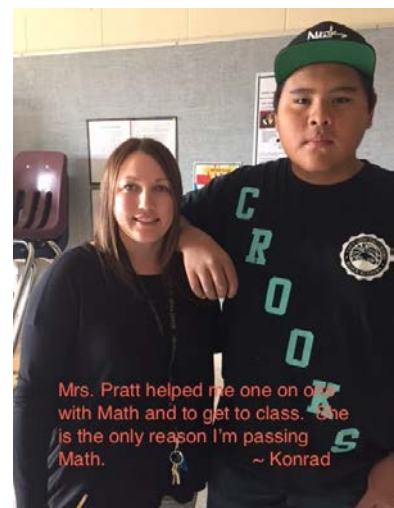
Site Three: Bert Bowes Middle School

- Transitions Coach working closely with classroom teachers to encourage academic achievement and positive personal and social development
- Teaches and encourages strategies for academic success
- Math tutorial support, math in-class support
- Monitors attendance and actively encourages attendance

Kelty, Aboriginal Transition Coach, asked her students: "How have I, as the Aboriginal Transition Coach, helped you to be successful?"

Responses:

- “She helps me do good in Math and to get to class.”
- “She gets me to class and to give me motivation in and out of class. She helps me in class when I need it.”



Mrs. Pratt helped me one on one with Math and to get to class. She is the only reason I'm passing Math.
~ Konrad