

SUCCESS FOR ALL

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First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education

Moving Forward

“We have to be directly involved in making sure that, unlike residential schools; the school system not only prepares children for the market economy, but reconnects them with family, language, culture, and land. That is what the residential schools sought to disconnect our people from, and we have been suffering those consequences now for several generations.” – **Assembly of First Nations National Chief, Shawn Atleo**

A Reminder...

FNMI refers to the First Nations, Metis and Inuit people of Canada. Within these three distinct nations exists many other distinct groups, each with its own languages, worldviews, customs, ceremonies and histories. Often the word Aboriginal is used to describe these nations, however, this term has been rejected by many political organizations representing these communities. Aboriginal is often perceived as a colonial and homogenizing term, and its use assumes that these nations are all one group. Conversely, the application of the acronym FNMI promotes awareness of the unique character of these different communities, many of which are currently in a process of self-identification and cultural reclamation. For teachers, it underscores the importance of learning about, connecting with and ideally partnering with each FNMI student's home community.

What Works? Research shows...

Embracing a Bilingual Approach – Literacy success rates for First Nations, Metis and Inuit students are currently measured by their acquisition of standard English. Because FNMI students often communicate in non-standard forms of English within their own unique nuances, they often encounter challenges in the standard language. For these students literacy success is cultivated by individualized programs that support their identity, experiences and relationships with the world. Literacy programs for these learners must, therefore, offer differentiated instruction, make real-life connections and involve strategies and resources that are engaging, motivating and culturally affirming. It is critical, then, for educators to embrace a respectful, bilingual approach that recognizes that students may, as part of their everyday existence, speak non-standard English (also known as FNMI dialects). Often cultural and community nuances of a particular Nation are embedded in these dialects. Therefore literacy methods in schools need to use a bilingual approach that respects and values this uniqueness.



It is important to note the difference between ESL programming and bilingual programming. ESL programs are intended to help achieve quick assimilation into the mainstream, and to establish proficiency in the dominant language. Whereas, bilingual literacy programs in schools foster an environment where distinct dialects (and cultures) are validated, while still developing mastery of standard English.

Learners from FNMI communities should be exposed to a variety of communicative contexts and experiences that enable them to master code switching. This will provide them with tools for learning how to communicate and interact in a multitude of situations. Long-term, this ability and proficiency in more than one dialect will allow students to live seamlessly in a bilingual/bicultural or multilingual/multicultural state. A classroom that honours FNMI learners will necessarily adopt a bilingual or Multilingual approach to teaching standard English.

Research shows that educator training regarding the nature of dialects and of second language learning...(and) cross-cultural education...is important to affect positive change in the classroom...Training programs should include current information so that FNMI children's dialects are viewed as assets and not obstacles to learning.

Engagement and Retention...

(From Policy Levers for Improving Outcomes for Off-Reserve Students, By Helen Raham)

The high school graduation rate for aboriginal cohort lags 28% below the national average. It is essential to learn the interventions and supports required to keep aboriginal youth engaged in school and planning for higher education/training and successful entry into the workforce. The research suggests that:

- Dropping out is preventable. It is most often related to in-school conditions: lack of supportive relationships, a widening knowledge and skills gap, weak instructional and support services, perceived irrelevance of curriculum, poor attendance and behaviour; and low parental involvement.
- School connectedness is a significant factor in decisions to stay in school. Retention rates improve when schools promote students' sense of belonging through a visible aboriginal presence in the school and curriculum, positive relationships, opportunities to express their cultural identity, and family involvement in the life of the school.
- Attendance is strongly associated with school completion. Schools must be proactive in addressing attendance, tardiness and behaviour issues.
- In-school supports such as monitoring attendance, easing transitions, introducing native language and culture, personalized learning, homework and tutoring clubs, buddy systems, the presence of aboriginal staff, elder programs, and home outreach have positive effects on attendance, behaviour, motivation, academic progress, and retention.
- Access to technology, vocational, apprenticeship, mentoring and counselling programs, extra-curricular and after-school programs keep at-risk youth in school.
- Nationally coordinated approaches in Australia's *Whole of School Intervention Strategy* and New Zealand's *Student Engagement Initiative* significantly increased their aboriginal graduation rates.



Literacy Practices that Support FNMI Students...

Research suggests that for First Nations, Metis and Inuit learners, success in literacy is supported by a variety of "best practices," a few examples are described below...

- ⇒ Form partnerships with the FNMI Community
 - Develop critical relationships with the FNMI organizations and agencies in your area. They have access to programs and contacts like elders, Metis Senators and cultural resource people.
 - Learn a basic greeting in the language of the community you are working with.
- ⇒ Develop individualized literacy programs
 - Employ a balanced literacy environment and include FNMI resources and learning styles. Incorporate cooperative learning and multiple literacies strategies.
 - Include storytelling as a regular feature in your classroom.
 - Provide many opportunities for group-talk, where students share formally and informally (e.g. think/pair/share, brainstorming, jigsaw, interviews).
 - Facilitate sharing circles, using a talking stone. Set respectful ground rules by letting the class know that only the person holding the talking stone may speak. The rest of us have the responsibility to listen.
- ⇒ Provide engaging and motivating resources
 - Draw upon a variety of literacy resources that incorporate FNMI culture and language.
 - Ensure that these resources represent the diversity and location of your students.
- ⇒ Focus on early intervention in primary grades



- Implement play-based programs that encourage oral language and opportunities to read, write, listen and present.
- Provide multiple opportunities for students to engage with and decode print in a variety of FNMI languages, thus ensuring that an array of FNMI books and stories are utilized as part of the regular curriculum.
- Set up listening and book centres that offer FNMI stories and songs.
- Create the grandparent's chair as part of your literacy program and invite First Nations or Inuit Elders, Metis Senators or other role models to come and share their teachings and/or craft

⇒ Make differentiated and real-world connections

- Connect literacy to real-world experiences and vice-versa. Have this become a springboard for a diversity of literacy activities.
- Plan a field trip or participate in a local FNMI play, festival, or powwow with your class.
- Read an FNMI book and ask students how this relates to their own lives.
- Try using FNMI languages as part of your transitions in the classroom.

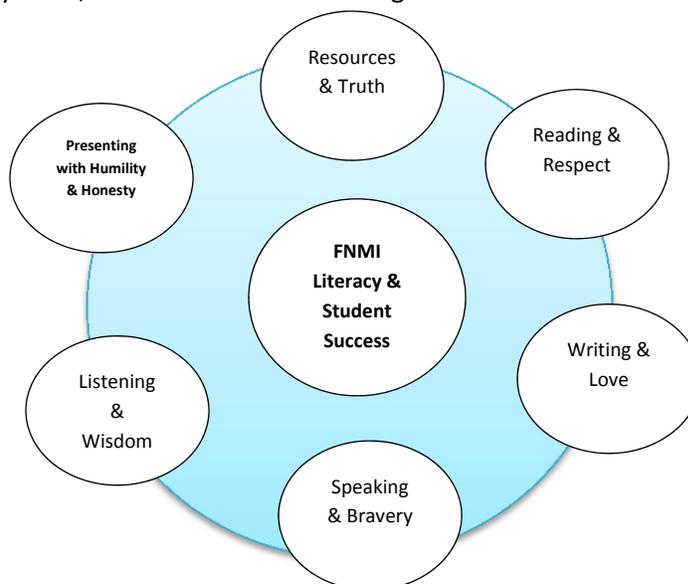
***Note: Learner success in literacy is cultivated in an environment that fosters confidence in the students' worldview (especially the culture of their Nation), personal identity, and experiences. Literacy programs in schools, therefore, need to be individualized (respectful of unique dialects), engaging, differentiated and supported by community partnerships and resources. The primary key to literacy success of learners is the educator, who ultimately affects the quality and relevancy of the program. It is therefore critical that our teachers have the tools, resources, training, and supports to work effectively with these learners. First Nation, Metis and Inuit students' success, engagement, retention and graduation highly depend upon it.

Increasing Literacy Success By Implementing An FNMI Model...

(Adapted from: Achieving Aboriginal Student Success-A Guide for K to 8 Classrooms, Toulouse, Pamela Rose, Portage & Main Press, 2011

New Research indicates that specific literacy strategies promote FNMI student success. These include the following:

- Creating textually and symbolically rich environments that honour the culture, worldview, and language of Aboriginal learners.
- Setting up classrooms that are based in differentiated instruction and balance literacy practices.
- Having educators who are caring and who transmit the message that all students can and will succeed.
- Ensuring that literacy is living. It is important that literacy be cross curricular. It is also crucial that literacy be connected, on a daily basis, to real life-and that strong connections to FNMI communities are in schools.



Highlight NLSD Schools...



J.A. Williams School students and staff host their Round Dance, yearly. This year's theme was **Mamawhitowin - Coming Together.**

Approximately 250 guests attended, despite poor driving conditions. More than 20 community sponsors contributed to the event. This annual event was planned and organized by students under the leadership of Ms. Simone Dequaine - FNMI Coordinator / Instructor. This year Mr. Moghrabi was honoured during the ceremony.

Student Engagement is at the centre of Kikino School's Improvement efforts. Students take on Leadership roles, participate in extra-curricular activities and mentor one another to be the best they can be. Student Leadership members go through the school's Annual Report with their Principal Ms. Thompson, and offer suggestions on goals and strategies for improvement. The Kikino Ski team has developed a fabulous reputation and students are motivated to work to ensure they can participate in this activity. Ms. Thompson works closely with her community's early learning partners to ensure that early literacy skills are a focus. This important relationship creates alignment between what is happening in both the school and the community. Way to go, Kikino!

First Dryland Training camp held this fall



Ski Days – Every week during Phys. Ed. Each class has the opportunity to cross country ski.



Students taking part in a yoga session held during September perfect attendance incentive



Our school ski coach and a student after she won her first medal at a ski loppet.



Students who hosted the annual Christmas Concert – they are mentored in public speaking

