

FNSA News

The Newsletter of the First Nations Schools Association

Fall, 2004



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First Nations schools implement their own measures of success

Welcome back. We hope you are looking forward to another successful school year. The 2004/2005 school year marks the beginning of both new and annual FNSA activities and this newsletter provides some of the highlights.

Notably, this September is the start of a pilot project to coordinate First Nations schools' efforts to measure student progress and collect data to track program and school effectiveness.

Until now, First Nations schools have used a variety of data and measures. The challenge has been that because there has been little coordination or standardization of those efforts, the FNSA has been limited in its ability to interpret the data and highlight the important work being done in BC.

During the past two years, First Nations schools have discussed school measures and data collection issues through a series of community consultation meetings and at Annual General Meetings. Participants in the 2004 Annual General Meeting last April voted to pursue a First Nations Schools

Measures and Data Collection Project pilot in 2004/05.

All First Nations schools were sent a letter from the FNSA this September asking for their assistance with this pilot project. Specifically, schools have been asked to complete a data collection form, which asks a series of questions of school staff and includes surveys for students and parents.

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Regional Sessions Underway

Everyone is invited to participate in this Fall's series of community meetings on Aboriginal education known as Regional Sessions, which are happening in communities across BC. Staff and board members from the First Nations Education Steering Committee and staff of the BC Ministry of Education will describe recent work and goals, and be available to discuss local education issues.

Visit the Workshops section of www.fnesc.ca for registration details.

Measures and Data

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The data will go to the FNSA, and the FNSA will create a provincial-level summary of the data.

Only the provincial level summary will be shared with Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC). The FNSA will not release any data for individual schools and all individual school level data will be treated as completely confidential.

The FNSA strongly believes that this project will assist First Nations schools in meeting accountability and reporting requirements. Rather than being an accountability measure imposed by an outside body, this process has been pro-actively developed by First Nations schools for First Nations schools. It enables the schools to report data that reflects values identified by the schools themselves.

Anyone who has questions, feedback or suggestions about the First Nations Schools Data and Measures Project can contact:
Barb Kavanagh barbk@fnesc.ca
Marie Matthew mlmatthew@direct.ca 250-652-5652
Dayna Anderson daynaa@fnesc.ca 1-877-422-3672

Results of the pilot project will be reviewed at the 2005 FNSA AGM for feedback and direction for future work.

Supporting Principals

The FNSA is pleased to announce that Marie Matthew will continue her work as Principal Resource Person and expand her services from a part-time to full-time basis this year. Marie supports First Nations school principals with issues such as school growth plans, parental involvement, staff management, record keeping, service integration, leadership, resource management, reporting, and funding. Marie has worked as an administrator in Neqweyqwelsten School in Barriere, BC. She can be contacted at mlmatthew@direct.ca
T: 250-652-5652.

School Assessment and the New Certification Option

Over the past five years, the FNSA has worked with First Nations schools to develop a school assessment model that reflects the unique needs of First Nations schools. Three different assessment tools have been created - one for K-12 schools, one for small preschool programs, and another for adult programs.

Eleven schools completed their internal and external reviews in 2003/04, and now the 2004/05 Assessment Project has begun. The first project workshop took place in April 2004 and twenty First Nations schools will be participating in this school year.

To date, fifty First Nations schools have undertaken assessments and they have generally indicated that the process was worthwhile and rewarding.

At the 2004 AGM, the FNSA membership approved a new certification component to the assessment process. The certification component is optional for schools that undertake an FNSA sponsored assessment project.

Schools have related that having the FNSA - an organization that was created by and for First Nations schools - formally certify schools is meaningful to many First Nations community and school staff. It demonstrates First Nations control of First Nations education and has additional benefits of bringing recognition from outside agencies, providing communities with assurances that schools are meeting recognized standards, and complementing the ongoing jurisdiction negotiations. Seven schools have been successfully certified to date.

As more schools undertake assessments and some also choose to seek FNSA certification, the FNSA looks forward to supporting schools in their growth efforts.

Program Information Online

You can find the latest FNSA/FNESC program guidelines, proposal writing tips and reporting templates online:

Youth Employment Strategy, New Pathways for Education, and SchoolNet: visit the Programs page at <http://www.fnesc.ca>.

Special Education Program information, visit <http://www.fnsa.ca/specialed.htm>

Data Linking Pilot Project

Tracking the progress of students who move between on and off-reserve schools has traditionally been a difficult task because Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) and the BC Ministry of Education (MoE) maintain separate sets of student records.

With approval from the FNSA and FNESC Boards, FNSA/FNESC staff worked with INAC and MoE staff to develop a project to address this issue. The Data Linking Pilot Project business plan was approved at the FNSA 2004 Annual General Meeting.

Phase One of the project is now underway. It involves linking records for students who are on the INAC nominal roll database, including those attending First Nations and public schools, with the MoE student records. The initial study will track three cohorts of Grade 6 students.

All data collected through this pilot project is subject to strict access to information requirements. For instance, only the FNSA and FNESC will have access to individual school level data and no identifiable student level data will be available to any of the project steering committee. If, after reviewing the results of Phase One, it is determined that a second phase would be beneficial, the committee will consult with First Nations schools and communities about this possibility.

Teacher Salary Survey and Band School Funding Research

One of the recommendations of the Minister's National Working Group on Education, described in the 2003 report, *Our Children - Keepers of the Sacred Knowledge*, is to address the longstanding salary differences between teachers in First Nations schools and their counterparts in provincial schools.

The FNSA and FNESC have now gathered supporting evidence for this issue through a survey that was distributed to all BC First Nations schools.

The study found that despite the additional funding granted by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada in 2003/04, significant salary and benefits inequities still exist. For instance, of the First Nations school respondents that use salary grids, 70% pay salaries to teachers that are below that of the nearest school district. Twenty-five percent of First Nations schools do not offer their teachers pension plans, and 20% do not offer extended health plans.

An independent study by Bill Postl for FNESC/FNSA of Band school funding for the 2003/2004 school year found that Band schools are, overall, significantly under-funded compared to provincial schools.

On average, Band schools would need a funding increase of 22% (\$2293 per student) to match the funding of a comparably sized provincial school in the same (or nearest) school district. Small schools and secondary schools experience the largest funding shortfalls.

Securing adequate teacher salary funding and overall First Nations school funding is a high priority for the FNSA and the research of the past year will be important support for the FNSA's efforts in this area.

The FNSA would like to thank all of those who contributed to these studies.

Seventh Generation Club

The Seventh Generation Club has over 6000 young members and it continues to be popular with students and their teachers.

Two editions of the Club daytimer were distributed this year - a Junior Edition and a Senior Edition - both featuring fun trivia and student artwork. The Club continues to recognize regular and consistent school attendance and it holds a variety of writing and drawing contests throughout the school year. Visit the club online at www.seventhgenerationclub.com.

Parents Club

Last year, in addition to the regular Parents Club activities like the newsletter and incentive prizes, the Club sponsored local workshops, hosted a Parents Conference, and made it possible for several parents to attend the BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Council Conference.

There are now 122 local First Nations Parents Clubs across BC, and, thanks to funding from INAC's Parental and Community Engagement Strategy Program, FNEESC and the FNSA continue to support the Parents Clubs in 2004/2005.

FNSA Membership Fees Due

If you have not already paid them, please remember that 2004-2005 membership fees are now due. Contact the office for details.

Special Education Lending Library and Services

First Nations schools are welcome to apply for the special education services delivered by FNSA/FNEESC's two Speech Language Pathologists and Special Education Consultant, and to request a variety of professional development workshops.

An information brochure and service request form are available on the FNSA website www.fnsa.ca on the Special Education Programming page, along with further information about the Special Education Program.

We are also pleased to announce that the new Special Education Lending Library, established for FNSA member schools, has a searchable online catalogue at www.fnesec.org.

Other useful services include the Toll-Free Special Education Resource Line (1-877-547-1919), *Connections* newsletter, and special education listserv.

Events

10th Annual Provincial Conference on Aboriginal Education, Vancouver, Nov. 6-8, 2004

FNSA Conference and Annual General Meeting
April 22 and 23, 2005 (tbc)
Vancouver, BC

First Nations Schools Association Board of Directors

Greg Louie, President
Maaqtusiis School - Nuu-chah-nulth/Coast Salish Region

Ernie Hill, Vice-President
Hartley Bay Elem./Sec. School - Haida/Tsimshian/Haisla/Nisga'a Region

Mark Point, Secretary
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Len Merriman, Treasurer
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Regional Representatives

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Victor Jim Moricetown Elem. School - Gitksan/Wet'suwet'en Region

Richard Elliott, Tl'etinqox'tin School - Tsihllqot'in/Carrier/Sekani Region

Ruth Laurie, SEN*POK*CHIN School - Kootenay/Okanagan Region

Carol Michel, Stein Valley Nlaka'pamux School - Secwepemc/St'at'imc/Nlaka'pamux Region

Cathy Seymour, Kwadacha Dune Ty Centre, Kaska/Dene/Tahltan/Tagish/Inland Tlingit Region

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