
STRENGTHENING OUR VOICE: A GUIDE FOR ENGAGING FIRST NATIONS AND MÉTIS PEOPLES IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS



 SASKATCHEWAN
School Boards
ASSOCIATION

BY GABRIEL DUMONT INSTITUTE
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This report was commissioned by the Saskatchewan School Boards Association.

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A copy of this report is available on the Saskatchewan School Boards Association website at www.saskschoolboards.ca under “Board Development > Research”.

The Gabriel Dumont Institute would like to thank Karon Shmon and Sheila Pocha for their work researching and writing the report.



Thanks is extended to Shelley Brown and Shelley Daye for providing the artwork. The bear paw is symbolic of power and protection and the colours yellow, red, white and black represent the spiritual, emotional, mental and physical health of First Nations people. The Métis sash symbolizes the pride of the Métis people. The dream catcher is used to unite both First Nations and Métis peoples and to show that nations united are stronger than any one alone to support each other in power, health and friendship.

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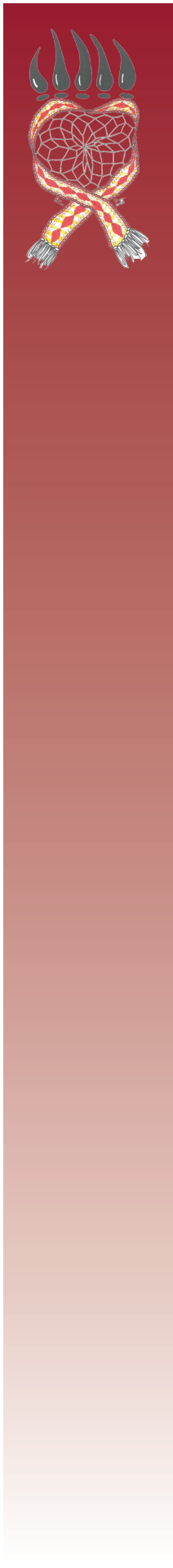
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INTRODUCTION

This resource serves as a guidebook for our K-12 school system to strengthen the engagement of First Nations and Métis peoples in support of their children's education, their school and their board of education.

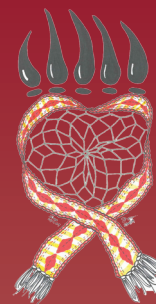
The Saskatchewan School Boards Association (SSBA) has commissioned this resource to strengthen the engagement of First Nations and Métis peoples in support of the SSBA's broad goal to speak as the voice of public education and to ensure that the wishes of the community are reflected in schools and are an integral part of decisions that shape the education of Saskatchewan's children. The Saskatchewan School Boards Association (SSBA) supports boards in this very important work.

With the understanding that there are no quick fixes and that even the most promising practices depend on the people and the situation in which they are operating, this guidebook cannot offer solutions. It can, however, offer guidance as we examine what research says, look at promising practices and ask ourselves a number of key questions that will support our efforts to engage First Nations and Métis peoples in support of their children's education, their school and their board of education.

SHARED DECISION MAKING

"Education truly reflects the diversity of the province's population when the First Nations and Métis community is meaningfully involved. The field of education has long recognized the need for involving parents and the community, but involvement has not routinely included shared decision making. Often decisions affecting First Nations and Métis children are made at the organizational level without the involvement of First Nations and Métis educators and parents. Shared decision making is intended to ensure that decisions affecting the lives of children are made in partnership with First Nations and Métis Elders, parents, the community and governments."

- Aboriginal Education Provincial
Advisory Committee Action Plan,
2000-2005



INSPIRING SUCCESS

Because we value relationships and authentic engagement we are committed to engaging children, youth, families, and communities in culturally responsive learning programs, and partnerships that lead to shared leadership, shared responsibility, and shared decision-making in the education system.

- Inspiring Success, 2009, p. 15



WHY IS THIS GUIDEBOOK NEEDED?

A SENSE OF URGENCY

Saskatchewan is poised at the brink of significant change. Provincial initiatives to improve student learning outcomes, such as the Curriculum Renewal, and the implementation of the Continuous Improvement Framework (CIF) present opportunities to redefine First Nations and Métis education as a foundation for learning for all students in Saskatchewan. It is necessary to ensure that these initiatives are part of a purposeful vision that keeps us focused on improved outcomes for all children and youth. We all have a role to play, and as citizens of Saskatchewan and beneficiaries of our unique Treaty relationship, we have a responsibility to contribute; this is what ties us together.

We are at a critical point in our province and the time for leadership to bring about meaningful, sustainable change is now. Much has happened in First Nations and Métis education over the past 20 years, yet despite our best efforts increased outcomes for First Nations and Métis learners, increased knowledge about First Nations and Métis peoples, cultures, histories and worldviews, and the actualization of an increased representative workforce have not been fully realized.

Assessment data on student outcomes reminds us that First Nations and Métis students are not benefiting from the educational experience to the same degree as their counterparts. The young and growing First Nations and Métis population is Saskatchewan's most valuable asset in meeting the impending challenges we face due to an aging workforce. Seeing the strength of the demographic shift presents a unique opportunity for all citizens of Saskatchewan. The new era of education allows us to engage as enlightened citizens, with a greater understanding of First Nations and Métis peoples, with increased ability to distinguish and dispel harmful racial stereotypes and myths about First Nations and Métis peoples, and who are willing to be part of a future built on shared goals and aspirations" (A Time for Significant Leadership, 2008, p. 2).

“... despite our best efforts increased outcomes for First Nations and Métis learners, increased knowledge about First Nations and Métis peoples, cultures, histories and worldviews, and the actualization of an increased representative workforce have not been fully realized.”

The last two decades of efforts to achieve an equitable outcome and benefit from schooling for First Nations and Métis students has resulted in narrowing the gap, but the change is occurring very slowly. Continuing at this rate will mean it will take decades before the goal is achieved and the critical windows of opportunity will be missed. The fact that the graduating class of 2020 is already in Grade 3 in our schools calls for immediate steps to be taken to ensure the current gap in achievement between Aboriginal learners and non-Aboriginal learners is not perpetuated.

The desire to eliminate this gap is expressed at the national, provincial and local levels. In 2008, the education ministers from across Canada gathered for the 94th meeting of the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC), and committed to addressing Aboriginal education, a key priority in their April 2008 ministerial declaration, “Learn Canada 2020”. The ministers agreed that there is an economic, social and ethical necessity to eliminate the gap. The commitment was summed up in a statement by Saskatchewan’s former Minister of Education, Ken Krawetz, who stated, “Across Canada, ministers work closely with First Nations, Métis and Inuit education partners to eliminate the achievement gap. We see Aboriginal achievement, especially achievement for children and youth, as critical to the future of Canada.”

SASK. TRENDS

“Because the Aboriginal population is younger, on average, than the non-Aboriginal population, one would expect the level of completed education to be higher. This is not the case. The gap between the non-Aboriginal population and the Aboriginal population is present at all age levels but is most pronounced among young adults –those 25 to 44 years.”

- Doug Elliot, Sask Trends Monitor,
Selected Characteristics of the
Saskatchewan Aboriginal Population,
Presentation to Strategies for Success
Conference, June 2, 2009



MOVING FORWARD

“Now is the time to move forward, within an ethical space, and with the common understanding of the urgency that requires our accelerated efforts to create an education system where management is shared by First Nations and Métis peoples; that includes systems of accountability; that provides all learners with knowledge of the unique contributions and worldviews of First Nations and Métis peoples; and offers outcomes that are equitable for all learners.”

- Inspiring Success, 2009, p. 6



STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

The “Summit on Aboriginal Education Strengthening Aboriginal Success Moving Toward Learn Canada 2020”, held in February 2009, another gathering of the CMEC, was the beginning of a national effort to work together with key partners to find solutions that contribute to the gap in academic achievement between First Nations, Métis and Inuit Canadians and non-Aboriginal Canadians.

Two Saskatchewan cabinet ministers, Ken Krawetz and Rob Norris, saw the summit as a unique opportunity to focus on common goals that unite us, such as strengthening student achievement, improving graduation rates and ensuring smooth career transitions.

The report emerging from the gathering recommended future collaboration and joint action as one means to improve and strengthen education to benefit Aboriginal learners.

The call for strengthening student achievement can also be seen in the last several editions of the *Saskatchewan Education Indicators Report*. The report is released annually to ensure public accountability and to guide planning for improvement in Saskatchewan’s education system. Both the 2009 and 2010 reports indicate that First Nations and Métis students are not experiencing the same level of achievement as non-Aboriginal students nor are they completing school at the same rate. In a statement announcing the release of the *2009 Saskatchewan Education Indicators Report*, the Minister of Education at the time, Ken Krawetz, summarized the purpose of the report:

“Our government is committed to improving student achievement within the provincial education system. The 2009 Saskatchewan Education Indicators Report provides an open and transparent medium in which accomplishments in Saskatchewan’s schools are recognized, and areas requiring planning and intervention to improve student outcomes are highlighted.”

He also highlighted some of the measures the Ministry of Education would lead to address the challenges outlined in the report:

“To address these challenges, our ministry has formed the Provincial Panel on Student Achievement. The Panel is currently hosting a series of focused conversations and based on those discussions will provide concrete, actionable recommendations regarding PreK-12 student achievement in early 2010. We have also implemented the CIF with school divisions and continue to work on curriculum renewal to improve student outcomes.”

SENSE OF URGENCY

“The people who make things move in this world share a same sense of urgency. No matter how intelligent or able you may be, if you don’t have a sense of urgency, now is the time to start developing it. The world is full of very competent people who honestly intend to do things tomorrow, or as soon as they can get around to it. Their accomplishments, however, seldom match those of the less talented who are blessed with a sense of importance of getting started now.”

- Anonymous

As a result, the Provincial Panel on Student Achievement released its report in February 2010, in which sixteen recommendations have been made to the Ministry of Education and the Government of Saskatchewan but which also call for a collaborative, and shared leadership, approach among the province's educational partners and key stakeholders.

The Panel notes that the recommendations are interconnected, interdependent and designed to be implemented as a whole. The recommendations are underpinned by what the Panel has called Saskatchewan's Culture of Learning, comprised of "six components that are foundational to a strengthened culture of learning and improved student achievement in Saskatchewan."

Student achievement continues to demand our focus, particularly in the areas that indicate our current strategies must improve. More recently, the Government of Saskatchewan has made "Investments in Education" its number one priority, emphatically stating this in *Government Direction for 2011-12: The Saskatchewan Advantage* which outlines the Saskatchewan Provincial Budget for the 2011-12 fiscal year. The document, building up the 2010 Throne Speech, says:

"Government is committed to improving educational outcomes for our First Nations and Métis students. The education of these students is a crucial precursor to their full participation in the labour market, and in Saskatchewan's future prosperity. Ministries are working collaboratively with First Nations and Métis leaders. The goal is simple and profound: create a strategy best suited to the needs of this important group of students. The initial focus will be on early learners" (Government of Saskatchewan, 2011, p. 17)

The need for stronger engagement with First Nations and Métis peoples was also noted.

PROVINCIAL PANEL ON STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

"The education and well-being of Saskatchewan's children and youth is a societal responsibility. The sustainability and long-term future of this province rests with the children and youth who are currently in school. Today's students are tomorrow's parents, community contributors and societal leaders. Every individual and organization has a responsibility to children and youth and an obligation to further the educational and social well-being of our young people. There are compelling moral, social and economic reasons why a strong culture of learning is essential – compelling reasons why immediate action is needed by every segment of Saskatchewan's society."

- Provincial Panel on Student
Achievement, 2010, p. 2





FOUNDATIONAL COMPONENTS OF A CULTURE OF LEARNING

The Provincial Panel on Student Achievement identified six components that are foundational to a strengthened culture of learning and improved student achievement in Saskatchewan. These foundational components were drawn from the research on student learning and effective schools and reflect the most current understanding of factors that influence student achievement.

These six foundational components are interdependent. All six are important; action on only one or two may result in some improvement in student achievement, however, action on all six will create synergies that have great potential to strengthen and enhance student achievement. Action on these foundational components will lead to long-term, meaningful change – to a stronger provincial culture of learning – and every present and future student in Saskatchewan will benefit.

The six foundational components of a provincial culture of learning and improved student achievement are:

- i. First Nations and Métis education** – First Nations and Métis children and youth continue to experience the effects of colonization and as a result have lower achievement scores and graduation rates than the student population as a whole.
- ii. Community engagement** – Student achievement is influenced by factors in the family and the community, as well as by factors in the student and the school. Thus, family and community engagement is essential for students to learn at high levels.
- iii. Early learning and child care** – Early learning and brain development set trajectories for learning, behaviour and health for life. Focusing on the nurturing that children receive during their first few years of life enhances their potential for success.
- iv. Sustainable learning organizations** – Education systems that operate as learning communities have distinctive teaching and learning conditions that are quite different from those of traditional systems.
- v. Effective practices** – Particular curriculum, instruction and assessment practices have been identified which enhance student achievement. These practices should be shared and supported by all within the system.
- vi. Equity for all students** – The principle of equity of outcomes as well as equity of opportunity is fundamental to public education in Saskatchewan. Thus, different students require different supports to achieve at high levels.



SHARED RESPONSIBILITY AND GOVERNANCE

Since 2006, schools and school boards in Saskatchewan have been working actively to establish School Community Councils (SCCs) in every school or school community in the province. SCCs are working with parents and community members to develop shared responsibility for the learning success and well-being of all children and youth; and, encourage and facilitate parent, community and youth engagement in school planning and improvement processes.

This empowers the community and provides an authentic voice for the students, parents and community. It enables them to determine how best to meet the unique needs of their school, it broadens the opportunity for innovation and specific strategies, and it provides a greater opportunity for relationship building and leadership development.

The Saskatchewan School Boards Association has been a lead organization for Aboriginal employee development in the province, in collaboration with other organizations and within itself. The philosophy to achieve a representative workforce, which would see Aboriginal employees working throughout all levels of the organization, underpins the SSBA's desire to see a similar structure of representative engagement, leadership and governance in K-12 education. The SSBA has further supported this goal by developing an innovative program, "Aboriginal Myths and Misconceptions Awareness Training", designed to increase awareness and understanding of First Nations and Métis peoples and their histories.

Shared responsibility and governance has been recognized as an essential component for engaging First Nations and Métis peoples. It frequently emerges as a priority for government. It is consistently at the forefront of the recommendations made to the Minister of Education by the First Nations and Métis Education Provincial Advisory Committee (FNMEPAC) such as the one made in a 2005 report made by the advisory committee when it was called the Aboriginal Education Provincial Advisory Committee (AEPAC).



SHARED DECISION MAKING

"AEPAC recommends that Saskatchewan Learning increase Aboriginal representation at all levels and that partnerships be developed and strengthened."

- The Learning Community in Aboriginal Education: Priorities Report 2005 - 2007, p. 16

"Thus, improving student learning will take a coordinated response by all who have a commitment to children and youth and a stake in our province's future."

- Provincial Panel on Student Achievement, 2010, p. 2



MODELS OF ENGAGEMENT

Outside of being the motto for the province, “from many people strength” exemplifies the vision for successful school, family and community partnerships. While many stakeholder groups have worked collaboratively to improve public education for decades, the vision to expand the partnerships to include parents and community members has been clearly expressed. The engagement of parents and the community in the planning and governance of public education is meant to be inclusive. The engagement of First Nations and Métis parents in this process is considered essential to the elimination of the gap in school success and achievement between First Nations and Métis students and non-Aboriginal students. It also supports and strengthens the SSBA goal to speak as the voice of public education and ensure that the wishes of the community are reflected in decisions that shape the education of Saskatchewan’s children.

A vast amount of research supports the concept that increased family involvement has a constructive impact on the domains of children’s general education and literacy outcomes. As this research reflects both non-Aboriginal learners in most cases and Aboriginal learners in some cases, we must examine it with a critical eye and look for promising and mutually supportive overlap while keeping the context of our own students and families in mind.

In general, the research can be summarized in the following by C.V. Harqual (2009), principle researcher at Authentic Organizations, who suggests the following seven principles are necessary for authentic engagement:

- i. Careful planning;
- ii. Inclusion and demographic diversity;
- iii. Collaboration and shared purpose;
- iv. Openness and learning;
- v. Transparency and trust;
- vi. Impact and action; and,
- vii. Sustained engagement and participatory culture.

MEANINGFUL ENGAGEMENT

Engaging First Nations and Métis peoples in educational planning and decision making will increase the learner’s potential to experience both Indigenous and Western methodologies within the educational setting.

- Inspiring Success, 2009, p. 11

We would be unlikely to hear much of an argument against these principles. They are sensible, sound and challenging to achieve. The challenge is to go beyond the talking and planning so what is envisioned becomes reality. This is often called “walking the talk” by First Nations and Métis peoples. A more common way of saying this is “actions speak louder than words.”

The overlap in the literature on parental engagement in their children’s education also suggests some seemingly simple strategies:

- i. Create a welcoming environment;
- ii. Strive for a shared goal of achieving student success and well-being;
- iii. Seek to continuously adapt and improve through reflection and assessment;
- iv. Create an authentic relationship with parents; and,
- v. Acknowledge assets and build from strength (build capacity).

Both the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) National Standards for Family-School Partnerships and the National Network of Partnership Schools have expressed common themes.

So it seems we are not lacking in research or in the capacity to compare and contrast what it is telling us about authentic engagement and parental engagement. A substantial number of schools and school divisions are already successfully implementing the proposed strategies but few examples from the research mirror the context and uniqueness of Saskatchewan schools. We have a rapidly changing student demographic and provincial population which is growing to include greater numbers of First Nations and Métis citizens. Our history as a province is both proud and shameful. We can be proud that Saskatchewan is a thriving home to many Canadians and an integral part of our national identity. Our shame stems from some of the efforts made to achieve this. In so doing, not all residents advanced. Some were marginalized and experienced losses, particularly the First Nations and Métis. The First Nations peoples lost much of their land base and were provided only small tracts of land which had limited resources. The Métis lost their entire land base. Both groups had their languages and cultural identities threatened. The negative impact of the residential and day school experience is still felt. Neither group had equitable access to the education, employment and livelihood opportunities from which others in the province have benefited. Our current path is destined for change and we have a remarkable opportunity to ensure everyone has the opportunity to participate and to benefit. Our call to action is not unlike that issued by Chief Sitting Bull who, over a century ago, issued this call, “Let us put our minds together and see what kind of life we can make for our children.”

One challenge we face in striving for authentic engagement is to ensure we keep the Saskatchewan context in focus as we follow the researchers’ suggestions.

Our shared history and current reality demands another level of awareness for engaging Métis and First Nations parents.





FIRST NATIONS AND MÉTIS PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT

“Studies reveal that parental involvement may be over-emphasized as a panacea without acknowledging factors which prevent Aboriginal families from meaningful participation in school-based activities” (Pocha, 2000, p. 35).

CREATE A WELCOMING ENVIRONMENT

We share a past which adversely affected First Nations and Métis peoples. The intergenerational impact of residential schooling, racism, lack of cultural validation and absence of role models in schools has made First Nations and Métis parents wary of what education has to offer.

“One of the most important factors would be teachers who really accepted and valued them as Aboriginal people so that they felt like they belonged in their classroom and school. This includes teachers who knew something of Aboriginal heritage and validated it as part of the school experience” (Pocha, 2000, p. 52).

STRIVE FOR A SHARED GOAL OF ACHIEVING STUDENT SUCCESS AND WELL-BEING

Schools have not been as successful in meeting the educational needs of First Nations and Métis students as well as they have for non-Aboriginal children. There are disproportionate numbers in modified, special education, gifted education and general courses which are not justified. Achievement and completion differences send a different message to parents who are asking, “Whose success and well-being?”

“She was always encouraging my kids and forever praising them. I think more praises are needed in the classroom.” The perspective of encouragement was widely evident in Pocha’s research which created a framework of the school believing in the child and his/her ability to do well in school. “I think as I got older, I enjoyed school a little bit more, but not really. I think it depends on the teacher. I had this one teacher, he really encouraged me. He believed that I could be somebody” (Pocha, 2000 p. 54) .

INTERACT WITHOUT JUDGING

Everyone involved has a bias. To examine it, know the history of how it was formed, and to suspend it is the challenge. This works both ways. However, it is the duty of school personnel to grow professionally in this area. Knowledge of other worldviews is essential to being inclusive.

“The feeling of patronization and discrimination was at the heart of their reluctance to become true partners in their children’s education by accepting the teacher’s invitations to visit and volunteer in the school. Their reluctance to participate, a factor noted in many research studies and deemed to be a causal factor in their children’s not achieving to their optimal level, evidently stems from the feeling of being patronized and considered inadequate when they do go to school to try to be involved” (Pocha, 2000, p. 73).

CREATE AN AUTHENTIC RELATIONSHIP WITH THE PARENT

Among First Nations and Métis peoples relationship is the cornerstone of any successful interaction. The positional power of the lines of authority for the school and school division are secondary to the power of relationship building between First Nations and Métis individuals and others.



“Existing research indicates that parental involvement is an important factor in student success. This may certainly be true for mainstream groups, but studies have not proven whether this is true for particular cultural entities. Consequently, parents in this study intuitively identified more positive teacher behaviours as conducive to producing an atmosphere in which their own children could flourish and achieve success. They called for teachers to offer challenge and freedom because they wanted their children to be stimulated and empowered. They called for warmth and respect because they perceived these behaviours as promoting positive feelings of self-worth in their children and of providing them with a sense of belonging” (Pocha, 2000, p. 69).

ACKNOWLEDGE ASSETS AND BUILD FROM STRENGTH

Until recently, traditional and Indigenous knowledge was not recognized as having any value or place in education. The same is true of much of the informal knowledge we possess as individuals. This coupled with the value placed on formal knowledge and formal qualifications has created the misconception that First Nations and Métis peoples have little to offer in a school learning environment. This is in spite of the fact that they have had limited access to obtaining formal education, training and qualifications, and possess other types of knowledge. We can acknowledge that assets are available from both the home and school and build from strength. What can each provide to help the child achieve success and well-being?

“Within an Indigenous perspective or paradigm there is a knowledge system that conceptualizes the word or the story told. Story becomes knowledge passed on to others so that learning is facilitated. Story is the way humans put information and experience in context to make it meaningful” (Pocha, 2000, p. 30).

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN TRADITIONAL AND MAINSTREAM KNOWLEDGE

“The oral tradition and stories is one key difference. I think that most people were always oral people, before there was the written tradition. Everybody has stories. For example, look at science – it is one big story made up of lots of different stories. When we look at traditional stories and legends, people sometimes think of them as just hogwash or folklore. But there are layers and layers and layers of meaning in those stories. Sometimes you don’t even get to those layers without listening very carefully. In mainstream communities there are fairy tales; there are also bible stories and theories. Many people believe in the bible. We learn and believe the Greek names for the constellations. Aboriginal peoples have names for the constellations as well. They are very ancient stories about the constellations. Why don’t we learn the Aboriginal names? We each have our own ways of learning and teaching; it is a different way of understanding and viewing the world, but it is not wrong.

- Interview with Bente Huntley, Saskatchewan Eco-Network,
Indigenous Educators – Rekindling Traditions,
<http://econet.sk.ca/eco-ed/bente-huntley.html>



SIX TYPES OF INVOLVEMENT

These contextual considerations illustrate that any strategy proposed by research and literature, or even by advocates from other jurisdictions who are experiencing success, must always take the local context into account. Each community is unique and will require a unique approach even where only minor tweaks are required.

With this in mind, we can proceed to look at several well-known strategies which have proven to be successful in a wide range of situations and communities. Appendices to this document provide more information about these models.

Dr. Joyce Epstein, the director of the National Network of Partnership Schools, and perhaps the best known author and researcher on strengthening school and family connections, has developed a framework advocating six types of involvement between parents and schools.

Epstein's Framework of Six Types of Involvement for comprehensive programs of partnerships:

- i. **PARENTING** – Help all families establish home environments to support children as students.
- ii. **COMMUNICATING** – Design effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communication about school programs and their children's progress.
- iii. **VOLUNTEERING** – Recruit and organize parent help and support.
- iv. **LEARNING AT HOME** – Provide information and ideas to families about how to help students at home with homework and other curriculum-related activities, decisions and planning.
- v. **DECISION MAKING** – Include parents in school decisions, developing parent leaders and representatives.
- vi. **COLLABORATING WITH COMMUNITY** – Identify and integrate resources and services from the community to strengthen school programs, family practices, and student learning and development.

- Source: Epstein, J. L. et al. (2009). *School, family and community partnerships: Your handbook for action, third edition*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

www.partnershipinschools.org

Epstein's work is widely known and is increasingly being put into practice by schools wishing to strengthen their connection with families.

WORKING TOGETHER

"Programs and practices, what we do in the schools, make the difference in whether, how and particularly which families become involved in their children's education. If we want everyone to be involved and not just some, then we have to put in place those practices that will welcome, encourage and guide families . . . to do those things that will be helpful to the children, to the school, for their families, for the community, for the future."

- Joyce Epstein

Her work is reinforced by the PTA of America which has created a set of National Standards for Family-School Partnerships.





REPORT: THE POSITIVE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FAMILY INVOLVEMENT AND STUDENT SUCCESS

In the 2002 research review *A New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family, and Community Connections on Student Achievement*, Anne T. Henderson and Karen L. Mapp conclude that there is a positive and convincing relationship between family involvement and student success, regardless of race/ethnicity, class, or parents' level of education. To put it another way, when families are involved in their children's learning both at home and at school, their children do better in school. The report also points to specific types of involvement as being especially beneficial to children's academic success.

FINDING ONE: Involvement programs that link to learning improve student achievement.

It's simple: The more parent and community involvement activities focus on improving student learning, the more student learning improves. Learning-focused involvement activities may include:

- Family nights on math or literacy;
- Family-teacher conferences that involve students; or,
- Family workshops on planning for college.

FINDING TWO: Speaking up for children protects and promotes their success.

Children whose parents are advocates for them at school are more confident at school and take on and achieve more. The more families advocate for their children and support their children's progress, the longer their children stay in school and the better their children do.

Families should become knowledgeable about the operations of schools and the laws that govern those operations:

- Be confident about their ability to work with schools;
- Expect only the best from their children and for their children; and/or,
- Join PTA.

FINDING THREE: All families can contribute to their children's success.

Family involvement improves student success, regardless of race/ethnicity, class, or parents' level of education. For involvement to happen, however, principals, teachers and parents themselves must believe that all parents can contribute to their children's success in school. Parents can promote their children's academic success by:

- Teaching their children the importance of education;
- Finding out what their children are expected to know and to be able to do and reinforcing lessons at home; and/or,
- Sending their children to school ready to learn every day.

Principals and teachers must support parent involvement by:

- Making parent involvement a priority;
- Recognizing and removing barriers to parent involvement;
- Sharing decision-making power with parents and community members; and,
- Working to understand class and cultural differences.

FINDING FOUR: Community organizing gets results.

Engaging community members, businesses and organizations as partners in children's education can improve the learning community in many ways. For example, community partners may be able to:

- Provide expanded learning opportunities;
- Build broad-based support for increased school funding; or,
- Provide quality after-school programs.

- Reprinted with permission from the National Parent Teacher Association (PTA), Virginia, USA.

The findings presented by Henderson and Mapp provide a framework for strengthening parent/family involvement programs. The PTA, working with leading experts on parent involvement and school-community partnerships, has updated its National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement Programs to reflect recent research and improve parent and community involvement practices. The updated National Standards shift the focus from what schools should do to involve parents to what parents, schools and communities can do together to support student success. To reflect this change, the standards have been renamed the National Standards for Family-School Partnerships discussed further, with links to additional resources, in the appendices to this guide.





CIRCLE OF COURAGE

Another body of work, the *Circle of Courage*, is directing the work of many who work with children and families. It is a philosophy integrating worldviews on youth development from Western educational thought, research on youth development and traditional indigenous philosophy. The circle is meant to be viewed, and applied, holistically so that each of the four values remains in our consciousness, and are simultaneously being nurtured, regardless of which value has the focus at any one time.



Circle of Courage, a Program of Starr Institute for Training

- Used with permission from "Reclaiming Youth Internationally". Artist: George Blue Bird

The *Circle of Courage* addresses the four essential needs for nurturing all children in a climate of respect and dignity (Brendtro, Brokenleg and Van Bockern, 2002):

- i. **SPIRIT OF BELONGING:** The universal longing for human bonds is nurtured by relationships of trust so that the child can say, "I am loved."
- ii. **SPIRIT OF MASTERY:** The child's inborn thirst for learning is nurtured; learning to cope with the world, the child can say, "I can succeed."
- iii. **SPIRIT OF INDEPENDENCE:** The child's free will is nurtured by increased responsibility so that the child can say, "I have power to make decisions."
- iv. **SPIRIT OF GENEROSITY:** The child's character is nurtured by concern for others so that the child can say, "I have a purpose for my life."

THE CIRCLE OF COURAGE PHILOSOPHY

"The Circle of Courage is a model of youth empowerment supported by contemporary research, the heritage of early youth work pioneers and Native philosophies of child care. The model is encompassed in four core values: belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity. The central theme of this model is that a set of shared values must exist in any community to create environments that ultimately benefit all."

- Source: *Reclaiming Youth at Risk* by Larry Brendtro, Martin Brokenleg, and Steve Van Bockern.
For further information:
www.circleofcourage.org

PROMISING PRACTICES

Saskatchewan has also developed models and initiatives aimed at achieving similar goals. This and other locally-developed models have taken a great deal of thought and effort to develop. They express our desire for a more inclusive and equitable experience for all learners:

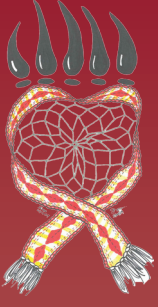


“A Time for Significant Leadership provides a strategy to build local capacity through relationship and understanding, excellence and equity, and accountability to First Nations and Métis learners and to all learners across Saskatchewan. In an effort to be both comprehensive and clearly aligned to the major initiatives of the Ministry of Education consideration has been made toward the ways provincial initiatives, policy, and the recommendations of the Aboriginal Education Provincial Advisory Committee (AEPAC) intersect and complement one another. This is a process of significant transformational change. The most significant change is in shifting understanding to include a much broader perspective about “ways of knowing being, and doing.” Now is the time for significant leadership to restore and validate the knowledge, wisdom and worldviews of First Nations and Métis peoples for the benefit of all. This is not an exercise in culpability, guilt or shame, but rather an exercise in personal and professional reflection and growth. Elders advise: You start where you are able and move as you should. The end result will be a fundamental shift in the way we look at education and the ways we respond to, and meet the needs of, all learners in our province” (A Time for Significant Leadership, 2008, p.2).

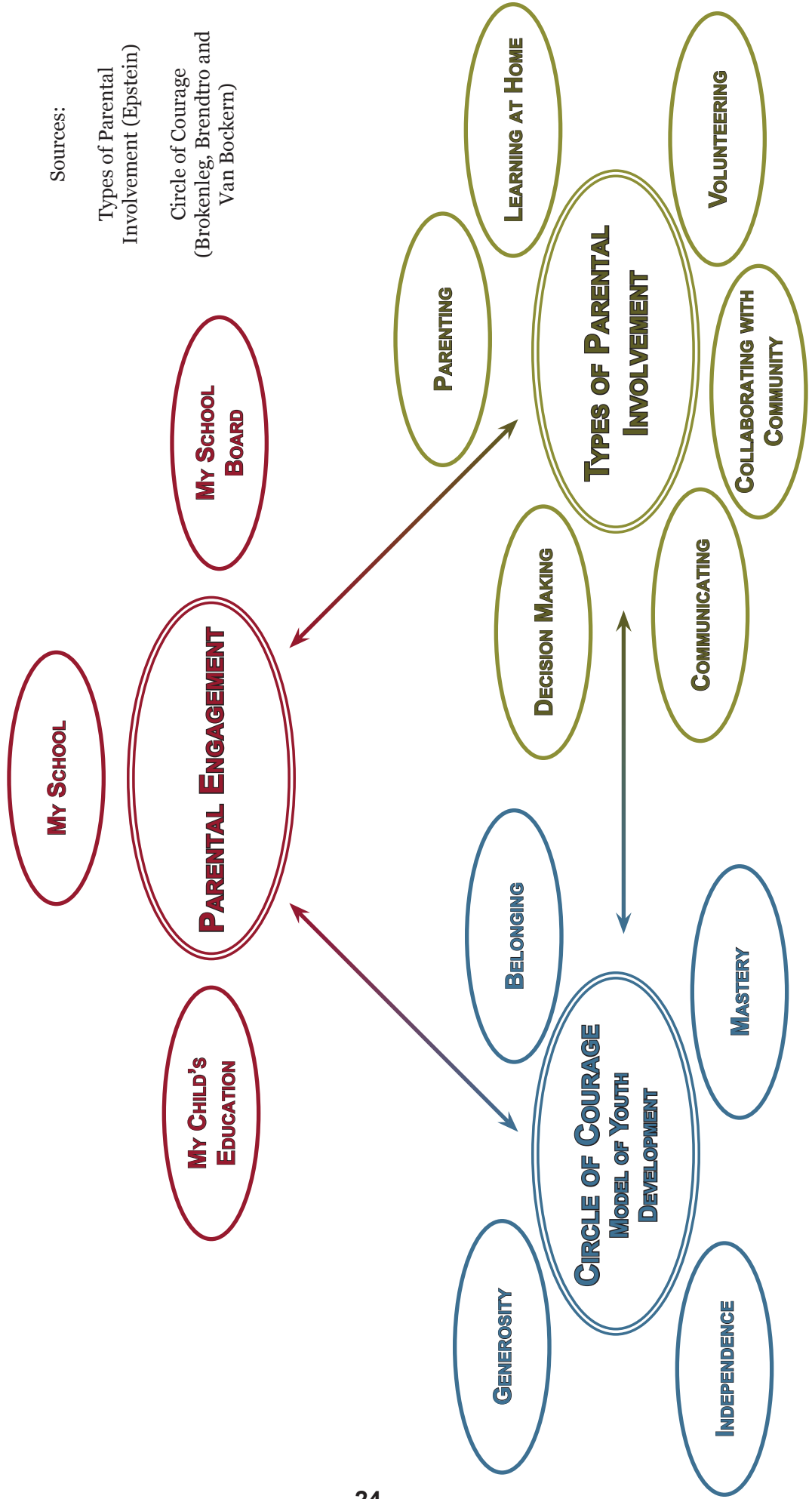
A Time for Significant Leadership, Epstein’s Framework of Six Types of Involvement, the National Standards for Family-School Partnerships and The Circle of Courage, each envisions how strong school and family partnerships will take shape and what they will achieve. Then questions about how to get from where you are to where you want to be are asked so a work plan can be made to strive for the goal. While each model has unique aspects, they also have a number of similarities. Perhaps we can look at these models as assets that build our capacity to reach the desired outcomes.

The following model will encourage us to look holistically at ways to engage First Nations and Métis parents at various levels and employing proven strategies by Brokenleg, Epstein and others.

“This is not an exercise in culpability, guilt or shame, but rather an exercise in personal and professional reflection and growth. Elders advise: You start where you are able and move as you should.”



FIRST NATIONS AND MÉTIS PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT



Sources:

Types of Parental
Involvement (Epstein)

Circle of Courage
(Brokenleg, Brendtro and
Van Bockern)

MOVING FORWARD

The opening paragraphs of this guide emphasize that there is no definitive recipe for success. Research has helped create models which have mostly been successful in most situations. Yet elders and philosophers will both tell us “the answers lie within us.” If that is so, your journey to find the answers can be one guided by the models presented. You will, however, be required to take stock of the lay of the land and customize your efforts so you enjoy the trip and reach your destination.

You are encouraged to look at planning models provided in *Inspiring Success* and other documents cited in this guide. The model from *Inspiring Success* was adapted to focus on the types of parental involvement recommended by Epstein, the PTA and the *Circle of Courage* to guide discussions with various stakeholders consulted for *Strengthening Our Voice*. Participants affirmed that the answers lie within us. They also affirmed that the most important ways to engage First Nations and Métis parents in their children’s education is to build authentic relationships and use authentic communication. These two areas consistently emerged in all of the discussions. A walk around the *Circle of Courage* shows how these two cornerstones nurture and support belonging, success, shared decision making and reciprocity.

UNITY

“This work is like dropping a stone in the water. We are creating ripples and eventually all people will find themselves in the circle.”

- Albert Scott,
Nakawe Traditional Knowledge Keeper,
Kinistin First Nation



FINDING THE WAY

“It would be so much easier just to fold our hands and not make this fight. ... To say, I, one man, can do nothing. I grow afraid only when I see people thinking and acting like this. We all know the story about the man who sat beside the trail too long, and then it grew over and he could never find his way again. We can never forget what has happened, but we cannot go back nor can we just sit beside the trail.”

- Chief Poundmaker, 1842-1886



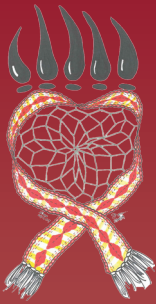
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APPENDIX 1:

EPSTEIN'S FRAMEWORK OF SIX TYPES OF INVOLVEMENT

This resource is reprinted with the permission of the authors.
You are encouraged to explore this information to help your
efforts in strengthening meaningful engagement.

Epstein's Framework of Six Types of Involvement
(Including: Sample Practices, Challenges, Redefinitions, and Expected Results)

TYPE 1 PARENTING Help all families establish home environments to support children as students.
Sample Practices
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suggestions for home conditions that support learning at each grade level. • Workshops, videotapes, computerized phone messages on parenting and child rearing at each age and grade level. • Parent education and other courses or training for parents (e.g., GED, college credit, family literacy.) • Family support programs to assist families with health, nutrition, and other services. • Home visits at transition points to pre-school, elementary, middle, and high school. Neighborhood meetings to help families understand schools and to help schools understand families.
Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide information to <i>all</i> families who want it or who need it, not just to the few who can attend workshops or meetings at the school building. • Enable families to share information with schools about culture, background, children's talents and needs. • Make sure that all information for and from families is clear, usable, and linked to children's success in school.
Redefinitions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>"Workshop" to mean more than a meeting about a topic held at the school building at a particular time. "Workshop" may also mean making information about a topic available in a variety of forms that can be viewed, heard, or read any where, any time, in varied forms.</i>
Results for Students
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness of family supervision; respect for parents. • Positive personal qualities, habits, beliefs, and values, as taught by family. • Balance between time spent on chores, on other activities, and on homework. • Good or improved attendance. • Awareness of importance of school.
Results for Parents
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding of and confidence about parenting, child and adolescent development, and changes in home conditions for learning as children proceed through school. • Awareness of own and others' challenges in parents. • Feeling of support from school and other parents.
Results for Teachers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding families' background, cultures, concerns, goals, needs, and views of their children. • Respect for families' strengths and efforts. • Understanding of student diversity. • Awareness of own skills to share information on child development.

Epstein's Framework of Six Types of Involvement
(Including: Sample Practices, Challenges, Redefinitions, and Expected Results)

TYPE 2 COMMUNICATING
Design effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communications about school programs and children's progress.
<p style="text-align: center;">Sample Practices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conferences with every parent at least once a year, with follow-ups as needed. • Language translators to assist families as needed. • Weekly or monthly folders of student work sent home for review and comments. • Parent/student pickup of report card, with conferences on improving grades. • Regular schedule of useful notices, memos, phone calls, newsletters, and other communications. • Clear information on choosing schools or courses, programs, and activities within schools. • Clear information on all school policies, programs, reforms, and transitions.
<p style="text-align: center;">Challenges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the readability, clarity, form, and frequency of all memos, notices, and other print and nonprint communications. • Consider parents who do not speak English well, do not read well, or need large type. • Review the quality of major communications (newsletters, report cards, conference schedules, and so on). • Establish clear two-way channels for communications from home to school and from school to home.
<p style="text-align: center;">Redefinitions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>"Communications about school programs and student progress" to mean two-way, three-way, and many-way channels of communication that connect schools, families, students, and the community.</i>
<p style="text-align: center;">Results for Students</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness of own progress and of actions needed to maintain or improve grades. • Understanding of school policies on behavior, attendance, and other areas of student conduct. • Informed decisions about courses and programs. • Awareness of own role in partnerships, serving as courier and communicator.
<p style="text-align: center;">Results for Parents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding school programs and policies. • Monitoring and awareness of child's progress. • Responding effectively to students' problems. • Interactions with teachers and ease of communication with school and teachers.
<p style="text-align: center;">Results for Teachers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased diversity and use of communications with families and awareness of own ability to communicate clearly • Appreciation for and use of parent network for communications. • Increased ability to elicit and understand family views on children's programs and progress.

Epstein's Framework of Six Types of Involvement
(Including: Sample Practices, Challenges, Redefinitions, and Expected Results)

TYPE 3 VOLUNTEERING Recruit and organize parent help and support.
<p style="text-align: center;">Sample Practices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School and classroom volunteer program to help teachers, administrators, students, and other parents. • Parent room or family center for volunteer work, meetings, resources for families. • Annual postcard survey to identify all available talents, times, and locations of volunteers. • Class parent, telephone tree, or other structures to provide all families with needed information. • Parent patrols or other activities to aid safety and operation of school programs.
<p style="text-align: center;">Challenges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruit volunteers widely so that <i>all</i> families know that their time and talents are welcome. • Make flexible schedules for volunteers, assemblies, and events to enable parents who work to participate. • Organize volunteer work; provide training; match time and talent with school, teacher, and student needs; and recognize efforts so that participants are productive.
<p style="text-align: center;">Redefinitions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>"Volunteer" to mean anyone who supports school goals and children's learning or development in any way, at any place, and at any time -- not just during the school day and at the school building.</i>
<p style="text-align: center;">Results for Students</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skill in communicating with adults. • Increased learning of skills that receive tutoring or targeted attention from volunteers. • Awareness of many skills, talents, occupations, and contributions of parent and other volunteers.
<p style="text-align: center;">Results for Parents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding teacher's job, increased comfort in school, and carry-over of school activities at home. • Self-confidence about ability to work in school and with children or to take steps to improve own education. • Awareness that families are welcome and valued at school. • Gains in specific skills of volunteer work.
<p style="text-align: center;">Results for Teachers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Readiness to involve families in new ways, including those who do not volunteer at school. • Awareness of parents' talents and interests in school and children. • Greater individual attention to students, with help from volunteers.

Epstein's Framework of Six Types of Involvement
(Including: Sample Practices, Challenges, Redefinitions, and Expected Results)

TYPE 4 LEARNING AT HOME Provide information and ideas to families about how to help students at home with homework and other curriculum-related activities, decisions, and planning.
Sample Practices
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information for families on skills required for students in all subjects at each grade. • Information on homework policies and how to monitor and discuss schoolwork at home. • Information on how to assist students to improve skills on various class and school assessments. • Regular schedule of homework that requires students to discuss and interact with families on what they are learning in class. • Calendars with activities for parents and students at home. • Family math, science, and reading activities at school. • Summer learning packets or activities. • Family participation in setting student goals each year and in planning for college or work.
Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design and organize a regular schedule of interactive homework (e.g., weekly or bimonthly) that gives <i>students</i> responsibility for discussing important things they are learning and helps families stay aware of the content of their children's classwork. • Coordinate family linked homework activities, if students have several teachers. • Involve families and their children in all-important curriculum-related decisions.
Redefinitions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>"Homework" to mean not only work done alone, but also interactive activities shared with others at home or in the community, linking schoolwork to real life.</i> • <i>"Help" at home to mean encouraging, listening, reacting, praising, guiding, monitoring, and discussing -- not "teaching" school subjects.</i>
Results for Students
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gains in skills, abilities, and test scores linked to homework and classwork. • Homework completion. • Positive attitude toward schoolwork. • View of parents as more similar to teacher and of home as more similar to school. • Self-concept of ability as learner.
Results for Parents
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know how to support, encourage, and help student at home each year. • Discussions of school, classwork, and homework. • Understanding of instructional program each year and of what child is learning in each subject. • Appreciation of teaching skills. • Awareness of child as a learner.
Results for Teachers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better design of homework assignments. • Respect for family time. • Recognition of equal helpfulness of single-parent, dual-income, and less formally educated families in motivating and reinforcing student learning. • Satisfaction with family involvement and support.

Epstein's Framework of Six Types of Involvement
(Including: Sample Practices, Challenges, Redefinitions, and Expected Results)

TYPE 5 DECISION MAKING Include parents in school decisions, developing parent leaders and representatives.
Sample Practices
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active PTA/PTO or other parent organizations, advisory councils, or committees (e.g., curriculum, safety, personnel) for parent leadership and participation. • Independent advocacy groups to lobby and work for school reform and improvements. • District-level councils and committees for family and community involvement. • Information on school or local elections for school representatives. • Networks to link all families with parent representatives.
Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include parent leaders from all racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, and other groups in the school. • Offer training to enable leaders to serve as representatives of other families, with input from and return of information to all parents. • Include students (along with parents) in decision-making groups.
Redefinitions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>"Decision making" to mean a process of partnership, of shared views and actions toward shared goals, not just a power struggle between conflicting ideas.</i> • <i>Parent "leader" to mean a real representative, with opportunities and support to hear from and communicate with other families.</i>
Results for Students
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness of representation of families in school decisions. • Understanding that student rights are protected. • Specific benefits linked to policies enacted by parent organizations and experienced by students.
Results for Parents
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Input into policies that affect child's education. • Feeling of ownership of school. • Awareness of parents' voices in school decisions. • Shared experiences and connections with other families. • Awareness of school, district, and state policies.
Results for Teachers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness of parent perspectives as a factor in policy development and decisions. • View of equal status of family representatives on committees and in leadership roles.

Epstein's Framework of Six Types of Involvement
(Including: Sample Practices, Challenges, Redefinitions, and Expected Results)

TYPE 6 COLLABORATING WITH COMMUNITY Identify and integrate resources and services from the community to strengthen school programs, family practices, and student learning and development.
Sample Practices
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information for students and families on community health, cultural, recreational, social support, and other programs or services • Information on community activities that link to learning skills and talents, including summer programs for students. • Service integration through partnerships involving school; civic, counseling, cultural, health, recreation, and other agencies and organizations; and businesses. • Service to the community by students, families, and schools (e.g., recycling, art, music, drama, and other activities for seniors or others). • Participation of alumni in school programs for students.
Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solve turf problems of responsibilities, funds, staff, and locations for collaborative activities. • Inform families of community programs for students, such as mentoring, tutoring, business partnerships. • Assure equity of opportunities for students and families to participate in community programs or to obtain services. • Match community contributions with school goals, integrate child and family services with education.
Redefinitions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>"Community" to mean not only the neighborhoods where students' homes and schools are located but also any neighborhoods that influence their learning and development.</i> • <i>"Community" rated not only by low or high social or economic qualities, but by strengths and talents to support students, families, and schools.</i> • <i>"Community" means all who are interested in and affected by the quality of education, not just those with children in the schools.</i>
Results for Students
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased skills and talents through enriched curricular and extracurricular experiences. • Awareness of careers and of options for future education and work. • Specific benefits linked to programs, services, resources, and opportunities that connect students with community.
Results for Parents
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge and use of local resources by family and child to increase skills and talents or to obtain needed services • Interactions with other families in community activities. • Awareness of school's role in the community and of community's contributions to the school.
Results for Teachers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness of community resources to enrich curriculum and instruction. • Openness to and skill in using mentors, business partners, community volunteers, and others to assist students and augment teaching practices. • Knowledgeable, helpful referrals of children and families to needed services.



APPENDIX 2:

PTA NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR FAMILY-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS

This resource is reprinted with the permission of the authors.
You are encouraged to explore this information to help your
efforts in strengthening meaningful engagement.

PTA National Standards for Family-School Partnerships

Standard 1—Welcoming All Families into the School Community

Families are active participants in the life of the school, and feel welcomed, valued, and connected to each other, to school staff, and to what students are learning and doing in class.

Standard 2—Communicating Effectively

Families and school staff engage in regular, two-way, meaningful communication about student learning.

Standard 3—Supporting Student Success

Families and school staff continuously collaborate to support students' learning and healthy development both at home and at school, and have regular opportunities to strengthen their knowledge and skills to do so effectively.

Standard 4—Speaking Up for Every Child

Families are empowered to be advocates for their own and other children, to ensure that students are treated fairly and have access to learning opportunities that will support their success.

Standard 5—Sharing Power

Families and school staff are equal partners in decisions that affect children and families and together inform, influence, and create policies, practices, and programs.

Standard 6—Collaborating with Community

Families and school staff collaborate with community members to connect students, families, and staff to expanded learning opportunities, community services, and civic participation.

Reprinted with permission from the National Parent Teacher Association (PTA), Virginia, USA.

A comprehensive and practical guide to family involvement, *The National Standards Implementation Guide* can be found at:

http://www.pta.org/Documents/National_Standards_Implementation_Guide_2009.pdf.

Family-School Partnerships

Research shows that family involvement promotes student success. Students with involved parents are more likely to

- Earn higher grades and pass their classes,
- Attend school regularly and have better social skills,
- Go on to postsecondary education.

When families, schools, and communities work together,

- Student achievement improves,
- Teacher morale rises,
- Communication increases,
- Family, school, and community connections multiply.

Building Family-School Partnerships the PTA Way

PTA's process for building successful partnerships starts with the National Standards for Family-School Partnerships and consists of three steps:

1. Raising awareness about the power of family and community involvement.
2. Taking action to cultivate involvement through specific programs and practices.
3. Celebrating success as your school sees increased involvement and its impact.

Reprinted with permission from the National Parent Teacher Association (PTA), Virginia, USA.

The Power of Partnerships: A Guide to PTA's Building Successful Partnerships Process, can be found at: http://www.pta.org/Documents/BSP_Booklet.pdf.



APPENDIX 3:

THE CIRCLE OF COURAGE

This resource is reprinted with the permission of the authors.
You are encouraged to explore this information to help your
efforts in strengthening meaningful engagement.

CIRCLE OF COURAGE IMPLEMENTATION

Main components and common settings for Circle of Courage implementation are described below. This brief description highlights some significant elements of Circle of Courage philosophy and methodologies.

Circle of Courage

The Circle of Courage is a model of positive youth development which integrates traditional indigenous practices, the heritage of early pioneers in education and youth work, and contemporary resilience research. The Circle of Courage is based in four universal growth needs of all children: belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity. These needs are represented in the medicine wheel, an ancient symbol used by indigenous people of North America, which reminds us of our interconnectedness with all of creation.

Belonging: Significance is nurtured in communities of belonging. The Lakota expression, *mitakuye oyasin*, is translated generally as “we are all related.” Treating others as kin forges powerful social bonds.

Mastery: Competence in traditional cultures is ensured by guaranteed opportunities for developing skills. Children are taught to observe carefully and listen to those with more experience. A person with greater ability in a given dimension is seen as a model for learning, not as a rival. Brain science demonstrates that humans have an innate drive to become competent and solve problems. Success in surmounting challenges strengthens desire to achieve.

Independence: Native teaching is designed to build respect and develop inner discipline. From earliest childhood children are encouraged to make decisions, solve problems, and demonstrate personal responsibility. Adults model, nurture, demonstrate values, and give feedback, and children are provided with abundant opportunities to make choices without coercion.

Generosity: Virtue is reflected in the pre-eminent value of generosity. Tribal leaders and elders are expected to give of their time, wisdom, and material matters whenever needed, thus demonstrating the supremely respected value of generosity. In following such examples, youth prove their own worthiness by making a positive contribution to another.

Circle of Courage Schools

Shared mission: To meet Circle of Courage standards, schools must be places that meet the needs of young people in ways described below. This is a sampling not an exhaustive list.

Relationship building: Schools must recast problems as learning opportunities, provide fail-safe relationships, decode the meaning of behavior, model respect even to the disrespectful, enlist youth as colleagues, provide seeds to grow, and connect youth to cultural and spiritual roots.

Staff instructional competence: Research suggests a number of instructional techniques that can help motivate and encourage learning, such as: reinforce efforts and provide appropriate recognition, provide good practice opportunities, use cooperative learning, and set objectives and provide feedback.

Staff emotional competence requires that staff be supported in efforts to become emotionally intelligent through self awareness, recognizing feeling as it happens, managing one’s own emotions, recognizing emotions in others and feeling empathy, motivating self, and handling difficult relationships.

Shared power: Students must feel a real sense of choice and responsibility. The focus of shared power includes: assuring real student involvement, searching for win/win solutions to problems, listening in non-

judgmental ways, building a sense of community, and promoting democratic values and moral development.

The format for developing shared power includes positive acknowledgments, compliments, appreciations; an identified agenda which is open, sharing feelings, consequences of behavior, and thoughts without fixing blame.

If problem-solving is required, assure a clear statement of problem, brainstorm solutions non-judgmentally, discuss pros/cons of possible solutions, and end with an understanding of what happened or is going to happen/change.

Kindness: At the heart of good education is caring and respect. The by-word is discipline and not punishment.

Discipline is proactive, recognizes and supports natural consequences, and teaches responsibility and behavioral management through inner self control.

Punishment is reactive, arbitrary, consequences imposed by adults “in charge”, obedience demanded, and control by external rule and threat.

Kindness is in place when people share, listen non-judgmentally, and balance compassion with accountability and restitution.

Response Ability Pathways (RAP)

RAP is the training for implementation of the Circle of Courage. RAP methods are grounded in research evidence on resilience, brain science, and positive youth development.

RAP taps into and develops the innate strength and resilience of young persons. Focus is on three basic capacities: connect, clarify, and restore, which are the normal “abilities” of the human brain. We are “hardwired” to connect to others for support, to clarify challenging problems, and to restore harmony and respect. Utilizing RAP methods and strategies, adults can disengage from adversarial encounters, connect with adult-wary youngsters, and restore bonds of respect.

Universal design principles of RAP are relevant to all settings. These include: stimulating, jargon-free content, attunement to diverse backgrounds, and practicality and easy implementation.

A powerful alternative to either punitive or permissive approaches, RAP counters current approaches that lock adults in conflict with young people. Instead of reactive, coercive interactions, youth are enlisted as responsible participants in positive change. RAP deals with problems by focusing on strengths and solutions. Brief “teaching moments” instill positive behaviors and values. RAP sets high expectations for youth to take responsibility and show respect for self and others.

Trainings, books, and seminars will be invaluable resources to enlarge upon the foregoing condensed description for learning to apply the Circle of Courage.

The reader is referred to these sites for further information:

www.circleofcourageinstitute.org and www.reclaiming.com



APPENDIX 4:

EXAMPLES RESPONSES

This resource is reprinted with the permission of the authors.
You are encouraged to explore this information to help your
efforts in strengthening meaningful engagement.

GOAL - Parenting

What do we want? Parents actively engaged in their children's education.

What will it look like?

Parents are partners with the school and share the goal of success at school for all children.

Indicators

What do we need to get there?

Learning that takes place at home.

An inviting school where parents drop in to volunteer and provide help and expertise.

Parental support and involvement at school.

An active, inclusive school community council

"BEING SMART IS COOL"

What strategies can we use?

Parents and Community

- parent communication
- role of the parent - inform what is their role.
- encourage students to study at home.
- Literacy issues need to be addressed: Literate or Illiterate
- face to face communication needed.
- home visits
- formal communications opportunity to speak to them in their first language.
- Children motivate their parents to go out to the school - this

engages the children - gives them pride + belonging
- Community ed team to work together

Schools and Community

- invite to see success
- volunteer for field trips
- positive reinforcement call good not only bad.
- sensitive & aware of family dynamics.
- early intervention and engagement.
- offer to come to all classrooms and not only your child's.
- "let me hear from the school" - stay away from "Don't let me hear from school"
- parental input into school procedures.

School Boards and Community

- Board member Ed governance
- Ed Act and links to our community.
- general / Ed. component
- Job shadowing opportunities.
- open seats available as school boards to have a voice.
- opportunities for communities to communicate their voice/opinion.
- parent input into school board policies + procedures.
- All school divisions should have local First Nation and metis history in the schools.
- "Love of Learning"
- have conversations about your child's abilities.
- child needs to be happy to learn.
- All children learn different
- photos of past graduates - need pride

* challenges for a community
- policy is consistent
- profile of a family is different.
- transportation

Communication

Public Relations focus on the Value of an Education. (Early investment → Communication Strategy.

GOAL - Communicating

What do we want? The open, honest and frequent exchange of information and mutual support.

Needs to consider engagement and interest.

What will it look like?

Regular exchange of information and an open invitation communicate at any time.

Authentic voices are spoken, heard and valued.

Positive Role Models

* More focus on positive communications.

Indicators

What do we need to get there?

Welcoming visuals in the school. Friendly, readable newsletters. Informal and positive communication in balance with that of a more serious nature.

Relationship building.

Buy-in from parents and communities.

What strategies can we use?

Parents and Community	Schools and Community	School Boards and Community
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Home visits - Build relationships - web pages - Radio show or web link - emails - facebook - twitter - texting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Newsletters - web pages - open meetings - phone calls - emails 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - meetings in the communities - consulting-communication experts - memos - Letters - Board minutes or web sites - Emails

- * Open to all available technology.
- * Make it READABLE for parents.
- * Engagement and meaningful involvement.
- * Relationships should be a priority.

what is volunteering?
 Attending a science fair with their child - show appreciation for their time and attending.

<p>GOAL - Volunteering</p> <p>What do we want? Parents and community members have the desire to contribute to the well-being of their community and see the school as the community's hub.</p>		
<p>What will it look like?</p> <p>A learning community is built where everyone has something to offer and something to learn.</p> <p>Strengths and capacities that would otherwise be unknown emerge and are shared.</p>		
<p>Indicators</p> <p>What do we need to get there? collaborative picture at every level - parents a part of the decision making process.</p> <p>A method to communicate that knowledge beyond the classroom walls is valued.</p> <p>A method to invite parents and community members to identify and share their skills and knowledge.</p> <p>A method to show appreciation for their gifts.</p>		
<p>What strategies can we use?</p>		
Parents and Community	Schools and Community	School Boards and Community
<p>Communicate →</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> shoulder tap phone call home visit <p>Ask:</p> <p>Tell me what I need to know about your child</p> <p>Inventory parents' gifts and connect with lessons - rather than vice versa.</p> <p>Ask the parents that are involved</p>	<p>Engage and excite students and their parents to get involved.</p> <p>create situations where the purpose is to develop relationships and then when they think about getting involved it won't be as intimidating or threatening.</p>	<p>Start at SCC level..</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> shoulder tap "bring a friend" <p>connect with FN Bands and Metis locals - extend the invitation to them.</p> <p>Get a contact so you can send them the minutes, agendas, etc.</p> <p>Value the various levels of volunteerism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2 hrs twice per year - 2 hrs once per month - 2 hrs once per week

to "Bring a friend"

Employ people that will help "bridge" between Board & community & school.

GOAL - Learning at home.

What do we want? Parents, students, staff and community members believe learning is a valuable lifelong process that will enhance their lives and community.

What will it look like? *Holistic Model - involving family & extended family.*

All knowledge is valued.

Recognizing the knowledge keepers are within the community at large.

A variety of knowledge keepers are recognized and include intergenerational sources, both formal and informal and are without prejudice.

Indicators

What do we need to get there?

Adequate resources in place to support diversified sources of knowledge.

A mechanism to express the value of a variety of types and sources of knowledge.

A mechanism to exchange and implement knowledge.

A mechanism to check to see if actual engagement with home is happening.

What strategies can we use?

Parents and Community

Schools and Community

School Boards and Community

Parents are interviewed by their children about the skills and knowledge they may be willing to share. Time is built in for knowledge exchange in the home.

School libraries are open some evenings and include knowledge exchange opportunities, particularly those originating from the home.

Policy enables family borrowing from the school library.

"I am with you" concept.
- Booklets to share with parents at home about what is being learned and how parents can help their children.

- schools need to initiate the partnership.
- Recognize that students are knowledge keepers also so involve them in the community forums. (i.e. developing ideology).

- Resources are provided by school boards/ministry to provide programs to support parents in helping their children learn both educational and traditional learning.

- Liason person to work with parents and the school.

- school to utilize local media to make parents

- SCC from prov. school meet with local FN Board of Ed to share strategies for a learning at home model.
- school board members make themselves known to the parents.

aware of some of the school and learning at home initiatives to encourage parental involvement.

Data base of parental/family profile to find out parental and extended family talents that they would be willing to share and contribute at school.

GOAL - To ensure the wishes of the community are reflected in schools and are an integral part of decisions that shape the education of Saskatchewan's children.

What do we want? Parents, students, staff and community members believe learning is a valuable lifelong process that will enhance their lives and community.

To ensure the works of the community are reflected in schools.

What will it look like? Shared decision making requires definition, communication for understanding.

School divisions and schools support and invite shared decision making.

Not only their right - but parents need to know it's their right. Parents and community members believe it is their right to participate.

Climate needs to be developed.

Decisions made are infrequently challenged because they reflect the community's wishes.

Indicators

- Open opportunity to discuss.

What do we need to get there? - Relationships need to be solid and trusting.

A way to authentically engage participation. - Interact without judging - with a common + clear understanding of process of engagement.

Credibility achieved through authenticity, relationship building, and consistency.

What strategies can we use?

Parents and Community

Schools and Community

School Boards and Community

- survey students and parents (paper, internet)

- client contact

- mail outs

- school community council involvement

- take meetings to the community

- parent interviews in the community.

- mail outs

- school community council involvement

- use of advisory councils.

- take meetings to the community.

- share P.D. opportunities with all groups in the organization.

- work with school community councils

- use of Advisory councils.

- Use of culturally affirming activities, symbols wherever possible

- Examining the Treaty Relationships.



GOAL - Collaborating with Community

What do we want? A mutually respectful and caring relationship between community members, school staff, and community organizations, agencies and businesses.

- Eliminate the racism
- Need Truth + Reconciliation; Address loss of language and culture.

What will it look like?

Each of the above are known to one another, consider the school the hub, and share the goal of community building through fostering positive relationships and activities.

- We need to know what we are doing in our house first in order to advance partnerships.
- Relationship building is critical.
- people need a sense of belonging; Teach cultural Awareness.

Indicators

What do we need to get there?

Stakeholder participation, planning, and an implementation plan.

- power gets in the way.
- Educate partners so a true school/community partnership can be developed.

What strategies can we use?

Parents and Community	Schools and Community	School Boards and Community

<p>GOAL - Belonging</p> <p>What do we want? All members of the community have a sense of belonging.</p> <p>- Respect and accept all cultures and values within the school - community.</p> <p>What will it look like?</p> <p>Members of the community care for and respect one another and their community.</p> <p>Members of the community feel cared for and respected.</p> <p>physical appearance of school community presence in school teacher presence in the community family atmosphere "home away from home"</p> <p>Indicators</p> <p>What do we need to get there?</p> <p>A mechanism to identify members of the community.</p> <p>An awareness of the state of well-being of others.</p> <p>Community resources which support well-being.</p> <p>What strategies can we use?</p>		
<p>- spirituality and ceremonies.</p> <p>- Entrench into school and Board policy.</p> <p>- whole community engagement and attendance in school meetings.</p> <p>- make sure it's always family-oriented.</p> <p>- Use radio, tv and technology to communicate.</p>		
Parents and Community	Schools and Community	School Boards and Community
<p>- Elder Gatherings</p> <p>- recognition</p> <p>- spirituality is important.</p> <p>- Traditional Parenting and child rearing.</p> <p>- Pot-lucks + food.</p> <p>- Make teachers a part of the community</p> <p>- Relationship building between parents + teachers</p> <p>- Positive feedback to parents on children's behaviour or perfect attendance.</p> <p>- constant communications</p>	<p>- culturally affirming</p> <p>- school environment</p> <p>- culturally relevant.</p> <p>- Friendliness</p> <p>- First Impressions</p> <p>- welcoming Feeling</p> <p>- Teacher / community home visits and contacts</p> <p>- Seasonal teachers mentoring new teachers, who are to be involved in the community.</p> <p>- Empower youth to take ownership of community</p> <p>"Giving Back"</p> <p>- Hold a "Diversity Day"</p>	<p>- Shared Decision Making</p> <p>- shared Responsibility</p> <p>- Establish policy to have teachers involved in the community.</p> <p>- community circle meetings</p> <p>- school board and community events that encourage participation.</p> <p>- celebrate achievements</p> <p>- Board policy statement on inter-agency involvement in school.</p> <p>- group problem solving.</p>

GOAL - Belonging

What do we want? All members of the community have a sense of belonging.

What will it look like?

Members of the community care for and respect one another and their community.

Members of the community feel cared for and respected.

Indicators

Entrench in pre-service
teaching courses.

What do we need to get there?

A mechanism to identify members of the community.

An awareness of the state of well-being of others.

Community resources which support well-being.

What strategies can we use?

Parents and Community

Schools and Community

School Boards and Community

- Utilize community Resources
- Aboriginal Role Models
- Utilize gifts within the community
- community people with different talents + skills.
- Take the school into the community.
- "Observe and Do" methodology.

- Role models
- Pictures and Aboriginal symbols in the school.
- Language and signs in the language
- Share info from conferences and Best practices.
- Showcase what is going on in the school or in the community
- get youth to do this.
- teach pre-service teachers about

- turn Board policy into "Real Action"
- "walk the talk"

community belonging.



<p>GOAL - Mastery</p> <p>What do we want? Community members who have a sense of efficacy in one or more areas of their lives.</p>		
<p>What will it look like?</p> <p>Community members are increasingly capable.</p> <p>Areas of expertise grow in scope and ability.</p>		
<p>Indicators</p> <p>What do we need to get there?</p> <p>Exposure to a wide range of interesting, engaging fields in which people can strive for mastery.</p>		
<p>What strategies can we use?</p>		
Parents and Community	Schools and Community	School Boards and Community



GOAL - Independence

What do we want? Community members are self-directed and confident.

What will it look like?

Community members choose areas of interest and learning.

Community members have the ability to make choices in most areas of their lives.

Learners have achieved sufficient mastery to be independent.

Indicators

What do we need to get there?

Excellence in the home, school and community.

What strategies can we use?

Parents and Community

Schools and Community

School Boards and Community

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GOAL - Generosity		
What do we want? Community members have the desire to give back to others and their community. <i>use any resources you have</i> <i>Random Acts of Kindness (see someone in need and help).</i>		
What will it look like?		
Mentors make themselves available to others.		
Volunteerism increases.		
Community members do acts of random kindness and community improvement whether or not they are organized or acknowledged.		
Indicators		
What do we need to get there?		
Caring and safe schools and communities.		
Character education.		
Modelling.		
Mentoring.		
What strategies can we use?		
Parents and Community	Schools and Community	School Boards and Community
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inviting welcoming environment (food) - personal invitations - transportation service - communication <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - newsletters - home visits - local radio station - tv - posters - announcements during BINGO - Acknowledgement celebrations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - student of: week-month-year - incentives - "caught you being good" - no lates or absents for the week-month. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Partnerships: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - RCMP Cadet Corps - other schools - Elders - Common goals between parents, community + school. - Role Models <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Alumni, elders, community members interested to teach children crafts + skills, etc. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mentors - Evening activities: kohkum nights, RCMP cadet Corps, muffin mornings) - Recognition of volunteers, award nights - Clubs (community resources, e.g. friendship ctrs) 		


GOAL - Generosity		
What do we want? Community members have the desire to give back to others and their community.		
What will it look like?		
Mentors make themselves available to others.		
Volunteerism increases.		
Community members do acts of random kindness and community improvement whether or not they are organized or acknowledged.		
Indicators		
What do we need to get there?		
Caring and safe schools and communities.		
Character education.		
Modelling.		
Mentoring.		
What strategies can we use?		
Parents and Community	Schools and Community	School Boards and Community
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - involved in an annual community improvement project (ie: cleaning a community playground) - Parent mentors buddy with a parent whose children are doing well with another parent. - parent volunteer as a volunteer coordinator - act as a liaison to have students and school volunteer in the community 	<p>Databases</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Speakers - role models from FN and Metis communities. - Elders list - which lists elders willing to volunteer their areas of expertise and interest. - Local business owners to talk to students - school / students volunteer in the community. 	



APPENDIX 5:

EXAMPLES WORKSHEET

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You are encouraged to explore this information to help your
efforts in strengthening meaningful engagement.

<p>GOAL - Parenting</p> <p>What do we want? Parents actively engaged in their children's education.</p>		
<p>What will it look like?</p> <p>Parents are partners with the school and share the goal of success at school for all children.</p>		
<p>Indicators</p> <p>What do we need to get there?</p> <p>Learning that takes place at home.</p> <p>An inviting school where parents drop in to volunteer and provide help and expertise.</p> <p>Parental support and involvement at school.</p> <p>An active, inclusive school community council</p>		
<p>What strategies can we use?</p>		
Parents and Community	Schools and Community	School Boards and Community
		

GOAL - Communicating

What do we want? The open, honest and frequent exchange of information and mutual support.

What will it look like?

Regular exchange of information and an open invitation communicate at any time.

Authentic voices are spoken, heard and valued.

Indicators

What do we need to get there?

Welcoming visuals in the school. Friendly, readable newsletters. Informal and positive communication in balance with that of a more serious nature.

Relationship building.

What strategies can we use?

Parents and Community

Schools and Community

School Boards and Community

B

GOAL - Volunteering

What do we want? Parents and community members have the desire to contribute to the well-being of their community and see the school as the community's hub.

What will it look like?

A learning community is built where everyone has something to offer and something to learn. Strengths and capacities that would otherwise be unknown emerge and are shared.

Indicators

What do we need to get there?

A method to communicate that knowledge beyond the classroom walls is valued.

A method to invite parents and community members to identify and share their skills and knowledge.

A method to show appreciation for their gifts.

What strategies can we use?

Parents and Community	Schools and Community	School Boards and Community



<p>GOAL - Learning at home.</p> <p>What do we want? Parents, students, staff and community members believe learning is a valuable lifelong process that will enhance their lives and community.</p>		
<p>What will it look like?</p> <p>All knowledge is valued.</p> <p>A variety of knowledge keepers are recognized and include intergenerational sources, both formal and informal and are without prejudice.</p>		
<p>Indicators</p> <p>What do we need to get there?</p> <p>A mechanism to express the value of a variety of types and sources of knowledge.</p> <p>A mechanism to exchange and implement knowledge.</p>		
What strategies can we use?		
Parents and Community	Schools and Community	School Boards and Community
<p>Parents are interviewed by their children about the skills and knowledge they may be willing to share. Time is built in for knowledge exchange in the home.</p>	<p>School libraries are open some evenings and include knowledge exchange opportunities, particularly those originating from the home.</p>	<p>Policy enables family borrowing from the school library.</p>

GOAL - To ensure the wishes of the community are reflected in schools and are an integral part of decisions that shape the education of Saskatchewan's children.

What do we want? Parents, students, staff and community members believe learning is a valuable lifelong process that will enhance their lives and community.

What will it look like?

School divisions and schools support and invite shared decision making.

Parents and community members believe it is their right to participate.

Decisions made are infrequently challenged because they reflect the community's wishes.

Indicators

What do we need to get there?

A way to authentically engage participation.

Credibility achieved through authenticity, relationship building, and consistency.

What strategies can we use?

Parents and Community

Schools and Community

School Boards and Community



GOAL - Collaborating with Community

What do we want? A mutually respectful and caring relationship between community members, school staff, and community organizations, agencies and businesses.

What will it look like?

Each of the above are known to one another, consider the school the hub, and share the goal of community building through fostering positive relationships and activities.

Indicators

What do we need to get there?

Stakeholder participation, planning, and an implementation plan.

What strategies can we use?


Parents and Community

Schools and Community

School Boards and Community



<p>GOAL - Belonging</p> <p>What do we want? All members of the community have a sense of belonging.</p>		
<p>What will it look like?</p> <p>Members of the community care for and respect one another and their community.</p> <p>Members of the community feel cared for and respected.</p>		
<p>Indicators</p> <p>What do we need to get there?</p> <p>A mechanism to identify members of the community.</p> <p>An awareness of the state of well-being of others.</p> <p>Community resources which support well-being.</p>		
<p>What strategies can we use?</p>		
Parents and Community	Schools and Community	School Boards and Community

<p>GOAL - Mastery</p> <p>What do we want? Community members who have a sense of efficacy in one or more areas of their lives.</p>		
<p>What will it look like?</p> <p>Community members are increasingly capable.</p> <p>Areas of expertise grow in scope and ability.</p>		
<p>Indicators</p> <p>What do we need to get there?</p> <p>Exposure to a wide range of interesting, engaging fields in which people can strive for mastery.</p>		
<p>What strategies can we use?</p>		
Parents and Community	Schools and Community	School Boards and Community
		

<p>GOAL - Independence</p> <p>What do we want? Community members are self-directed and confident.</p>		
<p>What will it look like?</p> <p>Community members choose areas of interest and learning.</p> <p>Community members have the ability to make choices in most areas of their lives.</p> <p>Learners have achieved sufficient mastery to be independent.</p>		
<p>Indicators</p> <p>What do we need to get there?</p> <p>Excellence in the home, school and community.</p>		
<p>What strategies can we use?</p>		
Parents and Community	Schools and Community	School Boards and Community

GOAL - Generosity		
What do we want? Community members have the desire to give back to others and their community.		
What will it look like? Mentors make themselves available to others. Volunteerism increases. Community members do acts of random kindness and community improvement whether or not they are organized or acknowledged.		
Indicators What do we need to get there? Caring and safe schools and communities. Character education. Modelling. Mentoring.		
What strategies can we use?		
Parents and Community	Schools and Community	School Boards and Community



400 - 2222 13th Avenue
Regina, SK
S4P 3M7

Phone: (306) 569-0750
Email: admin@saskschoolboards.ca