



Nomination for Premier's Award
for Innovation and Excellence in Education:

**First Nations and Métis Student Achievement and Graduation Rates
at Stobart Community School, Duck Lake, Saskatchewan**

Goal of the program:

To support student achievement and strong graduation rates through high levels of student learning, inspired by high expectations, collaboration and engagement.

Prairie Spirit School Division

Prairie Spirit School Division is the progressive rural and urban school division surrounding the City of Saskatoon. Prairie Spirit covers a wide geographic area, north to Leask, south to Hanley, east to Colonsay and west to Perdue. The school division includes nine Hutterite colonies and three First Nations communities. Prairie Spirit includes towns, villages and new cities like Warman and Martensville.

The Division's 10,300 students are served by a team of over 1,300 dedicated professionals and support staff. Led by our dedicated staff, our students are achieving at high levels and our graduation rates are among the highest in the province.

Board Chair:	Larry Pavloff
Director of Education:	John Kuzbik
Vision:	Learners for Life
Mission:	Learning without limits in a world of possibilities

Whatever it takes:

Supporting strong student achievement and graduation rates for First Nations and Métis students

In Prairie Spirit School Division, we believe that all students can learn and to a high level when we provide the appropriate supports to our adult and student learners. This philosophy is evident in all of our schools, including Stobart Community School in Duck Lake.

Stobart Community School's philosophy is "whatever it takes" to ensure student success. The school's staff team has embraced an environment that welcomes students and views each child as a gifted learner, capable of achieving goals that equal or exceed those attained across the province.

Strong learning leadership is provided through the school administration's relentless commitment to students and staff

Strong leadership is required to maintain and sustain this philosophical approach. This leadership is provided through the relentless commitment of Principal Reg Nicolas, Vice-Principal Dovona West and Vice-Principal John David. This commitment is demonstrated in administration's support for each teacher and school staff member as they meet both the personal and academic needs of their students.

For teachers and staff, this belief translates into an attitude and commitment to engage students and to provide opportunities for their success in school, in the community and after graduation. There is an expectation by in-school administration, by long serving staff and by the community that teachers and school staff will commit to building relationships of care, respect, high expectations and responsibility with students. As part of these strong relationships, the adults will find the right way for students to learn what they need to know and do.

Stobart's student population is 90% First Nations and Métis (FNM). Defying provincial First Nations and Métis student achievement results, Stobart Community School has a graduation rate that exceeds the provincial non-Aboriginal rate and more than doubles the provincial FNM rate, with every Grade 12 Stobart student graduating on time in 2013/14.

The school's success is not due to a singular formula or program. It is the result of incremental success sustained over more than ten years. The high levels of student achievement are the result of a collective focus on student learning and the necessary supports for learning that begin in the early years and continue through to high school graduation and transition to career and post-secondary.

The pedagogy in classrooms provides rigor, choice, relevancy and strong teacher/student relationships. Students believe that staff are their advocates and they will assist them to improve in their learning. Technology, assessment and engagement keep students interested and attending. Success is expected, failure is unacceptable.

The following information describes the learning environment at Stobart Community School that embeds the philosophy **all students can learn**.

Stobart Community School

Vision: A community of engaged lifelong learners!

Mission: Respect, Inspire, Explore, Grow, Succeed!

Students and staff

In 2013/14, Stobart Community School had 355 students from the Town of Duck Lake, from the surrounding community and from Beardy's First Nation. The school had 276 First Nations students and 38 Métis students (90%). There were 41 non-Aboriginal students, including 14 EAL students from Vietnam.

The staff at Stobart Community School is over 40% First Nations and Métis. Prairie Spirit has set goals and targets in the area of FNM hiring throughout the school division. These staff members are highly committed to this school and to their students. There is very little staff turnover at the school. The expectations for staff members from both in-school administration and the community are very high.

School environment

The school provides a caring, nurturing, family-like environment for all students. This is an intentional approach that is supported by all staff in the school, including the in-school administrators, teachers, caretaking staff, admin assistants, educational associates and other support staff.

Stobart's renovated and expanded building contributes to the overall learning environment for students. This beautiful building is a source of pride for both staff and students. The school's commons area is the heart of the entire school and a focus for everyone in the building. It is typical to see staff visiting and eating lunch with students in the commons area or elders talking with students there during the day.

The building features a commercial kitchen and a provincially-funded daycare with a teen parent component allowing teenage parents to continue their education. A nurse practitioner, addictions counsellor, student counsellor, fitness centre and community college are also based in the school, making it truly the heart of the community. As the heart of the community, the school is also a welcoming, safe and caring place for parents to be supported as well.



The busy commons area of Stobart Community School

Instruction

Prairie Spirit School Division has received grant funds from the provincial First Nations and Métis Education Achievement Fund (FNMEAF) which has funded extra staffing at Stobart Community School. This extra staffing allows for a concentrated focus on early literacy and has extended to include math this year. As part of this approach, a co-teaching model is an effective way to ensure strong student results.

In addition, additional math supports have been provided through both a Dr. Stirling McDowell Research Grant exploring FNM Ways of Knowing in mathematics and additional Division Office support, as needed.

The staff at Stobart received Ministry funding to integrate FNM Ways of Knowing into the provincial curriculum. This three-year project (completed in 2010) has been highly successful and contributes to improved student engagement and, ultimately, to the strong high school graduation rate. This work has been shared throughout the school division.

Stobart staff are focused on continuing their own professional learning, with five teachers currently pursuing their Masters and several other teachers participating in a national research project regarding assessing learning through play. The staff members are Stobart are committed to their own learning to ensure they can best meet the needs of their students.

As part of his role, the school's School Community Coordinator monitors attendance with home visits and weekly meetings. This work is based on the understanding that students who are not attending school regularly are unlikely to succeed and graduate from high school.

Early learning

Stobart Community School recognizes the importance of early years learning for the future success of its students. The school offers two Pre-Kindergarten classes and a full-day, play-based Kindergarten program. The Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten teachers have embraced the play and exploration/play-based Kindergarten curriculums. As a result, their classrooms and teaching strategies reflect inquiry-based learning. These teachers are strong advocates for early learning and work tirelessly to build authentic parent/caregiver relationships. They are leaders in the school division, welcoming other teachers into their classrooms to observe and learn.

The pedagogy that is embedded in the Pre-Kindergarten program (two classes), the addition of full-day, play-based Kindergarten, and the strong Grade 1 program have all contributed to providing students at Stobart Community School with a strong foundation as they start their school careers.



Early learning is a strong focus at Stobart

Literacy

For many years, literacy success for all students has been viewed as an early years learning cornerstone. Stobart Community School's goal is for all students to be reading at grade level by Grade 3. In 2013/14, 93% of Stobart's Grade 3 students were reading at or above the provincial benchmark (*using PM Benchmark assessment tool*).

The school's additional staffing allocation provides time for teachers to work with their colleagues in both literacy and numeracy instruction, especially in the early years. In addition, a Literacy Coach based in Division Office spends time at Stobart Community School every week.

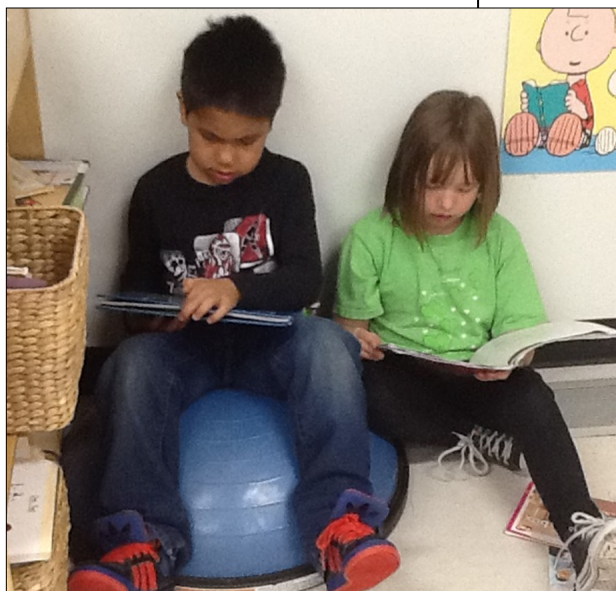
The school has embraced a Reader's Workshop approach for literacy instruction. This aligns very well with a more holistic FNM Ways of Knowing approach, providing students with choice and offering reading materials that are relevant to them.

Athletics and wellness

Stobart Community School offers a strong athletic program which also contributes to student success. Stobart's athletes have won provincial soccer and track and field titles and have been awarded numerous Saskatchewan High School Athletics Association (SHSAA) Sportsmanship awards over the past several years. Staff members demonstrate their commitment by coaching and promoting athletics to their students.

In addition, the school offers extra-curricular opportunities for students in Grades 4 - 6. The students are enthusiastic participants in these athletic opportunities.

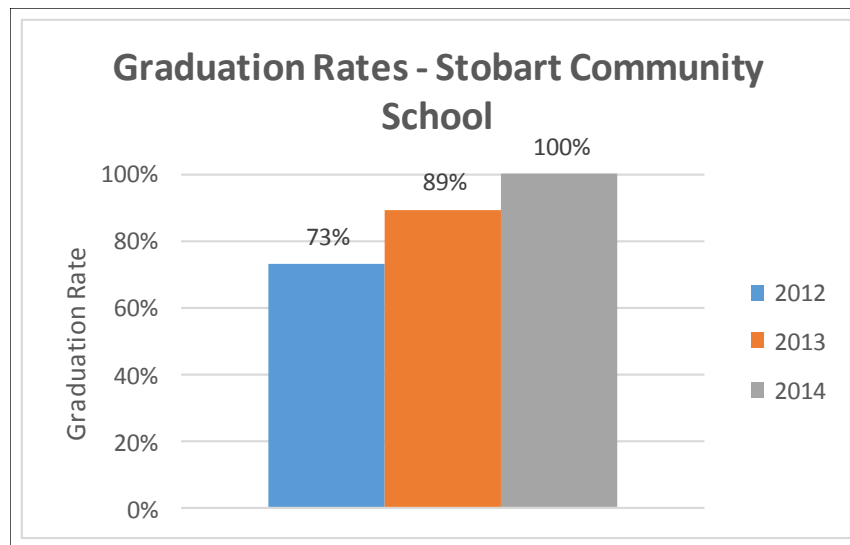
Stobart Community School is designated as a "Health Promoting School" by the Saskatoon Health Region. As a result, there is funding in place to provide and promote weekly fitness programming. The school is also involved in other initiatives such as Yoga 4 Classrooms and Take the Lead.



Classroom libraries support high levels of literacy

Evidence of improved student achievement

The exceptional graduation rates at Stobart Community School are in contrast with provincial FNM graduation rates. Provincially, the FNM graduation rate is 40.3% (*Ministry of Education statistics, 2014*). For Stobart Community School for the same time period, 100% of Grade 12 students who started Grade 10 at the school graduated in 2014 (*Stobart Community School statistics, 2014*).



At a Division level, the graduation rate for First Nations and Métis students in Prairie Spirit has increased each year since 2009 and exceeds the provincial average. The on-time FNM graduation rate for Prairie Spirit is 62.9% while the five-year graduation rate is 73.1% (*Ministry of Education statistics, 2014*).

Students at Stobart Community School are inspired by high expectations. Every Stobart Community School graduate is expected to complete a 30 level math or science course, which exceeds the provincial graduation requirements.

For the 2014/15 school year, 65% of the graduating students at Stobart will have completed 30 - 32 credits, well above the 24 credits required for Grade 12 graduation.

As students complete Grade 12, they are provided with a variety of supports to plan for their life after high school, including transitions to post-secondary and career. Stobart has a full-time counsellor on staff to support students in a variety of ways, including transitions.

Transition to Careers

In addition to focusing on improving graduation rates, Stobart Community School supports students as they transition to life after high school. An increasing number of students are attending post-secondary institutions after graduation.

Senior students at Stobart Community School are part of a special partnership with WalMart Canada in Prince Albert. Students who are sixteen years of age and older have the opportunity to work part-time in a school-sponsored program at WalMart with the support of school staff and administration. In order to continue to work at WalMart, students must maintain their academic achievements and regular school attendance. The program helps students understand the realities of citizenship and the responsibilities of work and finances.



Stobart's Senior Boys Soccer team won Provincial Gold in 1A Soccer in 2013

Criteria for Premier's Award for Innovation and Excellence in Education

Evidence of direct Board influence and participation in the innovation

- The Board of Education's mission and vision contribute to learning environments that support high levels of student learning throughout the school division. Our vision is Learners for Life and our mission is: Learning without limits in a world of possibilities. The commitment of our staff at every level, from the Board to the Division Office to the classroom teacher and support staff, supports a learning culture where every child will learn to a high standard.
- The Board's Strategic Learning Goals include a goal for First Nations and Métis graduation rates.
- The Board of Education supports the high levels of student achievement at Stobart Community School through its budget plan.
- The school reports its progress towards its school goals to Division and Board leadership on an annual basis.

Innovative nature of the program or project

- We believe the student achievement results at Stobart Community School reflect strong pedagogy and best practices.

Sustainability of the innovation within the present system

- With the ongoing commitment of staff and students, the support of Division Office and the Board of Education, we believe the strong student achievement results at Stobart Community School are sustainable and can be continuously improved as evidenced by the improvements over the past few years.

Cost of the innovation related to benefits achieved

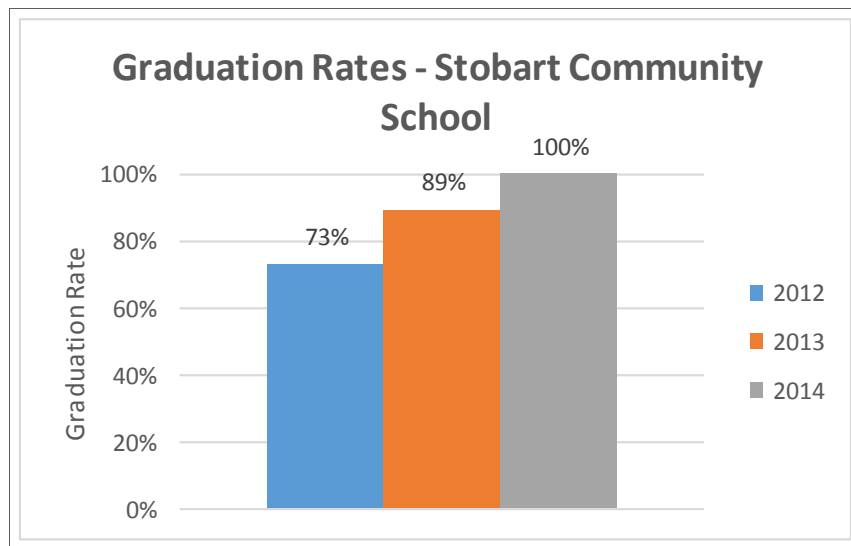
- The Prairie Spirit Board of Education's Strategic Learning Goals include a goal for increased First Nations and Métis graduation rates, demonstrating that this is a strong priority for our school division. The costs associated with the supports in place at Stobart are mostly in terms of staffing.

Client support for the innovation

- Tell Them From Me Survey results (attached)
- Student achievement results (provided)

Evidence of improved student achievement

- The exceptional graduation rates at Stobart Community School are in contrast with provincial FNM graduation rates. Provincially, the on-time FNM graduation rate is 40.3% (*Ministry of Education statistics, 2014*). For Stobart Community School for the same time period, 100% of Grade 12 students who started Grade 10 at the school graduated in 2014 (*Stobart Community School statistics, 2014*).



- For the 2014/15 school year, 65% of the graduating students at Stobart will have completed 30 - 32 credits, well above the 24 credits required for Grade 12 graduation.
- Stobart Community School graduates are expected to complete a 30 level math or science course, which exceeds provincial graduation requirements.

- The Tell Them From Me student survey provides information about how Stobart Community School students view themselves as learners and how they view their learning environment:

Tell Them From Me (Fall, 2013)		
<i>Elementary students (Grades 4 - 6)</i>		
	Stobart Community School	National norm
Students with a positive sense of belonging	94%	86%
Students who value schooling outcomes	100%	96%
Students who are interested and motivated	90%	71%
Students feel safe attending this school	93%	87%
Students feel they have someone at school who consistently provides encouragement	7/10	4.9/10
Positive teacher-student relations	9/10	7.9/10
Expectations for success	9.2/10	8.7/10
<i>High School students (Grades 7 - 12)</i>		
Students with a positive sense of belonging	66%	71%
Students who value schooling outcomes	81%	73%
Students who are interested and motivated.	52%	30%
Students feel safe attending this school	81%	85%
Students feel they have someone at school who consistently provides encouragement.	3.6/10	2.7/10
Positive teacher-student relations	6.7/10	6/10
Expectations for success	7.4/10	7.1/10
Students plan to finish high school	84%	82%
Students plan to pursue a trade or apprenticeship program	40%	21%
Students plan to go to college or university	68%	66%

(Prairie Spirit data, 2014)