

# Dreamcatcher Coaching 212<sup>o</sup>

The Extra Degree Makes a Difference



Note from a Dreamcatcher coach on June 12, 2014:

Year-end already?!?! ... and we all know what the end of a school year brings – FIELD TRIPS!!! This particular field trip picture is priceless, not only because it's too cute, but also because of the amazing gains this little boy has made in his reading this year. If you look close enough this picture is more than just a little boy sitting on a tree stump enjoying the sunshine and his lunch. Look closely now. It's a little boy sitting on a tree stump enjoying the sunshine and his lunch AS HE READS THE PAPER!!!! Like come on, who does that?!? A little boy who started the year reading level 4 and finished the year reading level 34, that's who does that! Its success stories like this that make the school year journey, as we've "Worked On Reading Dude!", so worthwhile!

# Nomination for the Premier's Board of Education Award for Innovation and Excellence in Education (2014)

**Saskatchewan Rivers Public School Division No. 119**

**Board Chair: Barry Hollick**

**Director: Robert Bratvold**

**Program Nominated: Dreamcatcher Coaching 212°**

In their 2006 book, *212° the extra degree*, Sam Parker and Mac Anderson make the following statements:

- At 211 degrees, water is hot. At 212 degrees, it boils. With boiling water, comes steam. And steam can power a locomotive.
- Seemingly small things can make tremendous differences.
- 211° can serve a purpose but 212° is the extra degree – the extra degree that will bring exponential results – the exponential results to you and those you touch throughout your days.
- Imagine the possibilities.
- You are responsible for your results. It's time to turn up the heat.

## **Dreamcatcher Coaching 212°**

The Dreamcatcher Coaching 212° (DC 212°) initiative began in Saskatchewan Rivers Public School Division, in 2012, with those same thoughts in mind... we are responsible for our results and small things can make a tremendous difference in helping our students achieve exponential results. By putting strategic supports in place at the school level and by ensuring that the data has faces in every school, this initiative truly provides excellence for every learner.

### *Intended Outcomes*

The DC 212° pilot project began in Saskatchewan Rivers in the 2012-2013 school year in response to our Board's mandates; 1) to provide excellence for every learner and 2) to align our division initiatives with higher literacy and achievement outcomes for all students. The pilot project was conceptualized with three primary goals:

- Increased student achievement
- Increased student and teacher engagement
- Elimination of the achievement gap for our First Nations and Métis students

## Processes

While the goals seem lofty, the processes to achieve them were simple and clear.

- Clear SMART **goals** written to **include 100% of the students** with strong alignment from the division level through the school and classroom levels, right down to individual program plans for students that required that level of intervention.
- **Explicit, intentional strategy instruction with a laser like focus** on increasing the achievement of all students
- Facilitation of teachers' **use of data** in a cycle of continuous improvement
- Partnership approach – **collaborative inquiry** through PLC activity
- **Reflective practice** - examining teacher pedagogy as related to student needs
- Work in a **trusting, open environment**
- **Respectful communication**

In the implementation of these processes, the stories of the teachers and students began to come to the forefront. It is these stories that have made this initiative unique, innovative, and successful.

## Implementation

A phased in approach to implementation ensured the sustainability of the momentum of the initiative. Contracting the services of external researcher and author, Karen Hume in the early phases, ensured strong alignment of the research base with the practical implementation. Coaches were allocated in schools on a pro-rated, per capita student basis. The initiative had seven schools participating in year one, 14 schools in year two school and currently enjoys 23 schools in year three. The initiative has seen successes in achievement, engagement, and changing school cultures. The initiative will continue to expand to include all Saskatchewan Rivers Public School Division schools over the next two years.

## Direct Board Influence and Participation in the Initiative

The Saskatchewan Rivers Public School Division's Board of Education is committed to the Dreamcatcher coaching initiative and has been instrumental in roles of leadership and stewardship while building relationships both within and outside of the school division.

## Leadership

Leadership implies the active role of setting direction for the work of the division. The Board of Education has, **through policy**, provided clear direction that goals, strategies and action steps must provide a pathway to achievement for *each* child. The mission statement reads:

The mission of the Saskatchewan Rivers Public School Division is to strive for excellence in education and to seek to maximize each child's unique learning ability.

In their **Strategic Plan**, the Board of Education articulated the following student achievement goal:

Our students will experience high quality differentiated instruction, informed by authentic assessment practices, that results in significant academic, personal and social growth and achievement.

The Strategic Plan identified the DC 212<sup>o</sup> initiative as one of the key strategies needed to actualize that goal and in doing so, directed senior administration to maintain and expand staffing allocations within the constraints of budget.

### **Stewardship**

With a secure plan in place for the Dreamcatcher Coaching 212<sup>o</sup> initiative, the Board of Education began to **monitor implementation strategies and project results**. Project results were provided to the board through a variety of processes, director's updates, accountability reports, and school presentations. In the 2013-2014 school year, the board invited presentations from two schools, each representing a different facet of the initiative. The board received reports of coaching processes, strategies, and results from Meath Park Public School (K-12) as well as a Sticky Team presentation which focussed on school efforts to increase the engagement of students and teachers from John Diefenbaker Public School (K-8). Both presentations articulated significant shifts in school culture to an environment of collaboration and collective responsibility, they emphasized the distributive ownership of the work, and acknowledged the impact of a clear goal focus and strong alignment.

### **Relationship**

As the Board of Education worked to build stronger relationships with parents and community, they sought out opportunities to **listen to stakeholders**. As board members toured schools, they also spoke with administrators, teachers, and students about their work in the coaching project. In response to a query from the board chair about what the board could do to improve their school, one youngster replied that he wanted, "higher literacy levels for the school!"

In striving to **build relationships across the sector**, the Board of Education invited education minister, Don Morgan and assistant deputy minister, Greg Miller to the division. As an agenda item illustrating effective operations of the division, the honoured guests toured a Dreamcatcher coaching school where they were proudly introduced to the initiative and the successes the school was achieving for every learner.

### **Innovative Nature of the Initiative**

For many years school divisions have written goals for achievement in academic areas and schools have written specific goals for students. What makes this initiative innovative and excellent is the way the division and individual schools have taken the researched-based strategies and processes and made them uniquely their own by putting the faces of the individual students on them.

### ***Catch-up Growth***

Clear SMART goals are written to include 100% of the students. As we looked into the faces of the students in our classrooms, it became clear that we needed a goal for the students that were consistently and competently working toward grade-level outcomes (annual growth goal), a goal for students who were falling behind - in some cases years behind – grade-level outcomes (catch-up growth goal), and goals for students that needed to have independent program plans. Catch-up growth plans require teachers to strategically use data to create a learning plan that enables these learners to return to achieving grade-level outcomes, usually within a two year window depending on the learning gap. The value of catch-up growth was articulated by teachers who commented:

- I was surprised to find that instead of feeling disappointed about having a different goal than their peers, “catch-up” students were relieved to learn that their goal was something that feels attainable.
- It made us focus early on in the project on these kids and to constantly keep them on our radar. Many of the students were able to complete nearly every outcome on the number strand to grade level – which was a pleasant surprise for both themselves and their teachers.
- It made staff more aware of and collaborate more on what strategies to use that can affect this growth.
- If catch-up growth wasn’t there, these kids would always be seen as “red zone” kids.

While catch up growth is challenging to determine, the power and self-confidence that it instilled in the learners was powerful. When the students believed that they could, they did!

### ***Data Walls and WIG Huddles***

The use of data walls in the coaching initiative was instigated as a means to facilitate teachers’ use of individual student data in a cycle of continuous improvement. Bulletin boards and walls are covered with charts identifying student progress. Through the evolution of these data walls, teachers have learned to track transience and growth as well as current achievement data.

Wildly Important Goal (WIG) Huddles are held around the data wall each week as groups of teachers meet for approximately 10 minutes to do three things; review and update the student data, report on the commitment that they made last week to raise achievement of their students, and to make a new commitment for the upcoming week. As individual teachers report on their actions toward the lead indicators, colleagues hear about their successes and challenges and can learn from that experience how to refine their own pedagogical and assessment strategies. Collaborative inquiry into best practices is followed up during Professional Learning Community (PLC) activities.

### ***Sticky Teams***

Picture a school of several hundred students of varying abilities from varying backgrounds with varying levels of support. Picture teachers, administrators, and school support personnel running breakfast programs, afterschool programs, lunch programs, tutorial programs, coaching teams, planning assemblies, and supervising students at breaks before and during school, among their many other

duties. A school goal, you say? We can try, they answer.

Researchers like Doug Reeves advocate for a laser-like focus in work toward achievement but how can one coach, with partial release time, really make this difference? It is possible when the Sticky Team joins the work implementing the principles of “sticky” as defined by Chip and Dan Heath; principles which connect the head and the heart.

Each school in the DC 212<sup>o</sup> initiative has a Sticky Team of 3-4 teachers, led by the vice-principal that works with the coach and school principal to support the achievement strategies through engagement. Their role is to wrap around the achievement work, bring the partners in learning together and to create and sustain momentum for the school goal throughout the school year. They have shared data with students in the form of “jello-brations”, promoted the school goal in December as “Christ-math”, hosted parent engagement evenings with estimation stations and other math learning ideas, turned assemblies into writing blasts, and created classroom support materials, including rubrics for the classroom teachers. With colleagues and students they have written songs, created plays, contrived crime scenes and developed computer games to encourage non-fiction reading.

The Sticky Teams have enabled learning to “stick” in a fun and engaging way for students and teachers.

### *DC 212<sup>o</sup>*

A good idea in isolation is one good idea. One good idea shared amongst a group encourages reflection, creativity, and innovation. DC 212<sup>o</sup>, our coaching newsletter, was initiated to serve that purpose – to share the good news, the good ideas that were successful each week within Dreamcatcher schools. In the words of Isaac Newton, “If I have seen further it is by standing on the shoulders of giants.” Building on the good news stories and celebrations of others is standing on the shoulders of **our** giants. Appendix A provides an example of a DC 212<sup>o</sup> newsletter.

## **Sustainability of the Initiative**

Sustainability requires ownership and belief about the work, success in the work, and the ability to resource the work. The need must remain strong and the ability to reach the goal attainable.

### *Goals – Sustained Need*

When the Dreamcatcher initiative began in the 2012 – 2013 school year, its roots were in the needs of teachers and students, as they related to increase achievement and engagement. While the level of the bar has been raised and will continue to change, the fundamental need to focus on achievement and engagement goals for students and to provide support for teachers, will remain.

### *Pedagogical Change*

Through instructional coaching, the Dreamcatcher initiative focuses on the explicit strategies needed for achievement as identified by student data. New pedagogies will be sustained and strengthened through support from the school-based coach, school-based PLC activities, division networking and staff development activities, and the work of division-level coaches and consultants.

### *Institutions and Structures*

Data walls, WIG huddles, and PLC time at the school level all provide the structures that facilitate conversations, collaboration, and actions that will sustain the coaching work in the schools. The addition of the Sticky Team provides the ongoing support to sustain the momentum throughout each school year.

### *Leadership and Ownership*

A major strength of the DC 212<sup>o</sup> initiative is that the leadership comes from within; there is no one person that carries the initiative. Collaborative, distributive leadership empowers teachers to share ownership for their classroom goals and the school goal. As one teacher stated, “The teachers do not consider just the students in their own rooms to be their responsibility; rather all students belong to all of us.” When there are many owners in the school, the initiative will live on.

### *School Culture*

Caring cultures with high expectations enable all students and teachers to have a sense of belonging. This in turn provides positive energy to sustain the initiative. The effects of this are profound in Dreamcatcher schools. Teachers have commented:

- Our school culture has changed in bringing us back together as a collective, looking at the data, and driving our teaching practices forward as a result of what the data indicated.
- Our school culture is moving towards higher expectations for academics for all our students while still providing support for our students’ non-academic needs.
- As a result of participation in the coaching project, our school culture is professional, goal-oriented, collaborative, supportive, and team focused.
- Discussions of our goal, teaching, and curriculum have become part of our everyday discussions. Teachers are open to sharing successes and problems.

## **Cost of the Innovation Related to the Benefits Achieved**

### *Costs*

A significant benefit of this project is that it is a made in Saskatchewan Rivers initiative. There have been no additional costs for resources other than for an external researcher in the initial stages. The innovation is built on a collaborative, co-constructed model using resources that are currently in every teacher’s classroom. The role of the coach is given to a classroom teacher as part of their current teaching assignment.

School Year	Resource	Cost
2112 - 2013	External researcher – Karen Hume	\$30 356.43
	Sub days	\$12 170.50
	Total Cost – year one	\$42 526.93
2013 - 2014	External researcher –Karen Hume	\$8 112.47
	Sub days	\$50 020.76
	Total Cost – year two	\$58 133.23

## **Benefits**

- Alignment of division, school, and classroom goals
- Goals for every student
- Reduced travel for division-level coaches and consultants
- Effective and efficient spread of best practices; instead of one teacher attending a workshop and affecting 20 students, one teacher attends a workshop and affects 20 teachers who each affect 20 students!
- Excitement and enthusiasm for learning due to the work of the Sticky Teams
- Focus and alignment of achievement goals are in place due to the work of the coaching teams
- Work is shared among staff members and leadership and ownership are a natural part of the process
- Better supports for transient students moving within each school and among our schools due to consistency in language, assessment and instructional practices, and common goals and strategies
- Increased instructional time - activities that may previously been a distraction from instructional time have been turned into learning opportunities... engaging learning opportunities:
  - Assemblies became writing blasts, math blasts, and data celebrations
  - Award ceremonies are for celebrating students that achieved personal learning goals
  - Classroom game time may now be SMARTboard activities that teach the forms, genres, and text structures of non-fiction writing
- Teacher and student beliefs have changed about success as a result of catch-up growth; self-fulfilling prophesy is now generating positive outcomes for students.

## **Client Support for the Innovation**

The DC 212<sup>o</sup> initiative has had tremendous support from the beginning of the initiative through to the work being done today from the classroom level through to the division office. The words of those involved are powerful reminders of our learning journey and the success we have enjoyed.

### **School Principals**

- I have become more connected to student learning and our staff teaching strategies. I have also become more able to facilitate and plan effective PLC days for our staff.
- We talk about learning in a different way now... at our assemblies we talk about math growth and change ...at SCC meetings we talk about math growth and change ... staff meetings we talk about math growth and change.

### **Coaches**

- This project is so worthwhile for our students. It has given me a sense of pride in the work that everyone does in our building every day. It is also tremendously helpful to have the opportunity to network with the other coaches and share ideas – so thank you for ensuring that we get the time to do that in the workshops. Thanks for an amazing year!



- The approach that all/most teachers are now taking in teaching math has changed considerably. ... I think that thinking about our goal, on the part of teachers, has eliminated a lot of practices that manufacture low achievement – the assigning of daily homework, the lecture/teacher at the front of the room instruction, everyone doing the same work on the same page, bell-curve mentality, one chance testing, etc. ...changes that have been initiated and sustained as a direct result of our goal. We are life-long learners!!

### *Teachers*

- I have changed the way I view my own teaching as well as how a school can work as a team. It was great to have support and a person to discuss and bounce ideas off of. Being able to have a team member to work with and not be in isolation is very valuable.
- Working toward our goal was very rewarding. It really was great to be part of something that was trying to make a difference for kids and their learning. I think we are realizing more and more as teachers that we are the difference as to whether kids are learning or not. I loved working with the kids, doing intervention, and helping kids feel like they could be successful.

### *Students*

- At our school we are bilingual; we speak English and non-fiction text features!
- After being assessed at mid-year a grade 2 student ran down the hallway to the principal and said, “I don’t know what you are doing but it’s working ‘cause I am a level 24 now!”

### *Parents*

- Why didn’t we have something like this when I was a kid. Math now seems like fun.... Not work!
- It’s nice to know that the teachers are trying new things and making the students more responsible (accountable) for their own learning. At least now they know how to improve (discussion about the data wall and student tracking).

## **Partnerships**

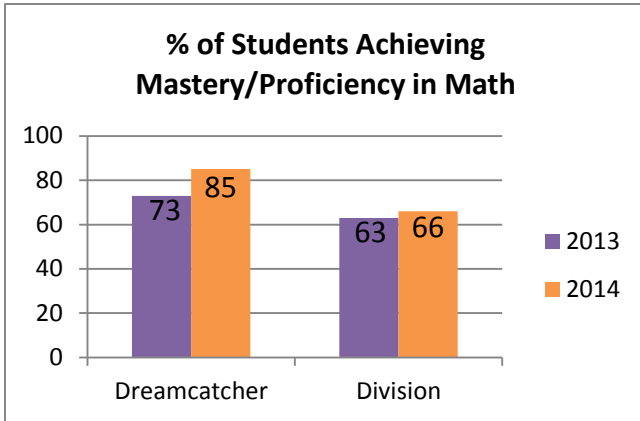
As we began to strategize the work of the Dreamcatcher initiative, Saskatchewan Rivers Public School Division partnered with Canadian author and researcher, Karen Hume to guide the initial work. Karen has done considerable work with change management, assessment, student engagement, and school leadership. Her expertise helped to establish the initiative in best practices and to support teachers and administrators in the change process.

An external partnership was important to help us get started in the work but it is the partnerships between home and school that have been strengthened with this work. Our parents have engaged in math nights, Apps with Apps (appetizers) events, and joined work toward reading comprehension by signing comprehension treaties with their child’s teacher (supporting the cultural/school connection). It is these partnerships that will sustain the work going forward as together we work to provide excellence for every learner.

## Evidence of Improved Student Achievement

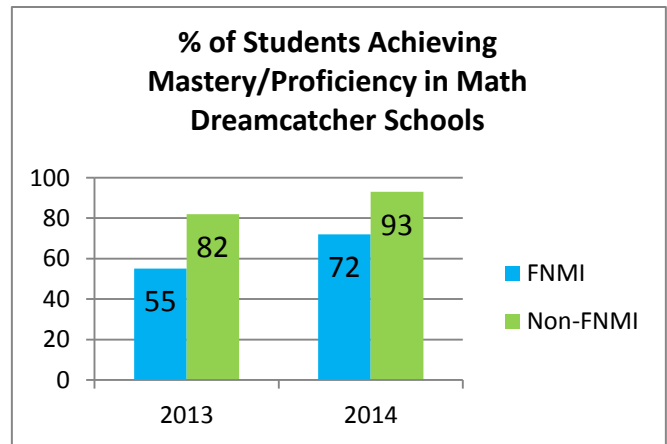
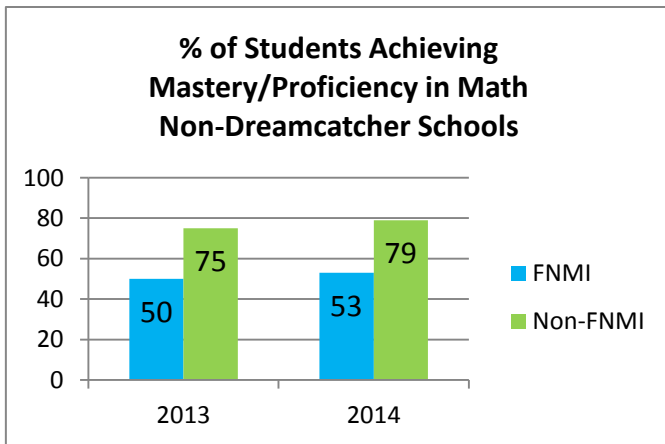
Throughout the initiative, data has been collected, displayed, reflected on, challenged, changed, and celebrated. Schools in the Dreamcatcher initiative were asked to choose one subject area goal to focus on. Highlights of our data are...

### Math

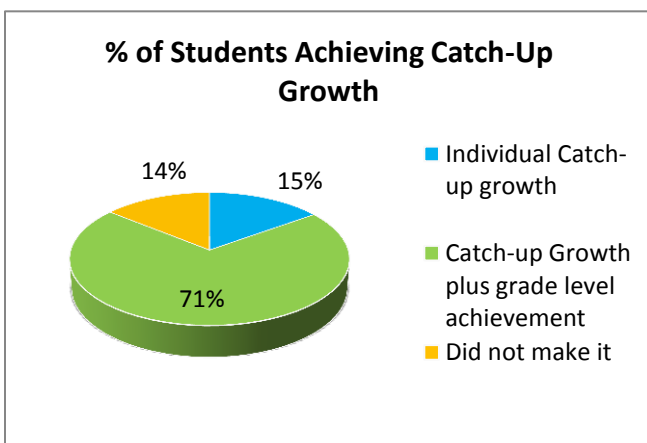


Data from students in Dreamcatcher coaching schools demonstrate that:

- Higher percentages of Dreamcatcher students achieve high levels (mastery/proficiency)
- First Nation and Métis students in the initiative are aggressively closing the achievement gap



### Math Catch-up Growth

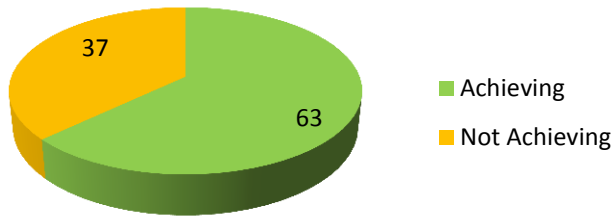


Catch-up growth students are students that are significantly below expectations. A separate learning plan is put in place for these students to enable them to return to grade-level outcomes within about a two year period depending on their current working level.

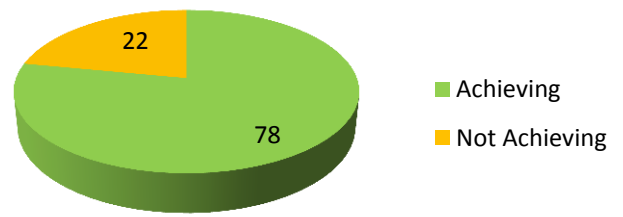
Math data indicates that **71% of these students returned to grade level outcomes in one year** and a further 15% are on track to achieve their catchup growth goal.

## Reading Comprehension

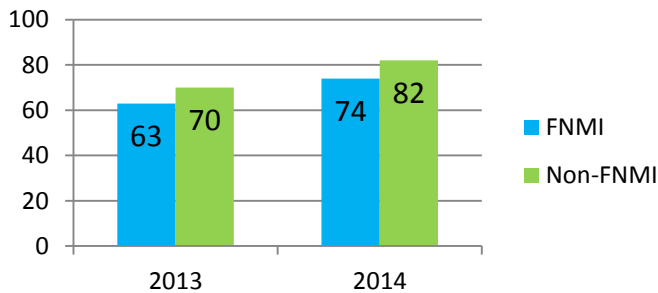
**% of Students Achieving Mastery/Proficiency in Reading Comprehension in DC 212 Schools 2013**



**% of Students Achieving Mastery/Proficiency in Reading Comprehension in DC 212 Schools 2014**



**% of Students Achieving Mastery/Proficiency in Reading Comprehension - DC 212 Schools**



Data from students in Dreamcatcher coaching schools demonstrate that:

- Students are significantly increasing their understanding of reading material – both fiction and non-fiction texts
- First Nation and Métis students in the initiative are increasing their comprehension at rates equal to non-First Nations and Métis students

## Conclusion

The success of the Dreamcatcher Coaching 212<sup>o</sup> initiative is reflected in the increased ability of the classroom teacher to set learning goals for every child, to implement a diverse range of instructional and assessment strategies, and ultimately to provide students with the confidence and competence to achieve their personal learning goals. As a principal said, “The extra degree really does make all the difference. It has been stretching our creativity to engage students and exciting to realize we can overcome the challenges we face!”