



Regina Catholic Schools

**Innovation & Empowerment through
Awareness and Actions:**
Continuous Action Planning Outcomes
for First Nations, Inuit & Métis Education

Nominated By:

The Board of Education for the Regina Roman Catholic
Separate School Division #81

Submission For:

The Premier's Board of Education Award for
Innovation and Excellence in Education

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Board Chair: Rob Bresciani
Director of Education: Rob Currie

Innovation & Empowerment through Awareness & Actions: Continuous Action Planning Outcomes for First Nations, Inuit & Métis Education

Introduction

In terms of action planning for First Nations, Inuit & Métis education, Regina Catholic Schools has firmly established an ongoing pattern of innovation and success. This award application takes a three-fold approach, looking at innovative practices developed by the school division – both past and present, addressing the ongoing role of the Board in promoting and supporting these practices, and concluding with data that demonstrates trending success for First Nations, Inuit & Métis (FNIM) students.

Program Goal

In Regina Catholic Schools, the over-arching goal for First Nations, Inuit & Métis students is to provide educational opportunities consistent with expressed needs as determined through varied consultative and advisory processes in place *and* educational outcomes in relation to their current level of learning. This goal finds its basis in Board policy that states, *“(The Board) recognizes that pupils of Aboriginal ancestry represent a significant minority group. Divergent educational responses may be required to help them succeed in their educational development...Regina Catholic Schools supports in principle and will strive toward the achievement of the **goal of education equity**...(Aboriginal Education Policy 1300)”*.

Program Description – A Series of Initiatives

Through ongoing Board direction and support, Regina Catholic Schools has established a standard where innovation and empowerment through awareness and actions has become the operational norm for addressing First Nations, Inuit & Métis education over the past 15 years. Success for FNIM students in Regina Catholic Schools is not the result of a single program or initiative; it is the natural outcome of deliberate resource allocations combined with program responses and sustained practices, leading to positive educational outcomes. Regina Catholic Schools has taken an integrated approach to FNIM education, marked by several innovations along the way. A few key innovations are briefly outlined below in order to provide necessary background information supporting the basis of this award submission.



Treaty Education

In 2002, the Board sensed a need for broader awareness around FNIM ways of knowing and understanding in order to create a more conducive and responsive educational environment, having broad potential to address the Board’s expressed principle of educational equity. Through Board direction and support, coupled with visionary

administrative leadership, the school division developed concrete learning initiatives that would allow all students to gain a better understanding of our direct and collective connections with existing Treaty agreements in Saskatchewan. **As one of the first school divisions to adopt Treaty Education**, the program “Teaching Treaties in the Classroom” was developed and implemented. Since early inception, this program has continued to receive significant support from the Board, school division administration and teachers – in particular Treaty Catalyst Teachers who were established in all schools. As this initiative progressed, Regina Catholic Schools adopted a leadership role beyond the school division, working with the Office of the Treaty Commission resulting in what is now recognized provincially as a rich history of collaboration, cooperation and co-development of Treaty Education across the province. By 2010, Regina Catholic Schools had provided Treaty Education professional development to over 500 teachers, representing well over 80% of all professional instructional staff.

Circle of Voices/First Nations, Inuit & Métis Education Plan of Action (2007-2010)

In 2007, Regina Catholic Schools engaged in a large-scale and comprehensive process to research FNIM educational “best-practices”, including the study of documented and proven practices across Canada while, at the same time, collecting input from locally established dialogue groups in order to create a foundation for future directions in the school division. The intent was to best meet the needs of a significantly growing population of FNIM students within the school division and create a vision for the future. **As part of this vision, the Circle of Voices Advisory Committee - unique to Regina Catholic Schools - was realized.** Along with this advisory body, a 3-year plan entitled “*The First Nations, Inuit & Métis Education Plan of Action*” was created and delivered across the school division in three phases:

- **Awareness (2007-2008)** - *featuring professional development opportunities for teachers, in order to better understand FNIM ways of knowing.*
- **Action (2008-2009)** - *consisting of a continuation of professional development coupled with the actualization of curriculum and connected resources addressing Kindergarten to Grade 6 Treaty units.*
- **Empowerment (2009-2010)** – *offering encouragement and support to teachers for expanding their efforts to integrate FNIM ways of knowing across all areas of the curriculum.*

Citing this planning approach in a report entitled, “*Be Bold, Move Forward: Measuring Success*” (2012), released by the Gabriel Dumont Institute of Native Studies and Applied Research, Regina Catholic Schools was recognized as one of two of the first school divisions in the province with a dedicated education action plan for FNIM students. Two years after Regina Catholic Schools adopted this plan; the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education released their FNIM policy framework, “*Inspiring Success: Building towards Student Achievement*” in March 2009. As such, Regina Catholic Schools had emerged as a forerunner using this type of planning approach, providing testament to the visionary, forward thinking and innovative work occurring in the school division at the time.

Regina Catholic Schools Renewed Action Plan (2012-2015)

As a follow-up to the 2007-2010 action plan, Regina Catholic Schools shifted focus to the development of a renewed 3-year plan entitled, *“First Nations, Inuit & Métis Renewed Education Plan”*, (2012 – 2015). This plan outlined a detailed commitment to FNIM learners based on a formal Vision, Mission Statement, and broad set of Belief Statements to drive all educational initiatives affecting FNIM students. This plan also made formal policy connections between Board policy and those policy statements established through the Ministry of Education, First Nations and Métis Education Branch through their plan entitled, *“Inspiring Success: Building towards Student Achievement (2009).”* The new plan, building upon the “current state” of FNIM education in the school division, identified key areas for long-term goal setting, with emphasis on data collection around core aspects of literacy (reading and numeracy), early learning readiness, and high school student engagement – focusing on credit attainment, grade level transition retention rates, and graduation on time rates. This plan also established a data driven approach in the division, including the establishment of reliable benchmarks for gauging goal attainment. This plan foreshadowed what was to come in provincial terms, providing the school division with the ability to maintain a sense of direction and continuity when aligning with the recently released *Ministry of Education’s Educational Sector Strategic Plan*. Moving forward, this planning approach will serve to further inform and direct resource allocations based on evolving learning goals for FNIM students.

In Conclusion

The selected FNIM planning initiatives developed by Regina Catholic Schools outlined above demonstrate the leadership and vision of our Board – positioning themselves on the leading edge of policy development, planning and educational initiatives unfolding at the local and provincial level. This stance has led to our current state where FNIM students are experiencing positive trends toward successful outcomes and overall learning goal attainment.

Award Criteria Commentary

Direct Board Participation

Board participation in this initiative is best evidenced through:

- **Board Policy** - The Board *“recognizes that pupils of Aboriginal ancestry represent a significant minority group. Divergent educational responses may be required to help them succeed in their educational development. (Aboriginal Education Policy 1300)”*.
- **Membership on the Circle of Voices Advisory Committee** – The Board appoints several members (ranging from 3 to 4) to the Circle of Voices Advisory Committee on an annual rotational basis. This representation allows for direct, accurate and meaningful expression of advisory views in the context of ongoing Board governance.
- **Financial Supports** - Support for FNIM educational initiatives are well entrenched in determination of annual instructional and operational budgets.

Innovative Nature

Over the past 15 years, Regina Catholic Schools has created a change environment that supports a natural evolution toward innovation and excellence in connection with FNIM education as evidenced by:

- **Treaties in the Classroom Program** (2002 to Present)
- **Circle of Voices Advisory Committee** (2007 to Present)
- **RCS First Nations, Inuit & Métis Education Action Plan** (2007-2010)
- **RCS First Nations, Inuit & Métis Renewed Three Year Plan** (2012-2015)

Combined, these major innovative actions illustrate how planning and forward progress in relation to FNIM education is the norm in Regina Catholic Schools.

Sustainability

With the Board goal of education equity in mind, coupled with the demonstrated ability to support ongoing consultation, critical partnering, and program development initiatives as demonstrated over the past 15 years, it is clear that Regina Catholic Schools has established a high level of sustainability in relation to FNIM education. The Board actively monitors progress toward their goal of education equity through various means including their membership on “Circle of Voices” and through regular administrative reports surrounding educational outcomes and ongoing planning directions for FNIM students in the school division.

Cost Benefit Analysis

Education equity initiatives are sustained through long-standing instructional and operational budget provisions, including funding for ongoing professional development and inputs to support the implementation of continuously evolving plan initiatives in response to demonstrated learning outcomes. Additional revenue sources such as the “First Nations and Métis Education Achievement Fund (FNMEAF)” are also accessed to target needs based on education outcome analysis of annual SMART Goals in the school division.

Client Support for the Innovation

Advisory systems in place at the division and local school levels ensure that client support for ongoing educational planning is in place. At the local school level, Learning Improvement Plans associated with the “*Continuous Improvement and Accountability Framework (CIAF)*” are shared with Catholic School Community Councils, where informal opportunities exist for them to act in advisory and support capacities. At the division level, “Circle of Voices” has existed since 2007, for the purpose of providing formal advisory input to all aspects of FNIM initiatives undertaken by the school division, including CIAF initiatives undertaken by the school division and respective local school communities.

Partnerships in Support

As a formal advisory body representing a broad cross-section of interest groups, the “Circle of Voices Advisory Committee” sets the standard for partnerships in Regina Catholic Schools. The goals of this committee are; to address educational issues related to FNIM students while providing direction and support for school division educational plans and associated goals, to provide advocacy for all FNIM students, to improve communication between FNIM parents, and to address social justice issues while identifying gaps in service. The committee also serves to act as a sounding board for Board policies, procedures and initiatives that directly impact FNIM students and their families. The Board and school division administration also maintain close ties with FNUC, SIIT, SUNTEP and Gabriel Dumont Institute. On a local school operational level, many partnerships exist to address local needs – particularly through various high school programs designed to promote retention and improved graduation rates among FNIM students.



Evidence of Improved Student Achievement

A current review of FNIM student educational outcomes arising from the Regina Catholic Schools Renewed Action Plan provides clear evidence to suggest that the approach used in Regina Catholic Schools is trending toward academic success while also meeting the over-arching Board goal of education equity. Evidence suggests that overall; these approaches are making a significant difference for FNIM students.

Presently in Regina Catholic Schools, learning targets are worded as SMART goals and organized under three major areas reflecting specific Board priorities for FNIM students:

- Literacy – Reading/Mathematics
- High School Credit Attainment/Retention/Graduation Rates
- Early Years Assessment (EYES)

While other groups may be targeted for reporting of SMART Goal outcomes, results are *always* reported to the following groups for input, discussion or advice:

- Circle of Voices Advisory Committee (system wide advisory level)
- Board Briefings (governance level)
- Catholic School Community Councils (local school advisory level)
- Senior, Central and School Level Administration (administrative/planning & implementation level)
- RCS Data Wall (general access level)

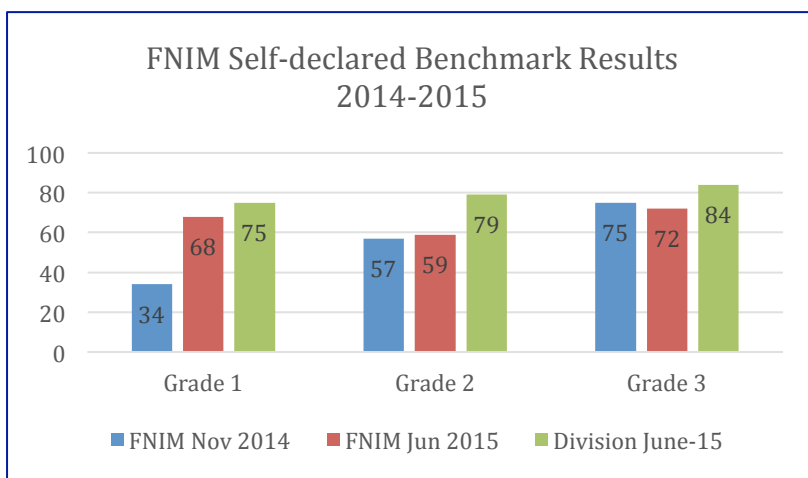
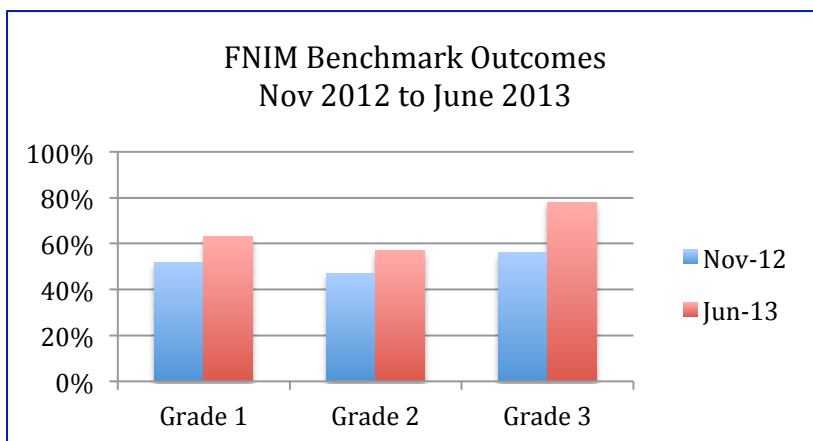
Elementary Education/Literacy: Reading

The 2012-2013 Reading Literacy SMART Goal reads, “By June 2013, the percentage of self-declared FNIM students in Grades 1 to 3 who score at or above grade level in English reading decoding and comprehension will increase 10% from June 2012.”

The 2013-2014 Reading Literacy SMART Goal reads, “By June 2014, the percentage of self-declared FNIM students in Grades 1 to 3 who score at or above grade level in English reading will increase 10% from June 2013.”

The 2014-2015 Reading Literacy SMART Goal sets high expectations, bringing FNIM students directly in line with the entire student population of the school division, reading, “By June 2015, the percentage of self-declared FNIM students in the English program who meet or exceed reading expectations will be:

- Grade 1 – 75%
- Grade 2 – 80%
- Grade 3 – 85%



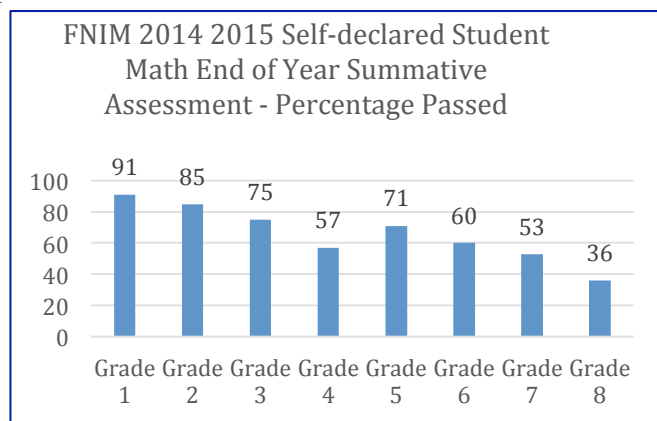
Reading Literacy: Goal Commentary

Most recent results for 2014-2015 show an astounding 100% increase from November to June for Grade 1 FNIM students, providing evidence that supports are effectively working across the division. The Grade 2 cohort is below the SMART goal (and division average) indicating that additional interventions are required. Students not meeting the SMART goal have been identified for Leveled Literacy Intervention (LLI) groups beginning immediately in 2015-2016. Grade 3 results are stronger and reflect the effectiveness of teaching and program interventions.

Elementary Education/Literacy: Mathematics

The 2012-2013 Mathematics SMART Goal reads, *“By June 2013, Grades 2 to 8 self-declared FNIM student results in the school divisions’ mathematics assessment will be gathered to establish baseline data that directs future goal setting.”*

The 2013-2014 Mathematics SMART Goal reads, *“By June 2014, the percentage of self-declared FNIM students in Grades 2 to 8 who pass the school divisions’ end of year summative mathematics assessment will increase by 10% from June 2013.”*



The 2014-2015 Mathematics Literacy SMART Goal reads, *“By June 2015, the percentage of self-declared FNIM students in Grades 2 to 8 who pass the school divisions’ end of year summative mathematics assessment will increase by 10% from June 2014”*

Mathematics Literacy: Goal Commentary

The June 2014 Grade 2 to 8 Summative Math Assessment provided a benchmark for self-declared FNIM students with an outcome of 67% of students in Grades 1 to 8 achieving a passing grade however, the data was not reported by individual grade levels. The June 2015 results demonstrate the goal was met in several grades when comparing to the June 2014 benchmark. A planned 2015-2016 school year increase of 0.5 FTE in the Mathematics Consultant position will be a key component in addressing the identified grade levels and specific content areas that present higher challenges. Math instruction, including a guided math approach, will be a point of emphasis for 2015-2016.

Pre-K and Kindergarten Education/EYES Assessment

The 2014-2015 Early Years Evaluation (EYE) SMART Goal reads, *“After Fall 2014 administration in Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten, 100% of students who score “Experiencing Some Difficulty” or “Experiencing Significant Difficulty” in two or more of the domains will be addressed in a Student Support Team meeting at their schools.”*

Early Years Education Assessment: Goal Commentary

The EYE Assessment was completed in November 2014. Subsequent Student Support Team meetings took place shortly following this assessment for all FNIM students fitting the support criteria specified by the 2015-2015 SMART goal as reported in school level Learning Improvement Plans.

In Addition...

Professional development for teachers has been provided through the school division PD budget. Parent/Teacher/Student conferences have occurred where parents and students participate in activities connected with the EYE curriculum based followed by a 1:1 meeting with the classroom teacher. Parents have been provided with support materials and suggestions for how they might directly assist their child in identified domains.

Secondary Education/Graduation/Retention Rates/Credit Attainment

The 2013-2014 Credit Attainment SMART Goal reads, "From September 2013 to June 2014, 80% of self-declared FNIM students in each of Grades 10, 11, and 12 will attain a minimum of 8 academic credits.

The 2014-2015 High School FNIM SMART Goals read:

- From September 2014 to June 2015, 80% of self-declared FNIM students in each of Grades 10, 11, and 12 will attain a minimum of 8 credits.
- By June 2015, the percentage of FNIM Grade 10 students completing Grade 10 and remaining in school for Grade 11 will be 90%.
- By June 2015, the on-time graduation rate for FNIM students in Grade 12 will be 70% or greater.

Secondary Education Goal Commentary

Data collected for 2013-2014 indicates that over 80% of self-declared FNIM students achieved attainment of 8 or more credits over their academic year.

Credit Attainment (2014-2015)

Data shows that this goal was approached but not met, particularly at 2 of the reporting high schools. Additional resources are currently in place to meet SMART goal targets for 2015-2016.

Enrolment Retention (2014-2015)

Data shows that the enrolment retention SMART goal was exceeded at two locations and closely approached at the remaining high schools. This set of outcomes will help direct additional resources where they are most needed.

On-Time Graduation Rate (2014-2015)

Data shows that all high schools met this smart goal by a reasonable margin of success.

2014-2015 Outcomes by School	Total Student Count (FNIM); Gr 10-12	Minimum 8 credits attained	Minimum 8 credits attained
Riffel	33	25	75.8%
O'Neill	72	49	68.1%
Miller	45	24	53.3%
LeBoldus	22	18	81.8%
TOTAL	172	116	67.4%

School	Grade 10 Count (FNIM)	# Enrolled in Sept. Grade 11	# Enrolled in Sept. Grade 11
Riffel	18	16	88.9%
O'Neill	30	25	83.3%
Miller	26	21	80.8%
LeBoldus	9	9	100.0%
TOTAL	83	71	85.5%

School	Grade 12 count (FNIM)	On-Time Graduation count (FNIM)	On-Time Graduation count
Riffel	12	9	75.0%
O'Neill	17	15	88.2%
Miller	10	9	90.0%
LeBoldus	5	4	80.0%
TOTAL	44	37	84.1%