



SAFE & CARING SCHOOLS

SEPTEMBER 2017



Nominated by:

Horizon School Division #205

For the

2017 Premier's Board of Education Award for Innovation and Excellence in Education

Horizon School Division Board Chair: Jim Hack

Director of Education: Kevin C. Garinger

Background

The three foundational goals set out by the Horizon School Division No. 205 Board of Education guide the work of all staff across the system. These goals are:

1. Safe & Caring

- Provide safe & caring learning environments for all students and staff

2. Literacy

- Ensure 100% of Kindergarten students are ready for reading by Grade 1
- Ensure 100% of Grade 1-8 students are reading at grade level
- Ensure 100% of Grade 9-12 students attain a level of literacy commensurate with success in the workforce or post-secondary education

3. Assessment

- Ensure effective assessment practices are in place across all schools



By focusing efforts on these three principles for effective learning, Horizon School Division's work has helped students from all backgrounds achieve success in learning.

While work is ongoing around each of these three foundational goals, our efforts in support of the *Safe & Caring* goal have seen significant innovation and success in recent years. This work ensures that all students, staff, parents/caregivers, community members and educational partners know they are welcome and celebrated in our system. This is critical to improving student learning outcomes, student engagement and a sense of belonging within the school community.

With the guidance and support of Horizon's Board of Education, a number of key initiatives are in place to achieve our *Safe & Caring* objectives:

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

A *Culturally Responsive module*, implemented in 2015, is shared with educators across Horizon School Division. This module was developed by Horizon staff with help from the Saskatchewan Professional Development Unit (SPDU) and in partnership with the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission (SHRC) as a professional development component for Horizon staff. The goal of this module is to challenge accepted paradigms about race and shift school culture towards accepting and celebrating individual

differences. The module includes information from the SHRC's *Citizenship Education* – an important initiative that supports the development of students' citizenship knowledge, skills and practice through curriculum-aligned resource materials from Grades 1 to 12. The *Culturally Responsive* module is available to the public on the Horizon School Division website (horizonsd.ca/services/safeandcaring).

Holocaust Symposium

On May 5, 2015, Horizon School Division held its first Holocaust Symposium. This has become an annual event attended by every Grade 11 student across the system. The event is made possible by the support of the Board of Education, in partnership with the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission and the Azrieli Foundation. This was the first educational symposium of its kind. Each of the past three Holocaust Symposiums have featured presentations on topics such as Holocaust history, anti-Semitism and Jewish culture. The highlight of these events has been the opportunity to hear testimonials directly from Holocaust survivors. Survivors share their powerful, compelling stories with Horizon students and staff



Mr. Amek Adler, Holocaust Survivor, sharing his testimony at the 3rd Annual Horizon Holocaust Symposium

and answer questions about their experiences. This event continues to evolve each year, incorporating information and presentations relating to genocide throughout recent history. The theme of this event, "*Interpret the past, forge the future*", is focused on ensuring the next generation of citizens learns the lessons of our past and works to embrace all cultures with kindness and compassion.

Reconciliation Flag Raising Ceremony

In recognition of National Indigenous Peoples' Day 2017, Horizon School Division held a ceremony at central office to raise the Reconciliation Flag and the flags of Horizon's four First Nation partners -- Day Star First Nation, Fishing Lake First Nation, George Gordon First Nation and Muskowekwan First Nation.

Dignitaries representing each of Horizon's four partner First Nations joined with members of Horizon's Board of Education, representatives from the Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations (FSIN), Touchwood Agency Tribal Council, Métis Nation - Saskatchewan, Horizon Senior Leadership and central office staff. The morning began with a pipe ceremony led by First Nations partners and joined by Horizon central office staff and Board of Education Trustees. A local drum group performed an honour song while the flags of each First Nation were raised in front of the Horizon central office building. The morning continued with performances by



a number of traditional dancers, and all in attendance joined a round dance to conclude the ceremony. The event was one of the many ways Horizon has committed to the vital reconciliation process of truth and healing, as part of the *Safe & Caring* goal.

Support for LGBTQ Students

In 2016, the Pride Flag was raised at Humboldt City Hall for the first time, to coincide with Humboldt Pride Week. Horizon School Division was proud to support this ceremony, signifying the community's support for and celebration of the LGBTQ community. The flag was raised once again in 2017, and Horizon was once again proud to join in the ceremony, with Director of Education, Kevin Garinger sharing words of support for all members of our diverse communities. These events are an extension of the Board's support of LGBTQ students, seen in the development of Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) administrative procedures to support students in every school and provide space for conversations and support relating to gender and sexuality.

Culture Days

Over the course of the 2016-17 school year, through Horizon's Learning Services Team, a number of "Culture Days" were held in Horizon schools to connect students with the various cultures in their communities. So far, these events have been held at Viscount Central School, Watson School and Drake School. In each instance, members from a number of cultural backgrounds in the area are invited to share with students and staff about their culture and heritage.

In addition to inviting members of various cultural backgrounds from the surrounding areas of each community, our Culture Days have also involved presentations from members of the Islamic faith and representatives from OutSaskatoon. OutSaskatoon is an LGBTQ organization that works to combat heterosexism, homophobia, biphobia and transphobia.

Connecting Culture Through Literacy



Horizon's Writer-In-Residence, acclaimed Canadian author Sigmund Brouwer, has been working with Horizon students since 2015. In 2016, he began working closely with a class of students at Punnichy Community High School to engage them in reading. These students served as First Nations consultants on his latest book, *Innocent Heroes*, which was released to critical acclaim last year following a book launch celebration at the school. The work of Mr. Brouwer, teachers and Horizon's Literacy Team resulted in substantial growth for these students'

reading levels. The year prior to this work, 91% of the class was below grade level. Following this

focused approach, and by engaging students in a process that celebrated their culture, 34% of the class was reading at or above grade level the following year.

Digital Awareness and Digital Safety

“Kids in the Know” is a program that Horizon purchased for schools, which was put in place for the start of this year. Teachers take an online training program to help them effectively use the program in their schools as they continue to help students develop the skills that will keep them safe in the physical and digital world. Part of this program also supports schools helping parents to understand how they can guide their children to safely navigate the digital world.

Following Their Voices

Te Kotahitanga research, based in New Zealand, indicates that culturally responsive schools see increased student engagement and improved achievement outcomes. This research provided the basis for the Government of Saskatchewan’s *Following Their Voices* program, which engages students, teachers and First Nations Elders in feedback related to improved student engagement and offers training to teachers and principals relating to culturally responsive schools. Horizon School Division is pleased to have Raymore School take part in this initiative. The feedback received through this program helps guide the education sector to provide better student engagement for all schools, and the Horizon Board was integral in supporting Raymore School’s involvement in this important work.

Each of these *Safe and Caring* programs have helped us support students of all backgrounds to achieve success in our classrooms and beyond.

Selection Criteria

Evidence of direct Board influence and participation in the innovation

The Horizon School Division Board of Education is critical to each of these initiatives and to the *Safe and Caring* direction of Horizon schools. In their meetings with First Nations Chiefs and councils, Horizon Trustees have established relationships, ensured community voices are heard, and built respect for diverse perspectives. Trustees attend and bring greetings at events such as Horizon’s Holocaust Symposiums, signaling their commitment to these important conversations. Horizon’s Board further indicates their support and involvement with these initiatives through their financial support.

Innovative nature of the program or project

Horizon’s *Safe and Caring* initiative has been the result of a multifaceted approach. Not one single initiative or event, but several. Alignment and integration of these strategies is deliberate, consistently communicating the same message: Every student contributes to their school community. Their contribution is valued and enhances the classroom, the school discourse and the learning that takes place in Horizon School Division.

Each initiative or event has been unique. For example, partnership between the Board of Education and the SHRC made the Horizon Holocaust Symposium possible. A close relationship with our First Nations

partners made possible the Reconciliation Flag Raising ceremony – the first Reconciliation event of its kind held by a school division in Saskatchewan. Recognizing a need in the students of Punnichy Community High School, we were able to focus the efforts of our Writer-In-Residence and engage them in a love of reading through a process that incorporated an examination and discussion of their culture.

Sustainability of the innovation within the present system or school

Horizon's *Safe and Caring* work focuses on supporting staff and students to become leaders within their schools and communities. Since this work is systemic, offering colleagues and students opportunities to interact and learn together, the result will be a sustainable change in paradigms. The benefits from this work will be seen in both our schools and communities. These initiatives will continue to evolve and support staff and student growth as responsible global citizens.

Cost of the innovation related to benefits achieved

The following are approximate costs for events/initiatives undertaken within the *Safe and Caring* goal over the course of the 2016-17 school year:

Holocaust Symposium – \$20,000

Writer-In-Residence (including books for students) – \$60,000

“Kids in the Know” digital awareness and safety tool– \$7,000

These efforts are aimed at encouraging staff, students and community members to celebrate diverse cultures, knowing they belong within their schools and encouraging positive development as citizens in their communities and digital spaces. As a result, the benefits achieved in student engagement, sense of belonging and cultural understanding are far-reaching and will be felt for many years to come.

Client support for innovation

Horizon's *Safe and Caring* work is well-received by stakeholders. We regularly receive very positive feedback following *Safe and Caring* events and activities.

As an example of this positive feedback, the following are a few selected quotes from students, taken from the *Holocaust Symposium Student Survey* in response to the question: “In a statement, express the most important lesson/idea that you gained by attending the 2017 Horizon Holocaust Symposium”

I gained to not judge a person from the outside, you should get to know them before you make up assumptions about people – Foam Lake Composite Student

To listen to the survivors speak. It helps us understand the wrongs committed in the past and helps the survivors cope. – William Derby School Student

The lessons of the last generation can too easily be lost by the next. It is therefore important to preserve and protect that which has been learned through hardship and sorrow. – Lanigan Central High School Student

It is always important to help others, even when not easy. No matter how small, the gesture will not go unnoticed. – William Derby School Student

That we are the last generation to hear Holocaust survivors firsthand. We must share our knowledge once they are gone because we have had the firsthand experiences. It is a huge privilege to have heard Mr. Adler's last speech. Thank you for the experience. – Three Lakes School Student

The most important idea is to stand out for what is right when we are being opposed. The change in the world has to start with us. – Foam Lake Composite Student

Partnerships in Support of the Innovation

First Nations Partners: First Nations Chiefs and Councils have engaged with Horizon senior leadership and Trustees regarding how to improve education outcomes for their communities. First Nations partners have shown their support for these initiatives through their willingness to share their culture through presentations to students and staff, and share opening prayers at various events.

Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission: The SHRC has provided critical support and partnership for a number of *Culturally Responsive* initiatives in Horizon schools. Representatives speak at the Horizon Holocaust Symposium each year on the role of the Commission, Human Rights, and post-1945 human rights infringements and genocide. The SHRC has also offered their support through involvement with the *Culturally Responsive* module.

OutSaskatoon: Representatives from OutSaskatoon are invited to speak with staff and students at a number of events. These representatives share resources and support for LGBTQ students and promote gay-straight alliances and safe spaces for students to discuss gender and sexuality.

Evidence of improved student achievement

Review of School Effectiveness (ROSE) / OurSCHOOL Survey

The ROSE process was implemented during the 2015-16 school year. ROSE is a research-focused improvement tool meant to provide feedback to the school, division and Board of Education. It gathers data based on the “7 Correlates of Effective Schools” (Lawrence W. Lezotte):

- | | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| 1. Instructional Leadership | 5. Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress |
| 2. Clear and Focused Mission | 6. Positive Home-School Relations |
| 3. Safe and Orderly Environment | 7. Opportunity to Learn and Student Time on Task |
| 4. Climate of High Expectations | |

Nine schools participated in the ROSE process during the 2016-17 school year. Cudworth, Ituna, Punnichy Elementary, Watson, Imperial, Lanigan Central High School, Humboldt Collegiate Institute, Quill Lake, Wadena Elementary. Following the ROSE processes in early 2017, students completed the Spring OurSCHOOL Survey (March 2-23, 2017). The results showed improvement in a number of categories between the Fall and Spring surveys:

Imperial School

“Students With Positive Relationships” – responses from students increased from 84% – 97%.

“Feel Safe Attending this School” – increased from 68% – 78%.

Watson Grade 4-8

“Students With Positive Relationships” – responses increased from 77% – 84%.

“Students Who are Victims of Bullying” – decreased from 28% – 22%.

“Feel Safe Attending this School” – increased from 60% – 69%.

Watson Grade 9-12

“Students with a Positive Sense of Belonging” increased from 74% to 79%.

“Feel Safe Attending this School” – increased from 82% – 87%.

“Advocacy at School” – increased from 35% – 42%.

For Horizon School Division students in Elementary Grades, the measure *Students who are victims of bullying* showed steady improvement from the Fall of 2014 - 28%, to the Spring of 2017 - 19%; this is well below the Canadian Norm of 26%. *Relevance* has also showed an increase from 73% in Spring 2013 to 80% in Spring 2017, however this is down slightly from the 81% achieved last year.

In Secondary Grades, the measure *Students Who are Victims of Bullying* has improved from the Fall of 2011 at 26% to the Spring of 2017- 13%; this is an all time low in this area, though slightly above the Fall number of 12%, when this number reached its lowest level since the survey began in 2011. Both the Fall and Spring data is below the Canadian Norm of 22%.

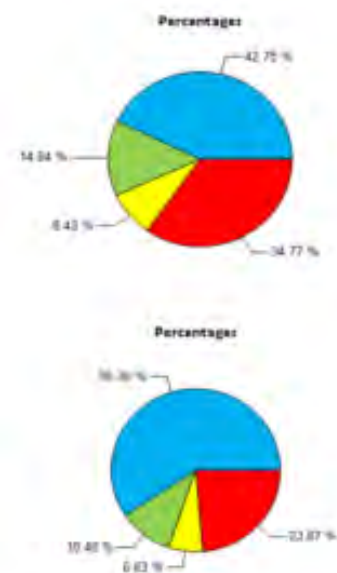
The measures for Students planning to finish High School, has showed marked improvement 2014 - 78%, to the Spring of 2017 - 87%; this is above the Canadian Norm of 82% and the highest result achieved since the beginning of this survey in 2011.

The measures as a whole for secondary students were above the Canadian norms.

Literacy Results

The graphs to the right show improvements to Horizon’s reading levels over the past three years. The top graph indicates reading levels measured in the **Fall of 2014**. The bottom graph shows reading levels measured in the **Spring of 2017**.

Blue – above expectations
Green – meeting expectations
Yellow – approaching expectations
Red – at risk



A significant increase can be seen in the number of students reading above the expectations for their grade level. Another major improvement can be seen in a reduction of students at risk.

Graduation Rates

Horizon students have also achieved a three-year graduation rate of 84% for the 2016-17 school year – just 1% short of Saskatchewan’s education sector goal of an 85% three-year graduation rate by 2020. This compares to the 2016-17 provincial three-year graduation rate of 76.5%. Horizon students also achieved an 86.7% four-year graduation rate and an 87.2% five-year graduation rate. This compares to the provincial rates of 81.3% (four-year) and 84% (five-year) for the province’s overall extended-time grad rates.

Conclusion

Horizon School Division’s Board of Education has focused the work of our system on ensuring students and staff are safe and cared for within our schools and facilities. By ensuring that students have a sense of belonging and a sense that their culture is celebrated, we see increased student engagement. This leads to improved reading levels and, ultimately, increased graduation rates. These initiatives are not aimed at one particular segment of the student population; rather they are inclusive of all students and cultures. This work is possible because of the relationships Horizon’s Board has built with communities, First Nations partners, the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission, OutSaskatoon and the Ministry of Education, among others. The work of Horizon’s staff, our focus and the success our students have achieved stems from the guidance and support we receive from our Board of Education. Their dedication to their *Safe and Caring* goal sets the tone for our vast division and helps us celebrate what makes each of us unique.