

Nelna Bessie John School

School Growth Plan
May 2016

Yukon
Education
Éducation

PART 1: Context, Priorities, Response to School Review, Recommendations and Connections

Context:

Nelna Bessie John School is a small, rural K4-9 school in the semi-isolated community of Beaver Creek on the Alaskan Highway, located on the Yukon-Alaska border which is comprised of White River First Nation and non-First Nation community members. The school officially opened as Beaver Creek School in September 1961.

The school, was renamed Nelna Bessie John School in 2005 in honour of a respected WRFN Elder. It is a two classroom, multi-grade school, offering primary, intermediate, and junior-high education with a staff of a Teacher/Principal, a classroom teacher, a 0.4 Native Language Instructor and trainee, and a 1.0 Educational Assistant. We serve students from the community of White River First Nation and non-First Nation status. Upper Tanana currently is the First Nation Language taught in the school. The population of Beaver Creek is estimated at around 104, with 14 children under the age of 13. The community of Beaver Creek does not have a day-care or Early Childhood Education facility or program. The main employers in Beaver Creek are Yukon government (Education, Health, and Highways), RCMP, Customs and Immigration, White River First Nation (WRFN) and privately owned businesses.

The vision for student success has its focus in connecting learning to life with developing individual student learning plans and successful transition between grade levels. The values of the school center on cultural inclusion which link the school (NBS) with the community in a variety of collaborative cultural programs, with partnership support from White River First Nation; taking learning out of the classroom and onto the land, while incorporating 21st century learning and technology.

Priorities:

The school's priority is set out in several goals:

Goal one: ongoing commitment toward students achieving their functional grade level in: Literacy, Numeracy, Cultural Inclusion, and Social and Emotional Growth through the practice and use of self-regulation programs and technology.

Goal Two: Creating a Project-based Learning environment for the students of NBJs incorporating the learning objectives of the newly devised BC curriculum to encompass inclusivity of the multi-grade and ability of our students.

Response to School Review Recommendations:

The school intends to respond to the 2014/15 school review in the following areas:

As a school growth plan committee, we disagree with the SGP review, we feel it is not valid, it is biased and school council takes exception with the two SGP reports. It is difficult to submit student data without violating a student's confidentiality having such small student numbers. With such a small school population the WRFN parents are very much represented in our SGP, and we wonder what that would look like for the review committee. The main challenge our School Council has is filling the guaranteed WRFN representative position on the council, again with such a small community size we are challenged to overcome any conflict of interest and over-lapping positions between WRFN band council, school council, supply teachers and parents.

Processes and Connections:

School Growth Review Team: Dan Ritco (principal), Ruth Johnny (FNL), Jolenda Johnny (Education Assistant), Kate Todd (School Council Chair), Caulene May (School Council Member)

School Wide Writes, DART, PM Benchmark assessments indicate a focussed concern in literacy, encouraging us to continue with interventions and literacy initiatives including focussed comprehension activities, daily writing, and oral class presentations. We also have dedicated class time and an appropriate location in the school for the Kindergarten and pre-school students in order to support focussed attention on their particular curriculum outcomes and play based learning.

PART 2: Focus

Evidence and Progress made:

Looking Back: Currently, the concerns outlined last year for students in the areas of Literacy and Social/Emotional growth remain. SWW and DART assessments indicate our literacy strategies and daily routines have increased student engagement in the areas of reading, writing self-assessment and self-monitoring strategies to improve student success. Attendance has been lower overall this year; again the small demographic of the school is a major factor. With only two families represented in the morning, if one child in a family gets sick the other child will follow. So, at times 50% of the morning students could be away to 100% because the children spend so much time together both in and out of school.

Social and emotional opportunities for social interaction growth remained limited due to our isolated location. The students of NBJs have begun to identify and explore the emotions that drive their choices and speak more openly about what may be going on inside them. As a school we visited Selkirk Elementary so the students could experience being in a larger urban school with many students their same age and grade and make new connections. We also joined with Kluane Lake School to release the Chum Salmon and a Sports Day to increase the interaction between the two schools, First Nations and communities.

Literacy: Comprehension and areas of writing continue to be areas of concern, but daily writing activities, strategies and individual support has shown a growth in the students' work. Literacy strategies are becoming more familiar, and the students are becoming more comfortable taking risks with reading and writing. A stronger educational foundation has been established by having a dedicated Kindergarten and K-4 program in the afternoons while working collaboratively with the CDC to address early speech and language concerns for the younger students.

Cultural Inclusion: A modest cultural calendar of events occurred this year as we were working on building a better working partnership and relationship with WRFN. The WRFN Community Education Liaison Coordinator primarily works out of the school. The Muskrat camp held in March was an invitation by WRFN for NBJs to attend their camp. We coordinated with WRFN on dates, staff, location, set-up and supplies. This year we were invited to many cultural events with WRFN but with some changes in staffing in their office, there is some room for improvement with scheduling and preparation for culture camps. The main challenges for the school to attend Culture Camps are the field trip requirements

and the amount of paper work to be approved before attending. Due to our location the majority of proposed Cultural field trips are considered “Complex Trips”, require Superintendent approval and must be cleared by a First Nations Committee at the Department of Education. These demands prevent “on-the-spot” cultural experiences and require long lead in time for any trips.

Numeracy: This objective is promising. Student enthusiasm and attitude for math has improved considerably due to hands-on math projects with emphasis on the core curriculum ideas and strategies to support “life skills”. The struggle stems from literacy issues and student self-confidence.

Looking Forward

After consultation with other staff, school council and our Superintendent, we are continuing with our “Building Community Communication and Collaboration” focus, with a strong emphasis on WRFN/NBJS partnerships. As a renewing step we had the Chief and a member of WRFN Council in to discuss our Cultural Inclusion funding application. We want to have our outdoor classroom completed to address “on-the-spot” cultural activities while remaining within the community limits without having to request complex field trip permission.

A new priority for the upcoming school year is that we will pilot incorporating project-based learning throughout the school year to address the new core competencies outlined in the new BC curriculum for the students of NBJS. The previous goals will continue to be areas of focus at Nelnah Bessie John School.

- Social and emotional opportunities for growth
- Literacy
- Cultural Inclusion
- Numeracy

With a new focus on Project-Based Learning as a means to address the future career and work readiness for students. It will address cooperative learning in the classroom to help raise motivation levels, peer acceptance, academic achievement, and social skills for all students regardless of their grade or ability level. NBJS will begin to work with parents to better understand what Project-Based Learning looks like and how they can benefit the students. “Project-based learning emphasizes learning activities that are long-term, interdisciplinary and student-centred. Unlike traditional, teacher-led classroom activities, students often must organize their own work and manage their own time in a project-based class. Project-based instruction differs from traditional inquiry by its emphasis on students’ collaborative or individual artefact construction to represent what is being learned. Project-based learning also gives students the

opportunity to explore problems and challenges that have real world applications, increasing the possibility of long-term retention of skills and concepts.” (Wikipedia)

School Inquiry and Action: Project-Based Learning

Rationale goals and objectives:

Goal: To develop and support a Project-Based Learning environment, including experiential learning opportunities across all the grades and curriculum areas.

Objectives to support the goal:

Our objective is to create a Project-Based Learning unit that incorporates First Nation Culture and other curriculum areas to address gaps in student learning and understanding, such as: land-claim agreements, land stewardship, governance, Indian Act and self-government.

“Project Based Learning is a systemic teaching method that engages students in learning important knowledge and 21st century skills through and extended, student-influenced inquiry process structured around complex, authentic questions and carefully designed products and learning tasks” (Buck Institute for Education, (2011), p. 5).

Target:

Project-Based Learning unit will be introduced to both the students and their parents utilizing and modifying example units from PBLU.org.

NBJS will have one completed PBL unit drafted to cover starting from a Cultural component, with project guidelines, sequence of project, teaching guide, launching project, scaffolding project, assessing project, rubrics, student outcomes, curricular links, feedback reporting sheets, time planner, resources, student and teacher handouts.

PART 3 – ACT

Goal: Project-Based Learning

Objective: How do we develop and support a Project-Based Learning environment while maintaining inclusivity and assessment outcomes?

Actions: Strategies/Interventions	Evidence to Track Progress	Person (s) Responsible
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -For the first month of school introduce what Project-based learning looks like and its rationale to parents and the community in weekly information sessions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Attendance taken during weekly open information sessions and with parents before/during, planning and after 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Principal, School Council, FNLT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Launch a PBL: “Make a Difference: Civic Responsibility” unit with the students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Rubrics, reflection sheets, planner 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Teacher/Principal
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Review time used to time required for PBL activities and how attendance of students impact planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -On track with weekly plans to complete the PBL. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Teacher/Principal and WRFN
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Report to School Council throughout the pilot PBL with outcomes of students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Rubrics, feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Teacher/Principal and WRFN
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Begin developing a PBL with rubric, time plan and student outcomes for a cultural unit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Written unit started, outcomes identified, rubrics created, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Teacher/Principal, FN teacher, School Council, Parents, WRFN, FN consultants

-Ready for presentation during 2016-2017 academic year to the parents, WRFN and community after review by FN and curricular consultants.

-Finished unit to submit April 2017 to FN consultants and other consultants

-Teacher/Principal, FN teacher, School Council, consultants

PART 4: Monitor and Adjust

**Dates for monitoring progress:
October, February, May**

Communications Plan:

Principal and School Growth team members should be in place for the upcoming school year. New plan should be reviewed and meeting dates set for October, February and May for plan review. School Council and SG team should meet to monitor progress. Review process should include a meeting in early May to consider evidence of progress and establish new/renewed focus for next year.

Date and description of adjustments made to the plan:

March 7, 2016: Draft sent to Simon Blakesley and Mike Woods for review.

Signatures:

Barb Kaminecki-Principal

Tristian Nieman-School Council Chair

Ruth Johnny, Teacher

References

Hallermann, S., Larmer, J. & Mergendoller, J. (2011). *PBL in the Elementary Grades*, Buck Institute for Education.