



School District 87 (Stikine)

District Literacy Plan

July, 2010

Prepared and submitted by Gerry Brennan, Director of Instruction

School District 87 (Stikine) District Literacy Plan Report July, 2010

1. Welcome to the Stikine: District and community context and demographics:

Covering an area of over 188,000 square kilometres, the Stikine region boasts several of the largest and most significant parks in Canada. Here can be found the mighty Stikine, Taku and Liard rivers, three of the last free flowing wilderness rivers in North America. The Stikine River has created the dramatic Grand Canyon of the Stikine -- a major geological wonder. Gorges up to 300 m (948 ft.) deep have been carved through sandstone, granite, and volcanic rock. The Stikine river basin, passing through two countries, abounds with a great variety of wildlife which still coexists in a natural balance between predator and prey.

The Tahltan, Tlingit and Kaska Peoples are the original First Nations of the region. The Tahltan traded their goods frequently using the coastal Tlingit tribes as middlemen. Today the Tahltan people are activity involved in managing the resources of this region, most specifically in the communities of Telegraph Creek and Dease Lake. The Tlingit First Nation is prominent in Atlin, while the Kaska First Nation populates the Lower Post community. Each community is distinct within the District and offers opportunities to celebrate cultures.

We live in a beautiful rural and remote area. Our small communities (the largest has a population of about 350 people) are spread throughout this vast region which stretches north to the Yukon and west to Alaska. The trip from Atlin, starting at the furthest north-west point to Lower Post to Dease Lake to Telegraph Creek, the furthest south-west point, is distanced by almost 1500 kilometres. Leaving from Dease Lake, day trips to the other communities are virtually impossible.

Our school population is composed mainly of First Nation students. Hunting, fishing and gathering are important to community and family life. In June we see a drop in enrolment as many students and families go to fish camp to catch and preserve their yearly supply of fish.

Leaders in the First Nations community are working hard to maintain and promote traditional languages and culture. This task is difficult due to the influence of and economic wealth from high paying jobs generated by mining and development. These impacts create social, emotional and cultural issues.

In our communities, there are many single parent families, a high rate of family breakdown, domestic violence and poor health and lifestyles. Many teenagers are engaged in self-destructive behaviours including drug and alcohol abuse as well as sexual activity leading to unplanned pregnancies.

Still, there is a strong desire for education. Parents want their children to do well at school, although they may lack the capacity for understandable reasons to provide practical support at home. Grandparents and extended families play a huge role in the success of young people and given time, support and a variety of opportunities, students can and do succeed.

The Stikine School District has much to offer our students. Small class sizes, dedicated District staff, Principals, teachers and support staff, as well as well maintained schools and adherence to provincial curriculum and standards are in place. Educational programs and services are provided through two K to 9 schools in Atlin and Telegraph Creek, one K to 7 school in Lower Post and one K to 12 school in Dease Lake. Both Atlin and Telegraph Creek support High School enrolments from various age groups in their communities. Iskut has the Klappan Independent School. Each community has pre Kindergarten programs: Iskut, Telegraph Creek and Atlin have active Head Start Programs, while Lower Post and Dease Lake run Pre-school programs.

Current Adult literacy programs are extremely limited with a Reading Center in Dease Lake, a community volunteer-run Library in Atlin and a Tahltan Band Office Library being developed in Telegraph Creek. Unfortunately, the closing of Northern Lights College campus in Dease Lake will leave the community Reading Center without a location.

A combination of efforts by the School District to address K through 12 literacy needs and the Literacy Now Task Forces addressing community literacy will indeed increase the capacity of communities to improve literacy throughout the Stikine areas that have active Literacy Now Task Forces, currently, limited to Atlin and Dease Lake.

2. School District 87 (Stikine) commitment to Literacy

School District 87 is clearly committed to literacy development, especially for the school-aged students of the Stikine. While the primary objective is K-12 education, the District supports the efforts of each Literacy Now Task Force and recognizes the importance of its participation to assist with community literacy programs that address the needs of all community members, youngsters and elders, alike. Given the urgency of improving K-12 academic achievement and meeting needs of the whole child as outlined in our current District Achievement Contract, we will continue to concentrate on supporting our schools' populations first. At the same time we recognize our responsibility and are committed to supporting literacy throughout our communities and will continue to support literacy initiatives in whatever practical manner we can.

Our **District Literacy Plan** is simple. We must foster growth in all areas for all our K-12 students, school-aged and adult. Our public schools offer the educational setting for school-aged students, while the Satellite Program assists students of school age who are unable to attend school and adult students engaged in the completion of their Grade 12 Dogwood or adult equivalent. District efforts must provide opportunities for all staff to further develop skills to meet the vast and varied needs of all students. This will be accomplished through the successful implementation of our District Achievement Contract. Our capacity to support a District Literacy Plan that extends beyond K-12 is limited; however, we are committed to maintain connections with all agencies and community organizations and actively participate in initiatives that promote a wide spectrum of literacy development in all communities, whether a Literacy Now Task Force exists, or not. We will participate in all Literacy Now Task Force meetings whenever possible and provide ideas, support, guidance and sponsorship. We are also committed to strengthening individual school and community relationships by acting as liaison between partners and supporting activities that strengthen this aspect of public education. Finally, we are committed to the completion and signing of our Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement, scheduled for October, 2010. This accomplishment will allow for further opportunities to meet the goals of the Agreement that address the whole child, socially, emotionally, physically and intellectually. Again, the achievement of these goals will, most often, occur through our schools.

3. The Year in Review

Dease Lake Literacy Now Task Force was able to hire a LOC at the end of the 2009- school year. This position was a ten month appointment and the LOC resigned as of May, 2010. During his tenure, the LOC was active in seeking out community needs and responding when plausible. Communication between District and the LOC was irregular but shared a common interest in supporting school-aged children and pre-schoolers. Literacy Now sponsored various activities including beverages for a community dinner that brought people together for a celebration of 'community'. This was co-organized by the Director of Instruction and a Tahltan Health employee. One of the more significant contributions was the financial support of the purchase of RealCare© Program babies that resulted in 3 community members and 6 high school students caring for a virtual baby for a weekend and receiving computerized

data on their care-giving skills. This program was started by a Tahltan Health employee and when circumstances changed the District continued the program with the help of a District employee. In addition, the Reading Center was promoted and organized trips by Pre-school and K-1 classes occurred. The Reading Center supported Girl Guide badge acquisition for reading, as well.

Upon resignation and with the submission of his final report, the LOC was disconcerted with the Literacy Now Program and felt that distribution of government funding needed to be reconsidered. In conversation, the LOC explained that losses of funding significantly impact small communities, often more so than larger centers.

Currently, the Dease Lake Task Force is without stewardship, a LOC, and an active Board. Events during the summer will dictate the continuation of the Chairperson, as well as other Task Force members. In the fall, the pursuit of a steward will continue as Tahltan Health has expressed possible support for this duty. The District will re-establish communication with all partners in the fall.

Atlin's perseverance has paid off as they finally were able to maintain a committee member consistency and secure a LOC and move forward with implementation of their Community Literacy Plan. There have been changes in the infrastructure of the Committee with new Chairpersons, committee members resigning and a LOC being hired. Connections with the District Literacy Plan and coordination of efforts have been minimal this past year. In part, this may be due to personnel transitions and awareness of the District's desire to actively participate as a part of the Task Force. Most meetings were scheduled without travel considerations and teleconferencing did not work out due to scheduling and short notice of meetings. The Committee has been quite focussed on their initiatives and action has been taken. Their movement forward with implementation has been speedy but not in haste. Another consideration for the lack of connection with the District was due to the Director of Instruction's capacity to attend to Community Literacy Planning due to other professional responsibilities.

In a short time, the Atlin Task Force and LOC have been able to provide a number of services. Advertising has occurred through the local newspaper. Spelling Bees have been sponsored on Friday afternoons. Story time and open house at the Library have been successful. A toy lending program and funding for book series through the Atlin School PAC have been implemented. The annual Atlin Summer Festival will see Children's Art workshops and puppeteer performances sponsored by Literacy Now.

Telegraph Creek has not engaged in the process to establish a Literacy Now Task Force; however, efforts by the school have enriched Literacy in the school and beyond to the community. A music festival was held in conjunction with visiting Denetia School from Lower Post. Community events have brought community members, families of students and elders into the school to add to the development of Tahltan Language and Culture. School staff members enhance relationships in the community and foster involvement with sports and recreational activities as well. District support for reading in the school has seen an improvement for the first time in years.

Lower Post has not engaged in the process to establish a Literacy Now Task Force. The community has joined together with Denetia School as the catalyst for improved literacy. Community members are active in the regular routines at school and in enrichment activities related to Language and Culture development. Integration of curricular programs and First Nations' traditions occur daily. Cabins have been built for outdoor experiences, field trips to experience traditional ways have occurred monthly. Community use of school facilities and participation in events has become a part of the school and community culture. This approach has provided literacy activities for the whole community.

Iskut maintains a private Band school and many students choose to attend Dease Lake School after grade 8 or 9. There are some students who endure the 60 minute one way bus ride who attend the elementary grades as well. This year far greater attention has been given to building relationships between Dease Lake School and the Iskut community, as well as between the two communities

themselves. Teachers have travelled to Iskut for parent-teacher interviews. Transition meetings were held in the spring for students coming to Dease Lake in the fall. Regular communication lines have been established between the District and the Educational Management at the Iskut Band Office. Conversations continue to focus on meeting the needs of school aged children from Iskut. The District also provides Satellite Distance Learning opportunities for adult aged students from Iskut through the District Satellite program.

The School District has relinquished its offer to steward funds for Literacy Now and both Task Forces have been at work to find new stewardship. Dease Lake is hoping that if the Task Force continues in the fall, Tahltan Health will agree to steward funds. At the time of this report, Atlin was confident that they had found a steward and discussions were underway to secure this opportunity.

To date, the District has re-established ties with Inter-agency groups by attending meetings and actively offering ideas to support community growth in all areas. We have sponsored efforts to improve community literacy in addition to contributions by Literacy Now Task Forces.

4. Communication

Communication has been vital to the development and success of each Literacy Now Task Force and operations. Recent events of the second half of the school year decreased communication opportunities between Task Forces and the District; however, in the case of Dease Lake, communication continued sporadically. In Atlin the late completion of the Task Force's plan and only recent appointment of a new Chairperson and LOC has rekindled some communication lines.

It is expected that 2010-2011 will see the return of regular conversations between both Task Forces initiated by the Director of Instruction when in Atlin and regularly with the yet to be determined new LOC in Dease Lake.

Distance and related travel will always be a significant factor for quality communication in the Stikine. However, the support of PLNet, WTS, improved technology hardware and services at the District level have increased opportunities for successful communication without travel. At least this is the case for four of our five communities. Telegraph Creek continues to present a geographical problem for connectivity. The slow speed and limited band width presents a scenario for the four District schools that looks like driving a car with three wheels. Limited access for Telegraph Creek omits the school and community from many opportunities that are available to virtually the rest of the Province. This is crucial for literacy development in the 21st century and must continue to be in the forefront of all Provincial conversations around technology service delivery.

The District will maintain and enhance lines of communication and continue to participate within its means with the regional and local Literacy Coordinators and maintain active membership in the established Literacy Now Task Forces.

5. Summary Reflections

Student performance and achievement data for the Stikine indicates an urgency to attend to the academic needs of the K-12 students in our public school system. This is paramount for the District. At the same time, we continue to understand the importance of the community to help raise a child. Social and emotional needs of students have to be met in order to support their learning in any setting. A partnership with each community that fosters literacy in its broadest sense and reaches out to all members of the community may ultimately enhance K-12 learning. We have not been able to accomplish this fully, due to the academic urgency District-wide.

There is also evidence that Stikine students often take longer than the traditional 12 years to graduate. The District supports students in the system until they reach adult age and then limited services are available in two of the four communities. However, the District is committed to ensure that these offerings are not at the expense of K-12 school-aged student educational services.

Each school in School District 87 has been committed to literacy development. Partnerships with community agencies and members have enhanced this commitment. For Literacy Now Task Force communities, we have seen the potential for further partnerships and initiatives. Investigation and analyses of community resources has strengthened the chances for further partnerships. The District expects to continue to build connections and relationships with these resources and the people behind them. The District will continue to liaison and discuss needs with agencies in each community and support initiatives whenever possible. We will also continue to support early childhood opportunities.

The closure of the Northern Lights College campuses and yet undetermined new service providers present an interesting situation for consideration. The District may have to consider its capacity for servicing the local learning needs of the adults in Dease Lake and Atlin in the near future. We will continue to offer very limited support for adult students or students who cannot attend their designated high schools. This support has proven to be valuable and the relaxed time expectations work in favour of the students who have very busy lives. An example of this support is reflected in the three adult graduates from Telegraph Creek this past June who, without the Tahltan School staff support, would not have graduated. Two graduates in their early 20s are parents, one expecting a second child, and the third graduate is 45 years old and completed a dream of receiving a regular Secondary Dogwood Diploma.

The District will continue its efforts to build relationships and take advantage of community people and resources that can support literacy development in each community. When travelling to the communities, efforts will be made to have constructive conversations about moving literacy forward at all levels in the community for all partners. Active participation in current Literacy Now Task Force meetings and liaison with LOCs will continue whenever possible. Further relationships need to be built with employers, such as the Tahltan Nation Development Corporation to increase literacy awareness and opportunities for employees and future employees. The District will also continue conversations with those responsible for technology services in education to emphasize the need for quality service to our rural, remote and geographically isolated communities.

Our data to date, suggests that we have not improved literacy skills in our schools. There is evidence that participation in literacy related activities at the community level has increased. Over the next year, the District will monitor closely student performance and achievement while supporting literacy initiatives that will lead to improved learning. The District will also monitor all students and their Passport to Success (Graduation) supporting their needs along the way. Increased participation from community members could signal greater awareness with community literacy initiatives. This will also be true with increased agency activity around literacy development.

There are many speed bumps related to District Literacy Plans that are expected to encompass the community beyond our K-12 system. School District 87 understands the value of community and the power a collective effort can have to improve literacy at all levels. The District will continue to collaborate and explore ways to increase opportunities for school and community. The District will continue to commit all plausible resources to enhance literacy, first and foremost with K-12 students, and secondly with our communities at large.



Stikine Planning Protocol

District Literacy Plan for 2010-2011 School Year

Person Responsible: Gerry Brennan

SCHOOL GOALS			
	Goal 1: K-12 Literacy	Goal 2: Community Literacy	Goal 3: Community Development
Importance to Success	3	2	3

PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS			
Much more than expected (+2)	All students fully meet expectations in ELA	Partner involvement in literacy opportunities has increased	Participation in opportunities improves quality of life for all community partners
More than expected (+1)	All students are minimally meeting expectations in ELA	All partners are aware of literacy opportunities with increased participation	Interagency support is coordinated with DLP in each community
Expected (0)	Improve Literacy in K-12 System	Improve opportunities for Literacy development in communities	Provide community wide growth opportunities that may enhance Literacy development
Less than expected (-1)	Literacy skills stagnate for majority of students	Literacy opportunities stagnate	No new opportunities occur in communities
Much less than expected (-2)	Literacy skills decrease	Less literacy opportunities are available in communities	Less opportunities exist than in the past

Adapted from Goal Attainment Scaling (Kiresuk, Smith & Cardillo, 1993).

Action Plan

Goal 1: Improve Literacy in K-12 System

Who: School District 87

When: 2010-2011 School Year

Where: All Schools

How: Strategies for Implementation:

- Successful implementation of staff development to further develop instructional skills related to literacy development through series of workshops on planning, assessment, reading and writing across the curricular areas

- Increased literacy resources for each school – assessment resources, Library resources, District Resource Center development

- Attainment of Achievement Contract Goals related to Literacy

- Create opportunities for Professional Learning Communities among teachers

Strategies for Assessment:

- District wide assessments in reading and writing

- Classroom Assessments

- Monitor Library circulation

- Monitor resources inventory and circulation of DRC

- Success in Achievement Contract with Literacy related goals

- Monitor PLC activity

Action Plan

Goal 2: **Improve opportunities for Literacy development in communities**

Who: School District 87

When: 2010-2011 School Year

Where: All communities

How: Strategies for Implementation:

- Continued liaison and participation in Interagency Meetings
- Collaborate with partners to coordinate literacy events when plausible
- Establish network for sharing correspondence related to Literacy initiatives
- Promote community workshops
- Liaison with Adult Education Institutes to promote adult education opportunities
- Participate in active Literacy Now Task Forces
- Communicate with Literacy Now LOCs
- Promote the use of School Newsletters to share information and opportunities related to Literacy for the school's Community
- Promote school staff participation in Interagency Meetings

Strategies for Assessment:

- Monitor participation in Literacy opportunities
- Monitor number of opportunities that occur
- Attendance and level of involvement at Interagency Meetings
- Attendance and level of involvement with Literacy Now Task Forces
- Monitor communication and involvement with LOCs
- Monitor community promotions through school newsletters

Action Plan

Goal 3: Provide community wide growth opportunities that may enhance Literacy development

Who: School District 87

When: 2010-2011 School Year

Where: All communities

How: Strategies for Implementation:

-Promote Aboriginal Educational Enhancement Agreement within schools to increase community partner involvement – bring partners into the school; get students into the community

-Establish work experience program for Secondary students

-Establish Service Learning models for schools

-Provide parent and school parent workshops related to Educational expectations for curriculum, assessment, reporting and 21st century employer needs

-Provide workshops in Response Ability Pathways (RAP) and Restitution/Restorative Justice approaches to behavior for District staff, parents and community members

-Participate in Task Force and LOC efforts to provide Literacy services and opportunities to community members when plausible

-Regular discussion and collaboration with Education Managers of First Nations in each community

Strategies for Assessment:

-Monitor goal attainment of EA

-Monitor participation rates in all opportunities

-Monitor frequency of opportunities and workshops

-Monitor success rates for school-based programs

-Monitor frequency of contacts with all partners

Summary Comments (to be completed at strategic times during the year):