

School Division Small Group Summaries

What has been happening, NOW Play-wise, over the past year or so?

Language learning is an important aspect of Indigenous education, however there are currently no language educators. Teachers have been taking initiative and experimenting in their classrooms with media and text to promote Cree language acquisition. Suggestions for future practice include the use of dramatisation and implementing knowledge of ancestral history through the use of play. All approaches should be applied through a culturally relevant lens. Examples provided include knowledge of cooking traditional foods, employing concept detective activities where students create their own explanations of certain ideas, and using storytelling as a way of creating traditional pieces. Language reinforcement, goal creation, and strategic partnering is encouraged.

What would you like to do in the upcoming year?

Goals for this upcoming year include a focus on both relationship and capacity building within the classroom. Through a focus on heterogeneity rather than divide, the goal is to build bridges between different communities. Land-based, experiential learning is also a large focus. Teachers may rely on cross-curricular subjects to implement this; for example, integrating a science and social studies related field trip where students can make connections to a place (experiential knowledge). Further, there is a focus on gaining and implementing Indigenous play strategies from Elders and the community. This may require repositioning with teachers and a new conversation to be started. There is also a need to transform the current views of literacy from solely reading and writing to a means that supports the development of the whole child, an appreciation of both language and identity, and a way through which culture can be taught and appreciated.

What support will you need?

Support is needed regarding finding ways to increase community involvement through capacity building.

What is the response of the community?

The community has been both supportive and excited about the initiatives; however, concerns have been raised due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The community has asked for ideas and plans before agreeing to take part.

Advice and Feedback

Student-centred work and planning can be used as a significant tool. Understanding the questions that students ask and considering whether they are framed through an Indigenous perspective or Western perspective can be targeted as a point for growth. Seeing how these frames can shift through various activities and resources (e.g., Bringing an elder into the classroom) serve as a means through which shifts can be understood. Additionally, it is recommended that when qualitative research is being conducted, to rely on your understanding of your classroom terrain - to feel confident in knowing the right questions, and also the meaning and intentions of what you are doing.