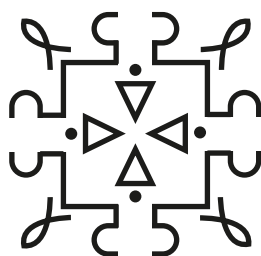


Aboriginal Academic Achievement (AAA) Grant Support Document



ABORIGINAL ACADEMIC
ACHIEVEMENT (AAA) GRANT
SUPPORT DOCUMENT



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This resource is available on the Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning website at <www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/ssdp/index.html>.

Available in alternate formats upon request.

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PURPOSE

This support document for the Aboriginal Academic Achievement (AAA) grant provides information to assist school divisions with developing AAA plans and measuring outcomes of programming that is focused on First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students' academic achievement.

The AAA grant is one component of Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning's broader ongoing focus on Aboriginal education. This document references recent changes to the AAA grant, including a focus on literacy and numeracy for Aboriginal students. The interconnected relationships among all stakeholders (e.g., school divisions, teachers, parents, students, and the community) are a primary focus of Aboriginal education in Manitoba. These relationships inform the culturally responsive approaches that are needed to address literacy and numeracy for Aboriginal students. Thus, Aboriginal education and Manitoba's *First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework* (published in draft format at <www.edu.gov.mb.ca/aed/fnmi_framework/document.pdf>) provide the basis for effectively utilizing the AAA grant to achieve the best possible educational outcomes for Aboriginal students.

THE ROLE OF THE ABORIGINAL EDUCATION DIRECTORATE

The Aboriginal Education Directorate provides leadership and coordination for departmental initiatives in Aboriginal education and training. The Aboriginal Education Directorate operates from within Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning and Manitoba Aboriginal and Northern Affairs. The primary role of the Aboriginal Education Directorate is in research, policy development, and strategic initiatives, with an emphasis on cultural awareness and cultural competency. This is accomplished in the spirit of cooperation and consultation with many groups and individuals, such as school administrators, educators, students, parents, Aboriginal and community organizations, and other government departments. The Aboriginal Education Directorate works in partnership with First Nations communities and organizations in Manitoba. The Directorate's work is supported by the guidance of two advisory councils from the Aboriginal community.

SCHOOL DIVISION PLANNING

Aboriginal people have a strong affinity with the circle because it symbolizes and resembles many cycles in the natural world. The universe works in circles, such as the shape of the world, the sun, and the moon, and the seasons follow a never-ending circular pattern. The wind blows in circles and birds even make their nests in a circular shape. The cultural concept of the circle/medicine wheel is described on pages 9–11 of *Integrating Aboriginal Perspectives into Curricula: A Resource for Curriculum Developers, Teachers, and Administrators*.

The concept of wholeness that is found in the circle teachings provides a foundation for understanding Aboriginal education and how Indigenous ways of knowing are integral to the modern education system. Therefore, in planning for the implementation of AAA programming, school divisions, schools, educators, and parents/families must be engaged as partners in the process of inclusion of Indigenous ways of knowing and sustainability-focused practices.

Wholeness is about finding ways to live in harmony and balance with all aspects of life (mental, spiritual, physical, and emotional) within ourselves and in our relationships with others, including Earth. Integral to Aboriginal education is the idea that academic achievement and success is founded in healthy and respectful relationships that reflect a sense of mutual responsibility and obligation.

Therefore, when thinking about Aboriginal education as part of school division planning, it is critical that it be looked at through a wholistic lens. Each of the following questions is central to considerations that need to be made by educational leaders and educators in school divisions, schools, and classrooms:

- How can a sense of belonging in the school division, school, and classroom be fostered to ensure that Aboriginal students see themselves as successful learners with a meaningful voice and place in the curriculum?
- What kinds of relationships and partnerships among the school division, school, teachers, students, parents, and the community are in place to support educational achievement for Aboriginal students?
- Is there a sense of community at the classroom level that fosters individual and collective responsibility for learning and well-being with respect for the individual knowledge and life experiences of all students?
- Are teaching and learning grounded in the local cultural context, where the sharing of knowledge, life experiences, and history is respected and valued? How is this supported at the divisional, school, and classroom levels?
- How are Aboriginal perspectives and Indigenous ways of knowing (the ways in which Aboriginal people have come to know and understand the world) integrated into curricula, instruction, and student learning experiences?

- How can resources and information be accessed to ensure that curricula and classroom instruction appropriately reflect the diversity of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples? How does the school division support professional learning?
- How can a sense of *Mino Pimatisiwin* (a good life) be fostered to ensure that Aboriginal students have a sense of purpose as learners who are growing personally and academically?

Seen in this context, Aboriginal education is a high-quality education based on positive relationships that integrate Indigenous ways of knowing and understanding the world into teaching and learning experiences for students. Aboriginal education should balance a respect for and recognition of the Indigenous world view in the curriculum and learning experiences of all students with the skill and knowledge sets required to participate in current technologies and economies. As an education system, therefore, engaging in Aboriginal education means that we are collectively responsible to ensure that

- Aboriginal perspectives and ways of knowing are addressed through the curriculum in meaningful and culturally respectful ways
- safe, culturally respectful spaces are created where students can learn about and engage in discussions about our shared history and experiences
- Aboriginal languages are promoted, recognizing how language and culture are inextricably intertwined
- teachers, schools, and school divisions engage in practices that ensure all students have equal access to the same educational opportunities

BACKGROUND

Aboriginal Education in 1971

In the years when First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people were beginning to find their way in mainstream society, political leaders were gathering to document their understanding of rights in a Canadian context.

What is *Wahbung: Our Tomorrows*?

In 1971, the Manitoba Indian Brotherhood (now called the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs) presented *Wahbung: Our Tomorrows* to the federal government. This position paper was part of a national movement among provincial and territorial Indigenous organizations that were expressing their views on how to become self-reliant in reaction to the federal government's 1969 *Statement of the Government of Canada on Indian Policy*, commonly known as the White Paper. As part of Prime Minister Trudeau's plan for a Just Society, the White Paper recommended abolishing the *Indian Act* and dismantling the

treaties between First Nations and Canada under the premise that this would lead to equality for Indigenous people. Indigenous people were sceptical and felt this new policy was merely an attempt to eliminate their existing rights.

Discussion and recommendations in the *Wahbung* document were centred on relationships with the federal government and on development in a variety of areas, including one that is relevant to the AAA context: education.

Aboriginal Education Today

Manitoba is currently developing an *First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework*. As part of the development process, it is important to remember the footprints made before us, such as the historic *Wahbung* document. The following are statements of belief from the education component of *Wahbung* that are still relevant today as ways for Aboriginal children to embrace their rights to quality education. The educators and leaders of 1971 stated their position on education as follows:

To be effective, education must be nurtured in relevancy, commitment, motivation, and identifiable purpose. The process must be part of community activities and community progress.

We the Indian people of Manitoba believe in education:

- As a preparation for total living, and in this context it extends far beyond the boundaries of what is conventionally considered schooling;
- As a prime means of improving our economic and social conditions;
- As a means of providing that this should be the right of every citizen: namely, the choice of where to live and to work. The essential provision of those required skills that will allow this privilege of choice;
- As a means by which we can be enabled to participate fully in our own social, economic, political and educational advancement;
- As a comprehensive program which must be designed to meet the needs of the total community by including offerings to people of all ages. (Manitoba Indian Brotherhood, p. 118)

Based on these statements of belief, it is clear what the educators who wrote them and the leaders who endorsed them wanted to happen in terms of their children's participation in learning, but in 1971 they had not yet seen the full intergenerational impact on culture and language, as well as the devastating interruption to family life, child rearing, and kinship relations. Residential school experiences have been targeted as the main cause of such catastrophic damage to whole Indigenous nations. Even so, these statements identify and speak to everything Aboriginal children need in order to be viable citizens—that is, knowledge of their ancestry, including knowledge of their culture and language. In order to exercise their rights as citizens, they need to be able to focus on knowing who they are, where they come from, what their potential is, and how they are going to achieve it. In other words, their Indigenous histories, cultural identities, and languages must be restored.

In 2003, Juliette Sabot, a former Director of the Aboriginal Education Directorate, made the following statement, which typifies how Aboriginal education has come to be viewed today: “Aboriginal education is everybody’s responsibility.” As Canadians, it is important for us to know and understand that Aboriginal people were keepers of the land long before visitors arrived on the Eastern shores seeking a new life in this land.

Many different nations on the North American continent, also known as *Turtle Island*, have laws that guide and govern their behaviour in their ancestral territory. In the Great Law of the Mohawk people, all of life is our consideration and this law guides our behaviour and actions all over Mother Earth. Many different Indigenous nations have such laws, which help us to understand our duties and responsibilities as citizens of this world. This is explained in the following description of the original law:

Indigenous people have always been intimately aware of their symbiotic relationship with the earth based upon a delicate balance between all living things on Turtle Island. Turtle Island is the name we use for the land that derives its history from the creation story of the Ojibway people—this story is similar in many respects to the creation story of other Indigenous nations. This understanding did not arise from a romanticized version of our relationship to the earth. It developed before contact with other societies and was based upon the basic law. This law was, quite simply, life and death. Indigenous understandings of this have always been quite clear. Through the process of cultural evolution, we have developed our customs, beliefs, institutions and methods of social control; our sense of belonging and connectedness to the earth, all are based upon the original law.

There is a teaching passed down from our ancestors that crystallizes our sense of responsibility and our relationship to the earth that arises out of the original law. It is said that we are placed on the earth (our Mother) to be the caretakers of all that is here. We are instructed to deal with the plants, animals, minerals, human beings and all life, as if they were a part of ourselves. Because we are a part of Creation, we cannot differentiate or separate ourselves from the rest of the earth. The way in which we interact with the earth, how we utilize the plants, animals and the mineral gifts, should be carried out with the seventh generation in mind. We cannot simply think of ourselves and our survival; each generation has a responsibility to ‘ensure the survival for the seventh generation’. (Clarkson et al., p. 12)

Aboriginal education is profoundly influenced by the intersection of Indigenous and western world views, and by the policies and practices that guide teaching and learning. It is also informed by the individual and systemic beliefs about the value and purpose of public education, language, and the historic relationship among schools, curriculum, and Aboriginal peoples.

Aboriginal education provides learning opportunities and experiences that honour the cultural identity of Aboriginal students and improve educational attainment and overall well-being. There are also broader educational initiatives that help all students and communities become better informed about Aboriginal world views, histories, traditions, cultural practices, and contemporary lifestyles.

The following statements were taken directly from Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning's *First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework*, which is currently under development. They are a direct response to the Aboriginal Education Directorate Advisory Council's (AEDAC) request to present First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people's relationship to the land as integral to everything they have believed and practised since their time on Earth began. The *First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework* will provide an understanding of what Aboriginal education is, why it is important to today's educational endeavours, and how it is necessary for all learners.

Laws of Relationship—Our Connection to Mother Earth

Indigenous people of Manitoba understand their relationship to the land as significant to their identity, the language they speak, their sustained existence, and that of future generations yet to come. The three Laws of Relationship—Law of Self, Law of Others, Law of Land and Water—indicate the interconnectedness to life, each other, the land and water worlds.

All of the Earth's creatures are included in these laws and apply to each and everyone. The notion of reciprocity is apparent within the ways we are taught our stewardship. Without our relationship with Mother Earth there is no understanding of who we are, nor is there a way to speak of these things; as well, our personal existence and that of future generations come into great jeopardy. Therefore, it is of utmost importance that the children and youth of today have access to the ancient knowledges of the laws that bind us together in the vast network of life.

Inherent in the ways of Indigenous Learning Life of the past, children and youth would learn about the relationships to the land as a matter of course in everyday life and living. Unfortunately this pedagogy has been disrupted and Indigenous children and youth don't learn according to the ways of our ancestors as they once did.

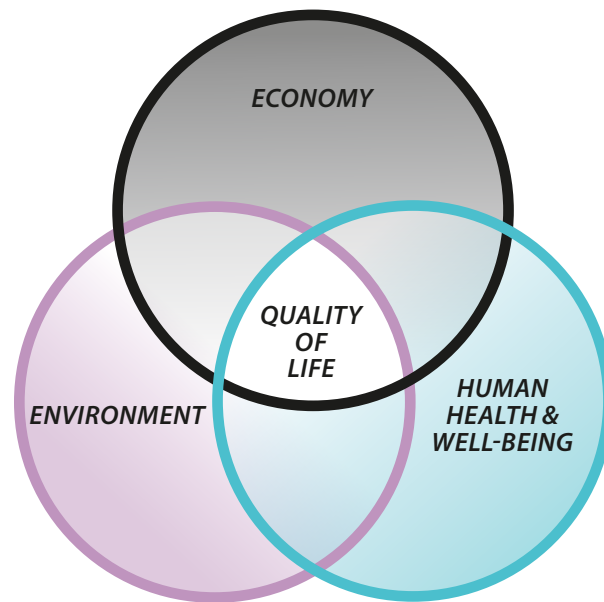
Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning is finding ways to address education for sustainable development (ESD) for all students in Manitoba schools. The following statements affirm a connection between what have always been the beliefs of Aboriginal people and what needs to happen in schools today related to ESD:

Education for Sustainable Development is setting a direction for education and learning that is based on knowledge, values and practices that are necessary for us to become sustainable both now and in the future. We are assisting our students to develop more sustainable behaviors in their classrooms, schools and communities and are preparing them to be global citizens who are environmentally, socially and economically literate. (Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning, 2014, p. 1)

ESD is embedded in Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning's mission statement:

"To ensure that all Manitoba's children and youth have access to an array of educational opportunities such that every learner experiences success through relevant, engaging and high quality education that prepares them for lifelong learning and citizenship in a democratic, socially just and sustainable society." (Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning, 2015c)

ESD involves “incorporating key themes of sustainable development—such as poverty alleviation, human rights, health and environmental protection, climate change—into the education system. ESD is a complex and evolving concept and requires learning about key themes from a social, cultural, environmental and economic perspective and explores how those factors are inter-related and inter-dependent. This Venn diagram ... represents the inter-relationship of the themes.” (Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning, 2015b)



(Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning, 2015b)

To ensure that students are engaged in ESD, Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning has been encouraging all schools in the province to have an ESD school plan in place. The Venn diagram reinforces the need to be wholistic in addressing ESD to achieve a better quality of life or *Mino Pimatisiwin* (a good life) for all students.

The following examples indicate how Aboriginal education in Manitoba is directly linked to each of the three key themes of ESD referenced in the Venn diagram.

Theme of Economy

This ESD theme includes the areas of education and employment, which are directly addressed in *Manitoba's Aboriginal Education and Employment Action Plan* (2014). The action plan specifically focuses on infusing Aboriginal perspectives into curricula, providing professional learning for educators, improving high school completion rates, and promoting pathways and transitions to post-high school career and learning options with a focus on Middle Years to Grade 12.

Theme of Human Health and Well-Being

This ESD theme includes cultural diversity, social justice, equity, and intercultural understanding, which are being addressed through professional learning available to school divisions/schools. This has been enabled specifically through the *A Journey from Cultural Awareness to Cultural Competency* training kit and support from the Aboriginal Education Directorate. The theme also includes demographics, which are important given that Manitoba's Aboriginal population is the fastest growing population group in Manitoba. Therefore, use of the Aboriginal Identity Declaration data collection tool by schools in Manitoba is a way to monitor demographic information about Aboriginal students that can be used to plan and implement appropriate programming through the AAA grant or other initiatives.

Theme of Environment

This ESD theme includes the areas of natural resources and climate change, both of which are closely linked to the Law of Relationship (referenced earlier in this document) regarding the connection of Aboriginal people with the land (Mother Earth). Land-based education initiatives, which are increasingly being implemented with AAA grant support in Manitoba schools, are a good example of how this theme is appropriately being addressed in Aboriginal education-focused programming.

VISION FOR ABORIGINAL EDUCATION IN MANITOBA

The 1996 *Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples: Final Report* indicated that governments need to focus their attention on improving educational outcomes for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students. It also stated that contributing factors affecting Aboriginal student success include lack of awareness among teachers, school boards, and decision makers about First Nations, Métis, and Inuit cultures, histories, and perspectives.

Many changes have been recently implemented to improve the experiences of Aboriginal learners. To assist in continuing this improvement, it is time to establish the four Rs: revitalization, recognition, relevance, and relationships. These four Rs can be a foundational context for advancing Aboriginal initiatives, including those that are implemented through the AAA grant.

Because the foundation of Manitoba's *First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework* is revitalization, recognition, relevance, and relationships, its focus is on promoting and enhancing the educational achievement of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people while educating all students about Aboriginal histories and Aboriginal distinctiveness. For First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people, the terms *revitalization*, *recognition*, *relevance*, and *relationships* relate

to identities, languages and cultures, wellness, rights, respect, and, in their entirety, world views.

Achieving the Vision

Revitalization

Revitalization of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit identities, languages and cultures, wellness, rights, respect, world views, histories, and distinctiveness instills in Aboriginal people the confidence to bridge two worlds: the world of their cultural traditions and beliefs and the world of mainstream Canadian society. The views expressed by Aboriginal peoples who were consulted in the development of the *First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework* stress that Aboriginal peoples need to be comfortable and confident in their own ways so that they can live and contribute in both worlds. Strengthening identity is paramount in moving forward and making change. Identity encompasses “where a person has been, where he or she is going, and who that person is.” Identity also

- relates to the individual, family, community, and nation
- includes racial identity, cultural identity, and legal identity
- needs to be explored and accepted on an individual level

Revitalization will be achieved through the following efforts in education at all levels:

1. Integrating Aboriginal knowledge and ways of practice

Acknowledging, sharing, and teaching Aboriginal knowledge and ways of practice will occur in formal and non-formal sectors, including K-12 classrooms, teacher training programs, and professional development opportunities within schools. School systems will require culturally relevant and land-based activities as supportive learning environments in order to strengthen and support Aboriginal identities. Schools will develop learning plans with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit staff members that assist in developing their leadership capacity.

2. Identifying distinct histories

Aboriginal peoples will be assured that those who are educating their children are knowledgeable and aware of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit histories and distinctiveness.

3. Acknowledging languages

The Aboriginal Education Directorate of Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning, together with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities, University College of the North (UCN), Manitoba First Nations Education Resource Centre (MFNERC), and other partners will work towards a shared goal of language revitalization and support for Aboriginal language initiatives.

Recognition

First and foremost, Aboriginal people want recognition of the following:

1. Past educational systems, such as residential schools, caused great harm, and that history continues to affect Aboriginal learners today. People need to be cognizant of the negative impacts and the movement that is underway to create positive change for Aboriginal peoples to move forward.
2. Successful education requires the active involvement of parents, families, and communities within school committees, parent groups, and in the classroom. Active involvement means an opportunity for these parties to
 - share and create awareness of their interests
 - encourage and support the creation of systems and opportunities to alleviate negative impacts
3. Jurisdictional issues affect individual lives, and every individual life is unique. Manitoba's Aboriginal people include
 - diverse communities
 - distinct language groups
 - distinct governance systems
 - an increasing population that is young and will have education and economic impacts
 - an increasing urban population
4. Culturally competent educators complement and inspire Aboriginal ways of living that are taught in the home.
5. Elders and language groups must be consulted, as needed.

Relevance

In order to improve Aboriginal educational outcomes, learning opportunities for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students need to be relevant and meaningful. Relevant teaching and learning needs to

- sustain and invigorate the local community (an eco-learning approach) and recognize the specific needs of that community
- engage students by addressing their specific interests and needs
- support the infusion of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit perspectives (e.g., by using the document *Integrating Aboriginal Perspectives into Curricula*)

Relationships

Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning believes in the value of relationships and is committed to collaborative partnerships between provincial education systems and First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people. These

partnerships will work towards creating cultural restoration, respect, and unity within systems.

The Manitoba Association of School Superintendents (MASS), the Manitoba School Boards Association (MSBA), the Manitoba Teachers' Society (MTS), and other provincial organizations work collaboratively with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit organizations. Aboriginal organizations and political groups in Manitoba include the following:

- Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs
- Southern Chiefs Organization
- Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak Inc.
- Manitoba Metis Federation
- Urban Aboriginal groups
- Manitoba Association of Friendship Centres
- Training centres that work with Aboriginal students
- Aboriginal teachers and educators
- Service organizations and political groups, both on-reserve and off-reserve (Service organizations and political groups serve the interests of their diverse constituents and have their own protocols and decision-making processes.)

The following principles are all connected and must be considered by educators:

- The writers of *Wahbung: Our Tomorrows* expressed what is necessary for Aboriginal children and youth to see themselves as successful contributors to the world.
- Aboriginal world views and practices are directly influenced by their relationship to the land.
- ESD is setting a direction for all children, including Aboriginal students, to see themselves as stewards of Earth, critical thinkers, and members of a global network aimed at sustaining a way of living in harmony with Earth.
- The *First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework* (under development) and the vision in the Aboriginal Education Directorate's strategic plan are providing an important vision for Aboriginal education.
- It is essential that Aboriginal students achieve the goals and outcomes of literacy and numeracy while learning Indigenous ways of knowing.

As educators implement Aboriginal education strategies and practices that not only address literacy and numeracy but wholistically connect teaching and learning with the principles referenced above, Aboriginal students will experience increased educational success.

Aboriginal Education along the Continuum

Every school division in Manitoba has a responsibility to ensure that Aboriginal perspectives and outcomes in provincial curricula are addressed in the classroom in appropriate and culturally relevant ways for all students. However, Aboriginal education occurs within the cultural contexts of communities and in places where there may be few Aboriginal students attending school in a specific division. As a result, school divisions may be in different places in their Aboriginal education learning journey. Some may just be beginning the conversation about the *what*, *how*, and *why* of Aboriginal education; others may already be deeply embedding Indigenous ways of knowing and perspectives into all curricular areas. School divisions must continue to meaningfully engage in Aboriginal education and Aboriginal perspectives to ensure that all students, not just Aboriginal students, benefit from an understanding of the historical and contemporary context of Manitoba and Canada and their responsibilities as citizens in a democracy.

Integrating Aboriginal Perspectives into Curricula: A Resource for Curriculum Developers, Teachers, and Administrators (Manitoba Education and Youth) and the *Guide to Implementing the Alaska Cultural Standards for Educators* (Alaska Department of Education and Early Development) can be useful tools for school divisions wanting to help educators incorporate Aboriginal perspectives into teaching and learning.

Aboriginal Education and the Aboriginal Academic Achievement (AAA) Grant

Aboriginal education has a broad focus encompassing the ways in which schools and school divisions embed the languages, cultural practices, knowledge systems, and histories of Indigenous people into the curriculum and the education of all students. While the AAA grant supports the broad focus of Aboriginal education, it is a supplemental fund that is specifically targeted to assist school divisions with current programming and/or with the implementation of new programming that improves the academic success of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students. Programming must focus on strategies that result in measurable increases in Aboriginal student achievement, particularly related to literacy and numeracy for a minimum of 50% of the AAA grant allocation.

There is no single way to improve student achievement. Achieving equitable outcomes and improving academic achievement for Aboriginal students requires wholistic approaches, effective pedagogical practices, meaningful and engaging opportunities for student learning, and enriching cultural experiences. Policies and procedures must also be reviewed to reduce knowledge gaps and remove barriers to Aboriginal student achievement. It is expected that school divisions will use AAA funding in a variety of ways to meet the needs of Aboriginal students within their particular divisional

context. Within this flexibility, the goal of AAA programming, curricular interventions, and enhancements must be to improve academic achievement as reflected in provincial, divisional, and school-based assessments, and to increase high school graduation rates for Aboriginal students.

AAA Guiding Principles

Principle #1: School divisions and schools should use Aboriginal student-specific data to inform planning and program monitoring and to track Aboriginal student literacy and numeracy progress and overall academic achievement.

The current AAA grant guidelines include an expectation that school divisions use student-specific data in reporting on Aboriginal student achievement outcomes with a specific focus on literacy and numeracy. Gathering relevant data about student achievement helps to identify gaps in student performance, barriers to student learning, and effective programs and practices that have the greatest impact on student success.

It is important for school divisions to use data to inform decision making. Data should be gathered from multiple sources at the classroom, school, school division, and provincial levels. The use of data will support engagement of schools and school divisions in equity and inclusive practices by examining trends in Aboriginal student achievement, proactively responding to the needs of Aboriginal students and families, and targeting investments to close the gap in educational outcomes between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students. School divisions are encouraged to use Aboriginal Identity Field self-declaration data from the Education Information System (EIS), where possible, or other data gathered by the division, to identify strengths and challenges related to improving Aboriginal student achievement. This data may be used to identify and implement strategies that focus specifically on literacy and numeracy. Specific strategies and initiatives to improve Aboriginal student achievement should be reported as part of annual AAA planning and reporting processes using quantitative and qualitative Aboriginal student-specific data.

Principle #2: School divisions and schools should embed the languages, cultural practices, knowledge systems, and histories of Indigenous people into the curriculum and the education of all students.

While the AAA grant has a strong emphasis on achievement related to literacy and numeracy, it is important for educators to understand the importance of integrating key concepts referenced above that are integral to Indigenous ways of knowing. Many approaches can achieve this integration, but literacy and numeracy outcomes can be addressed in effective and engaging ways through the infusion of Aboriginal perspectives into curricular and instructional approaches.

An example:

Learning about the tipi might require educators to ask questions such as the following:

- How is math used when making, setting up, and using the tipi?
- What teachings might engage students in critical thinking as they write, look, listen, and actively learn about the tipi?

Exploration of the tipi provides a wealth of possible learning experiences for all curricular subjects and can enhance literacy and numeracy outcomes while helping students understand the value of applying Indigenous ways of knowing to learning in school. This way of integration is perhaps different from commonly used integration approaches, but educators can use this method to help their learning community to understand that Aboriginal people have always learned concepts that would be classified in the school system under math, English language arts, science, and social studies but did not necessarily file the learning outcomes under these headings.

Principle #3: Schools and school divisions should use wholistic approaches that respect Aboriginal languages and cultures and the important role of family and community in the education of Aboriginal children and youth.

As an education community, we are responsible for ensuring that our teaching and learning strategies meet the needs of the whole child in culturally affirming ways that are respectful of Aboriginal knowledge and world views, families and communities, and individual experiences.

Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning recognizes that improving Aboriginal academic achievement in literacy and numeracy requires multiple approaches that address the learning and socio-emotional needs of Aboriginal students while engaging Aboriginal families as partners in education. As a result, AAA funding should be targeted to ensure the following:

- Meaningful partnerships are established with students, families, and communities that emphasize a shared responsibility for increasing Aboriginal student success in literacy and numeracy and overall academic achievement.
- Schools and school divisions engage in relevant and culturally proficient practices focused on reducing barriers and ensuring that all students have equitable opportunities to achieve educational outcomes.

Principle #4: Schools and school divisions should engage in culturally appropriate and equity-based practices that reduce barriers to participation for Aboriginal students and families and increase opportunities for educational success.

As an education community, we have a responsibility to ensure that the lenses of cultural relevance, proficiency, and equity are used to guide planning and programming to ensure that Aboriginal students are provided with high-quality, relevant, and balanced programs. To this end, school divisions should examine policies and practices in the classroom, school, and divisional level to ensure the following:

- There are high expectations for Aboriginal student achievement.
- Schools provide Aboriginal students with appropriately challenging learning experiences and culturally relevant curricula.
- Interventions and supports are strength-based and focused on providing Aboriginal students with the enriching learning experiences needed to increase success in literacy and numeracy.
- Schools are culturally affirming places that reflect the cultural community of Aboriginal students.
- The foundation for planning is the belief that all children can learn.
- Data is disaggregated to determine individual needs and to facilitate appropriate planning and programming for Aboriginal students.
- School divisions engage in hiring practices and policies that support a representative workforce.

AAA Guidelines

AAA grant funds should be used to support culturally relevant strategies that result in improved academic achievement. Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning recognizes that there are multiple factors that influence student achievement and that school divisions need to use a variety of strategies and approaches to improve Aboriginal academic achievement. The expectation is that whatever strategies or approaches a school or school division uses result in a measurable improvement in Aboriginal academic achievement in numeracy and literacy and that these improvements are reported as part of the

grant review process. School divisions have flexibility in how grant funds are allocated but programming and activities should be focused on the following:

- activities that directly improve literacy and numeracy for Aboriginal students (at least 50% of grant funding is to be spent on activities that improve literacy and numeracy)
- Aboriginal student-specific achievement data being used to plan, monitor the effectiveness of programming interventions, track Aboriginal student achievement, and report on outcomes
- teacher professional learning focused on building capacity to engage in effective practices that will positively affect Aboriginal student achievement
- effective practices that have a positive and direct impact on Aboriginal students implemented in the areas of curriculum, instruction, assessment, classroom management, and school organization
- practices that affirm Aboriginal culture(s) by incorporating, where appropriate, Aboriginal perspectives and world views into academic programming
- Aboriginal education activities linked to curricular outcomes
- equity practices that have a positive and direct impact on the academic achievement of Aboriginal students

School divisions are expected to include plans and reports for Aboriginal student academic achievement outcomes as part of school division planning, consistent with revised AAA guidelines.

The AAA plan should identify how divisional strategies and/or programming will improve Aboriginal students' achievement (e.g., increased percentage of Aboriginal students achieving grade-level outcomes on school-based assessments in literacy). Using the SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Timely) approach is helpful to ensure that the implemented programming is focused on Aboriginal student academic achievement and that meaningful data is collected to measure progress and demonstrate success.

The expected outcomes identified should be linked to the strategies (actions taken to achieve outcomes), data sources (tools used to collect evidence of progress in achieving outcomes), and indicators (observable/measurable ways to know you are making progress).

As per changes to categorical grant reporting processes, the following information is applicable to the AAA grant:

- Reporting and planning for the AAA grant will be included in school division plans.
- Reporting for the AAA grant should be done using the existing school division reporting and planning templates.

Information regarding the revised AAA reporting process is available at www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/ssdp/index.html.

SUGGESTED COMPONENTS TO ADDRESS AAA GRANT FOCUS AREAS

Focus Area 1:

Effective practices that have a positive and direct impact on Aboriginal student achievement implemented in the areas of curriculum, instruction, assessment, classroom management, and school division/school organization

General Considerations

It is recommended that school divisions/schools address the following items when planning and implementing programming related to AAA initiatives, and when tracking results.

- Implement classroom and school-based plans with identified outcomes specifically related to improving Aboriginal student achievement through the use of Indigenous knowledge systems and culturally relevant instruction.
- Provide teacher professional learning focused on effective pedagogy and classroom practices that will positively affect Aboriginal student academic progress.
- Have school division/school staff complete *A Journey from Cultural Awareness to Cultural Competency* professional learning, as well as cultural proficiency training, to ensure that classroom, school, and divisional practices are culturally appropriate.
- Use teaching and learning strategies that activate students' prior knowledge and experiences and support the infusion of Aboriginal perspectives and Indigenous world views in curriculum and classroom organization.
- Provide opportunities for Aboriginal students to see themselves reflected in the culture and curriculum of the school (i.e., programs, policies, extracurricular, student leadership).
- Establish strong relationships with parents, families, and communities focused on improving Aboriginal student achievement and engagement.
- Increase use of and access to community-based resources that support Aboriginal student educational success.

Suggested Strategies

The following strategies reference specific ways to address the preceding General Considerations.

- Develop AAA grant reports and a divisional Aboriginal Education Plan.
- Ensure that all staff (teaching, administrative, support, custodial) share a common vision and understanding regarding Aboriginal education.
- Provide teacher professional learning focused on curricula, student thinking, and effective practices in literacy, numeracy, and Aboriginal perspectives.
- Ensure that instructional planning by teachers and school plans identify Aboriginal-perspectives outcomes linked to curricula.
- Create lesson plans that incorporate Indigenous ways of knowing.
- Use resources that are culturally appropriate and that respectfully depict Aboriginal peoples and communities.
- Engage in assessment practices that allow students multiple ways of demonstrating mastery of student learning outcomes.
- Create/maintain a teaching community/network to build mutual support and share resources/promising practices across curricular areas.
- Incorporate the seven Aboriginal teachings into character education programs, classroom management, and community-building strategies.
- Include parents/families in the development of AAA initiatives in the school and on relevant educational committees, including Parent Advisory Councils.
- Implement treaty education.

Suggested Data Sources

- Tell Them From Me Survey
- attendance data
- report card data on Aboriginal student academic progress
- graduation rates of Aboriginal students
- retention in school rates of Aboriginal students
- percentage of Aboriginal students achieving increased success on classroom, school-based, divisional, and provincial assessments in literacy and numeracy
- teacher survey of the impact of professional learning on capacity building and implementation of effective practices
- number of Aboriginal parents/families involved in school-based activities and relevant committees (e.g., Parent Advisory Council)
- surveys and other qualitative data sources

- AAA grant reports
- increased use of resources in classrooms focused on effective practices that engage Aboriginal learners and increase their academic achievement
- representative workforce hiring strategy and percentage of Aboriginal teachers and administrators in schools
- classroom-based assessment data and report card data on Aboriginal student academic progress
- divisional Aboriginal Education Plan and school plans

Focus Area 2:

Activities that directly improve literacy and numeracy for Aboriginal students

General Considerations

It is recommended that school divisions/schools address the following items when planning, implementing programming, and tracking results related to AAA initiatives.

- Clearly emphasize literacy learning (outcomes and strategies) linked to student-specific data indicating literacy progress.
- Clearly emphasize numeracy learning (outcomes and strategies) linked to student-specific data indicating numeracy progress.
- Emphasize literacy and numeracy in divisional and school plans, and identify ways to show and measure progress. Track the impact of classroom, school, and divisional literacy and numeracy programming on Aboriginal student graduation rates, course completion rates, and attendance.
- Collect and analyze school/school division Aboriginal student-specific data to inform planning and to set priorities.
- Have an ongoing school/school division system in place to track, monitor, and use Aboriginal student-specific achievement data to increase Aboriginal student success, retention in school, and graduation rates.
- Disaggregate classroom, school-based, and divisional data to identify the instructional needs of Aboriginal learners.
- Document progress and tracking of Aboriginal student achievement clearly and consistently.
- Promote inclusiveness and enhance supports for Aboriginal students through school use of student engagement data.

- Base programming interventions and supports on current data, and monitor that data on an ongoing basis to ensure that what is implemented for Aboriginal students is effective, engaging, and culturally appropriate.
- Provide Aboriginal students with tutoring support as needed.

Suggested Strategies

The following strategies reference specific ways to address the preceding General Considerations.

- Develop divisional Aboriginal Education Plans and/or policies, including clear targets aligned with identified goals.
- Use disaggregated assessment data to inform school-based and division-wide planning and decision making.
- Develop literacy plans based on current and relevant provincial, divisional, and school-based data.
- Develop numeracy plans based on current and relevant provincial, divisional, and school-based data.
- Support data collection and research focused on improved outcomes for Aboriginal students in literacy and numeracy.
- Provide teacher professional learning focused on curriculum, student thinking, and effective practices in literacy, numeracy, and Aboriginal perspectives.
- Identify assessment and evidence-gathering strategies as part of classroom-based planning and decision making.
- Track Aboriginal student rates of retention in school and graduation, including reasons for school completion or for leaving school, and use data to develop student success and transition plans.
- Participate in the Tell Them From Me Survey and use the survey results for planning and implementing appropriate programming for Aboriginal students.

Suggested Data Sources

- graduation rates of Aboriginal students
- retention in school rates of Aboriginal students
- report card data on Aboriginal student academic progress
- percentage of Aboriginal students achieving increased success on classroom, school, divisional, and provincial literacy and numeracy assessments
- Tell Them From Me Survey

- research (quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods) at the divisional level identifying promising practices to improve educational outcomes for Aboriginal students
- divisional and school plans

Focus Area 3:

Practices that affirm Aboriginal culture(s) by incorporating, where appropriate, Aboriginal perspectives and world views into academic programming

General Considerations

It is recommended that school divisions/schools address the following items when planning and implementing programming related to AAA initiatives, and when tracking results:

- Include goals focused on school-wide integration of Aboriginal perspectives and world views linked to curricular outcomes in school plans.
- Embed Aboriginal perspectives into teaching and learning to increase capacity to effectively address Aboriginal education in academic programming.
- Increase the amount and usage of Aboriginal perspectives resources in classrooms.
- Increase the number of Aboriginal perspectives courses offered in schools.

Suggested Strategies

The following strategies reference specific ways to address the preceding General Considerations.

- Create welcoming schools that reflect the cultures of Aboriginal students and that invite partnerships with parents, Elders, and the community.
- Ensure that yearly teacher and school plans identify Aboriginal perspectives outcomes linked to curricula.
- Use Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning curricula and resources to support the integration of Aboriginal perspectives into teaching and learning.
- Select resources that promote an accurate portrayal and understanding of Aboriginal histories, languages, and cultures.

- Provide professional learning opportunities that support the infusion of Aboriginal perspectives, knowledge, and histories into curricular lessons and units.
- Find ways to learn about and build on the cultural knowledge that students bring with them from their home and community.
- Offer Aboriginal culture and language programming embedded in classroom activities and linked to curricular outcomes.
- Support implementation of treaty education.

Suggested Data Sources

- number of Aboriginal perspectives courses offered, number of students enrolled, and course completion data
- report card data on academic progress of Aboriginal students
- number of teachers who are accessing treaty education professional learning
- Tell Them From Me Survey
- attendance data
- graduation rates of Aboriginal students
- retention in school rates of Aboriginal students
- data that tracks the achievement of goals linked to curricular outcomes that are identified in school plans focused on the integration of Aboriginal perspectives

APPENDIX: ABORIGINAL PERSPECTIVES IN CROSS-JURISDICTIONAL DOCUMENTS

The Western Canadian Protocol for Collaboration in Basic Education (now WNCP) *Common Curriculum Framework for Aboriginal Language and Culture Programs, Kindergarten to Grade 12* (2000) states and supports crucial components of Manitoba's Aboriginal Education Policy (p. 19):

Aboriginal perspectives are reflected in the WNCP Framework through the three laws of relationship: the law of sacred life (including respect for oneself), the law of nature, and the law of mutual support. These laws are grounded in the belief that there is a sacred power greater than us and in the following related principles:

- All parts of creation are interconnected and manifest in the spirit of the Creator.
- Humankind must live in a respectful relationship with all that has been created.
- Spiritual forces are gifts intended to aid survival rather than threaten it.

The connectivity of all of these components is important in revealing to educators that all of these things are achievable and necessary.

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