



Creating Futures

South Slave Divisional Education Council – PO Box 819 – Fort Smith, NT – X0E 0P0 – Ph: (867) 872-5701 – Fax (867) 872-2150

News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Students to benefit from extraordinary learning boost

Fort Smith, NT – South Slave Divisional Education Council schools will be better in September with the introduction of an improved literacy focus, says Council Chairperson Ann Pischinger.

The new "Leadership for Literacy" program is targeted to assist more students reach higher levels in reading by 2008 and 2009. Although student achievement levels have been increasing steadily in South Slave schools, over the past several years an average of just over 50 per cent of South Slave students in grades 3, 6 and 9 are reaching Alberta standards.¹

"We're going to support our students and teachers in a way that has never been attempted before," said Pischinger. "We want parents to know that we strongly believe that every child can learn and that parents should be able to tell the difference within the next few years."

The Council will support the new "Leadership for Literacy" program with \$1 million in new staff and resources during the next two years, including:

- Intensive teacher development and ongoing support – eight lead Literacy Coaches and specially trained school principals;
- Focused programming – daily emphasis on teaching reading in grades K-12;
- Measurable improvement goals – short term and long term targets;
- Performance data – frequent measurement of student performance;
- Targeted supports - school teams, leveled books for students;
- Expert coordination – certified trainer and research-proven teaching strategies.

"As the Superintendent says, we know that children who succeed in reading, writing and math by age 12 have a much greater chance of finishing high school and continuing their education beyond high school in a college, university, apprenticeship or job placement program," said Pischinger.

Today's announcement is part of a \$22 million investment in education in the Council's budget for the next school year.

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For more information contact Jayne Murray, South Slave Divisional Education Council, (867) 872-5701 ext 23, or jayne.murray@southslave.learnnet.nt.ca

¹ Alberta literacy standards and results are ranked the highest not only in Canada, but in the world. 2004 Canadian Education Association (CEA) Policy Brief, *The Promise and Problem of Literacy for Canada: An Agenda for Action*, p5.

Backgrounder

South Slave Divisional Education Council "LEADERSHIP FOR LITERACY" REGION-WIDE LITERACY INITIATIVE

COUNCIL'S COMMITMENT

A key outcome for excellence in public education is that every student is able to read at grade level. Reading is the most crucial skill for success in school, and indeed, throughout life. Children who experience early reading success are far more likely to enjoy and value school, and are better equipped to attain productive and economically rewarding careers. Having an education foundation will allow students the fullest range of choices in their academic career and beyond.

Progress will be measured against the current reading proficiency levels to be assessed this spring and then again in each of the next two years - 2008 and 2009. Tools will include the Alberta Achievement Tests for grades 3, 6 and 9 – for which we already have multi-year performance data – and a standard assessment tool yet to be chosen. Currently, slightly more than half of South Slave grades 3, 6 and 9 students are achieving at the Alberta Achievement Test standard. We will help more students who are currently struggling to clear the bar.

Underdeveloped literacy skills are the number one reason why students are retained, assigned to special education, given long-term remedial services, and why they fail to graduate from high school.
Vincent Ferrandino & Gerald Tirozzi

The SSDEC also intends to reduce the gap between the highest and lowest performing students.

INTENSIVE TEACHER DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT

Teachers' professional development and resources

- Training in literacy and math instruction for all South Slave teachers over the next two years
- Training for eight lead Literacy Coaches so they can provide on-site capacity and work with other classroom teachers in their schools;
- Providing all teachers with in-service on how to teach reading across the content/subject areas and the best methods of instruction;
- Early assessment tools for reading so educators can find out immediately which students may need extra help and in which particular areas.

FOCUSED CURRICULUM

Giving students the best tools to succeed

- \$200,000 in funding for Literacy Coach training and new resource material to ensure that reading materials and tools are up to date;
- Refinement of expectations to enable a more intense daily focus on literacy and numeracy.

TARGETED SUPPORTS

Addressing the needs of students who need extra help

- Clear identification of students who need extra supports, within three weeks of the beginning of the school year;
- In consultation with parents, targeted interventions and supports for students who are struggling;
- Turn-around teams in each school.

CO-ORDINATED SUPPORT

The SSDEC's award winning Literacy Project Committee is being restructured to align with Leadership for Literacy

- Literacy Coaches will receive intensive training in how to assess reading achievement and how to support teachers in the classroom
- School principals will receive training as to what Literacy Coaches should be doing and what they should be seeing in their classrooms

For further information contact...