Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreements

Jurisdiction: British Columbia   Contact: Trish Rosborough

Level: K-12   Theme: Community Based Practice

Description of Practice:

Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreements

An Enhancement Agreement (EA) is a commitment made by each school district, all local Aboriginal communities, and the Ministry of Education to work together to improve the success of all Aboriginal students. This five year vision of success for all First Nations, Métis and Inuit students is jointly developed and implemented by the school district and all its Aboriginal communities.

An Enhancement Agreement defines goals, indicators and targets to provide a clear and measurable focus. Relevant data plays a necessary role in helping to track progress as well as identifying trends over time. EAs emphasize the integral nature of Aboriginal traditional culture and languages to Aboriginal student development and success. School districts are required to provide strong programs on the culture of local Aboriginal peoples to increase knowledge and respect for Aboriginal culture, language and history, and to encourage a greater understanding about Aboriginal people.

Enhancement Agreements provide an opportunity for educators and Aboriginal communities to learn from each other. Through engagement with Aboriginal communities we can gain a better understanding from each other about the needs of Aboriginal students, impediments to learning and factors that influence the way in which Aboriginal students can learn most effectively.

Background:

In 1999, provincial Education Partners signed a Memorandum of Understanding, acknowledging that Aboriginal students were not succeeding in the school system, and committing to work together to improve the educational experience of Aboriginal students. Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreements emerged as a strategy.

The first Enhancement Agreement (Improvement Agreement) was signed in 1999 when SD73 Kamloops/Thompson made a commitment together with its Aboriginal communities to improve the success of Aboriginal students. Shortly after, SD72 (Campbell River) began a similar process leading to an EA signing in June 2000. Both of these districts were unique in that the outcomes of the agreements were tied to additional/reduced funding for Aboriginal Education. This funding arrangement was ceased after the second signing and no longer applies to Enhancement Agreements

Development:

Currently there are 23 Signed Agreements in the Province with two districts having signed their second five year agreement. The official signing marks the beginning of the

implementation of the EA with the school district continuing to work closely with all of its local Aboriginal communities to implement and support strategies.

Implementation requires the frequent assessment of progress and review of targets and strategies throughout the life of the EA. Annual reports inform communities and the Ministry about the district's progress in meeting its goals for improvement.

Evidence:

- Research provides strong evidence to support a high correlation between certain factors and the success of Aboriginal students. A review of the research literature is well documented in the study *Sharing Our Success* in which William G. Demmert, Jr. (2001) provides five categories for analysis identified through numerous studies.
- Improved relationships between school districts and Aboriginal communities.
- Increased parental involvement in their children's education
- Improved academic performance -

Adaptability:

Enhancement agreements could easily be adapted for use in other jurisdictions. British Columbia has 198 First Nations communities, and is home to 32 of Canada's 53 indigenous languages. Enhancement agreements are developed locally with the diversity of community and district needs and experiences taken into consideration.

Further information:

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