Sunchild E-Learning Program

Jurisdiction: First Nations/INAC   Contact: Martin Sacher

Level: K-12/PSE   Theme: Classroom-based practices

Description of Practice:

The Sunchild E-Learning Program was created by the Sunchild First Nation in 1999. Sunchild E-Learning Project offers on-line courses to 13 First Nations communities to help increase the numbers of high-school graduates in these communities. The program objectives include: providing access to high school, post-secondary and industry training courses; creating partnerships between community, government and corporations to support service and delivery of the e-learning model; and improving retention rates and learner achievement for Aboriginal students.

Background:

In 1999, members of the Sunchild First Nation considered the lack of education in their community and decided alternative methods were needed to reach Aboriginal students. They discovered that:
· Aboriginal students faced unique challenges including family and legal situations, time away from class and relocating to new homes.
· Many Aboriginal students were adults. These students wanted to upgrade and build a better future while meeting their current schedules and responsibilities.
· Any successful education program would have to overcome these challenges with a new way of teaching. In addition, high quality education and experienced teachers would have to be brought to small numbers of students in remote locations -- without exceeding limited education budgets.

The Sunchild E-Learning model was adopted as a solution.

Development:

Sunchild E-Learning is different from conventional distance learning programs in that it creates accountability and interaction between student and teacher. Students are expected to be logged into the computer during class times and can speak with the teacher at any time through text messaging or a microphone. In most cases, students work from a classroom environment where a Key Teacher addresses technical concerns and ensures student participation.Experienced teachers with a passion for teaching First Nations students head the online classes, providing a level of education that is the same as or better than that found in urban schools. Students who miss class time or change residences can easily catch up by reviewing archived classes. This system also allows students to work at a comfortable pace. Achievement is tracked on a weekly basis so that intervention and support can be provided as soon as it becomes necessary.

<u>Evidence</u>:

The Sunchild E-Learning Community has met with remarkable success. In record numbers, students are re-entering the school system and staying in school. They're gaining valuable experience with computers, graduating and moving on to rewarding jobs or post-secondary education.

The success of SunChild was recognized by the Conference Board of Canada who awarded the cyber-school a 2005 Community Learning Award, and Time Magazine who featured the school in its July 4, 2005 edition.

<u>Adaptability</u>:

Today, Sunchild students are doing well in high school, adult upgrading, and pre-apprenticeship courses. Course completion levels are high and corporate partners are helping to bring Sunchild E-Learning to new schools.

<u>Further information</u>:

Sunchild E-Learning Program: http://www.sccyber.net/www/index.php

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