

Module 5A: Student Learning

Welcome to module 5A, student learning. In this module, you'll learn more about:

- High Quality Teaching and Learning and
- the Early Learning,
- Reading,
- Writing, and
- Math Goals of the division's strategic plan and how schools focus on these goals in their learning plans.

High Quality Teaching and Learning

One of the four aspirational statements of Good Spirit's strategic plan is high quality teaching and learning. This aspirational statement is focused on improving student success. High quality teaching and learning includes:

- using provincial curricula and related resources that are developmentally appropriate and culturally responsive,
- employing play-based learning experiences that support a sense of personal competency, self-efficacy, and social responsibility, and
- providing a wide range of opportunities to learn, practice, experience and demonstrate understanding, confidence, and motivation for a healthy and balanced life.

The four goals that directly affect the academic achievement of students are:

- By June 30th 25% more students will exit Kindergarten at appropriate development (green) than when entering Kindergarten.
- By June 30th there will be 10% more Grade 1 to 3 students reading at or above grade level as compared to the data from the previous year.
- By June 30th there will be 2% more Grades 4, 7, & 9 students writing at or above grade level compared to the data from the previous year.
- By June 30th there will be 2% more Grades 2, 5, & 8 students at or above grade level in math compared to the data from the previous year.

Let's look at these four goals more closely.

Early Learning Goal

The first goal we are going to look at, is the early learning goal which states, "By June 30th 25% more students will exit Kindergarten at appropriate development (green) than when entering Kindergarten."

Goal Evaluation

The Early Years Evaluation - Teacher Assessment or EYE is being used to measure the progress towards this goal. The EYE is given to Kindergarten students in the fall and again in the spring.

The EYE is used to assess the skills of children from ages 3 to 6 as they prepare and make the transition to school. The EYE looks at 6 domains and provides a result at each level. The domains are:

- awareness of self and the environment,
- social skills and approaches to learning,
- cognitive skills,
- language and communication,
- fine motor skills, and
- gross motor skills.

The Teacher Assessment provides a red, yellow, or green result for each student in each area. Results help drive the instruction given to Kindergarten students so teachers can provide them with the opportunities and experiences they need to be successful in school.

The primary goal of the EYE is to help prevent reading difficulties by identifying what skills students are missing and providing them with the interventions they need so they can be successful. It identifies a student's strengths and areas that need further development.

The information gained from the EYE is used to provide a baseline for students entering Kindergarten in the fall. Student progress is measured by comparing the results of the students in the spring to their fall assessment results.

Division Strategies

Schools are implementing several strategies to achieve this early learning goal. These strategies include:

- Indigenous Literacy Kits,
- the Heggerty Kindergarten Program,
- and Phonological Screeners.

Indigenous Literacy Kits

Kindergarten teachers have two types of Indigenous literacy kits that they can use in their classrooms. There are diverse play material kits and storytelling kits. Teachers incorporate the diverse play material kits into their center activities and invitations to learn. These materials help students to celebrate the differences between cultures and what makes each individual

unique. The Indigenous story-telling kits have a read aloud book that centers around a specific theme and includes items to support the learning and understanding of the story and its message.

Heggerty Kindergarten Program

The Heggerty Kindergarten Program is 35 weeks of daily phonemic awareness lessons that is intended to give Kindergarten students the background they need to develop as readers. It is meant to supplement the current literacy program in a Kindergarten classroom.

Phonemic awareness is the ability of students to identify and manipulate the sounds in words that are spoken. When students work on their phonemic awareness every day, they learn to hear different sounds in words which helps them with their reading, writing, and spelling.

Phonological Awareness Screeners

The phonological awareness screeners are completed by the Speech and Language Pathologists or SLPs in the fall and spring. The screeners assess several areas of phonological awareness including rhyming, initial and final sound isolation, syllable blending, segmenting, and deleting. The screeners provide information to the SLPs and to the teachers that will inform instruction in the classroom and flag students that need additional support. The Heggerty Kindergarten Program is one instructional tool that will address the area of phonological awareness.

Our schools are implementing a variety of strategies as they work to achieve the early learning goal of our school division.

School Based Strategies Include:

- Collaboration With Families
- Connecting With Families Through Digital Platforms
- Diverse Play Materials
- Documenting Student Learning On Digital Platforms
- Early Learning Environments
- Expanding Expressions Tool or EET
- Family Engagements
- Invitations To Learn
- Learning Sprints
- Literacy Beginnings
- Peer Mentoring
- Play-Based Learning AND
- We Thinkers

Let's look at a few of these school-level activities and programs in more detail.

Expanding Expressions Tool (EET)

The Expanding Expression Tool or EET is a tool that Kindergarten teachers can use to help students express themselves. It uses a simple multisensory approach to help students orally provide general descriptions of objects, use prior knowledge, summarize, etc.

The EET tool contains different beads. Each bead represents a characteristic of an object.

For example, if a Kindergarten child received a truck for his birthday and was telling his class about it, he could describe it as follows:

- For the 'group' bead he might say ... it belongs to the category of vehicles.
- For the 'what does the object do' bead his answer might be ... it carries things in the trailer.
- For the 'what does it look like' bead he might say ... my truck is blue with a red trailer.
- For the 'what is it made of' bead his answer might be ... it is made of metal with rubber tires.
- For the 'parts' bead this child might say ... there is a cab, a trailer, eight wheels, and in the back of the trailer is a small motorbike.
- For the 'where' bead he might answer ... you see trucks on the road. AND
- Finally, for the 'what else do I know' bead he might say ... my uncle bought it for me for my birthday. It looks like the truck he drives.

Invitations To Learn

Invitations to learn are collections of materials that are set up by the teacher and encourage students to explore and make discoveries. The materials are carefully selected to address different curriculum outcomes. Teachers observe students as they explore the materials and use student questions as the focus for further inquiry experiences.

An example of an invitation to learn could center around plants. One of the Science outcomes in Kindergarten is "to examine observable characteristics of plants, animals, and people in their local environment."

The plant themed invitation to learn might include:

- brown playdough,
- a variety of beans,
- plastic leaves and stems,
- small sticks,
- pebbles,
- sand,
- rubber mulch,
- plastic worms,

- cardboard tubes,
- green pipe cleaners, and
- buttons.

Teachers set up the area with the plant themed materials and then stand back and watch the children play. Observations can be made about how the students interact with the materials, the questions they ask, and the answers they provide to targeted questions asked by the teacher.

Play-Based Learning

Play-based learning is purposeful and structured play. During play-based learning, teachers connect the interests of students to a variety of learning opportunities that are linked to outcomes or learning goals. These learning opportunities are set up as centers. Students actively explore the environment and their world through these play-based learning centers.

Children naturally want to play so play-based learning builds on this curiosity and helps them learn through exploration. As the students explore the different centers, the teacher observes the students and documents their learning. Information is gathered on the different developmental domains of the EYE that are aligned with the Kindergarten report card. These domains are:

- social emotional development,
- intellectual development,
- physical development, and
- spiritual development.

In a play-based Kindergarten classroom you might find:

- a block center with blocks, sticks, pieces of wood, and cardboard boxes,
- an art center with paper, scissors, markers, paint, crayons, egg cartons, paper tubes, pipe cleaners, and popsicle sticks,
- a grocery store center with food items, a shopping cart, and a cash register,
- a math center with scales, number blocks, base ten materials, ten frames, math books, building mats, and buttons for sorting,
- a science center with rocks, pinecones, a sunflower head filled with seeds, shells, and magnets, and
- a writing center with lined and unlined paper, names of students, tracing pages that include straight, curved, and zig-zag lines, lacing cards, draw and label activities, sticky notes, envelopes, pencils, and crayons.

Teachers rotate the items they include in the different centers and they teach from the centers so students can recreate what they learn during free play. In addition, teachers can incorporate the treaty outcomes while teaching from the learning centers.

Questions To Ask

As an SCC member, it's your responsibility to understand the goals of the school's learning plan and help the council come up with action plans to support these goals.

Talk to classroom teachers and the principal to find out more about the strategies they are implementing for their early learning goal. Consider asking some of the following questions:

- How is play-based learning different from a traditional kindergarten classroom?
- How many students are at the green level on the EYE in the fall of kindergarten?
- What percentage of students were at the green level on the EYE in the spring of kindergarten? Was the goal of 25% more students at the green level met?
- What strategies are used to help Kindergarten students who are in the red and yellow levels on the EYE?
- How do the play-based learning opportunities in the classroom support the EYE and the developmental domains of the kindergarten report card?
- Do kindergarten teachers notice an improvement in students' phonemic awareness skills after implementing the Heggerty Kindergarten program? AND
- How are the diverse play materials and the literacy kits being used in the Kindergarten classroom?

SCC Action Plan Ideas

There are different ways that SCCs can support their school with the achievement of this goal.

A few action plan ideas are:

1. Create a pamphlet for parents and caregivers on phonemic awareness and list activities that they can work on at home to promote phonemic awareness.
2. Purchase diverse play materials and Indigenous resources for the literacy kits.
3. Create Welcome to Kindergarten packages with materials that promote phonemic awareness such as rhyming books and games.
4. Participate in events to build partnerships and relationships with parents, caregivers, and community members. AND
5. Provide items for center activities by purchasing them or by having parents, caregivers and community members donate them to the classrooms.

Reading Goal

A second goal of the division that focuses on high quality teaching and learning is, “By June 30th there will be 10% more Grade 1 to 3 students reading at or above grade level as compared to the data from the previous year.”

Goal Evaluation

The Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System is a one-on-one assessment tool that provides teachers with a reading level for their students. Teachers listen to students read and then engage them in a conversation to see what they understood from their reading. The assessment places students in green, yellow, and red levels. Results provide teachers with information they can use for planning activities and working with students to achieve reading outcomes.

The Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System is used to track the reading levels of students in Good Spirit School Division. Fountas and Pinnell is administered to Grade 2 to 6 students in the fall and to Grade 1 students in the winter. In the spring it is given to Grade 1 to 6 students whose scores were in the yellow and red levels during the fall and winter testing.

Division Strategies

Teachers within Good Spirit School Division have access to a variety of tools to help students with their reading. These tools include:

- the Good Spirit School Division Literacy Intervention Flowchart,
- the Balanced Literacy Framework,
- the Foundations of Reading in the Early Years Philosophy,
- Sask Reads, and
- their school libraries.

We’ll look at each of these tools a little closer.

GSSD Literacy Intervention Flowchart

The Literacy Intervention Flowchart outlines the process for reviewing the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark data and providing additional assessment and interventions to support students who scored in the yellow and red levels. School teams meet to determine the strengths and areas for growth of students who are reading below grade level. Decisions are then made about suitable interventions using the flowchart as a guide.

Balanced Literacy Framework

Balanced literacy is an approach to teaching that balances teacher instruction with independent learning. Students are provided with instruction in phonics and other targeted reading and writing skills that they need to become better readers and writers. Balanced literacy is said to strike a balance between whole language and phonics instruction.

Foundations of Reading In Early Years Philosophy

There has been a shift in the teaching of reading towards a stronger focus on systematic phonological awareness instruction. This is based on current research that suggests that the brain is not as “wired” for learning to read as it is for learning oral language. As a result, our Early Years Teams and Speech and Language Pathologists are collaborating together to gain a better understanding of phonological awareness and to build plans for supporting both teachers and students in the classroom.

Sask Reads

Sask Reads is a document that provides a provincial framework to support student success in reading. There are numerous resources found on the [Sask Reads website](#) that teachers can access and use in the planning and teaching of lessons related to reading outcomes.

School Libraries

The Good Spirit School Division Library Team is committed to creating library spaces that are open, inviting, and inclusive. In addition, they are working towards ensuring our school libraries support engagement and provide resources that reflect the identities and experiences of all our students. The library team:

- reviews library policies,
- develops weeding guidelines,
- works with schools to remove student barriers, and
- creates spaces that promote engagement, diversity, and inclusivity.

To achieve the reading goal of our division, schools are using a variety of different strategies.

School Based Strategies Include:

- Bookworm Vending Machine
- Conferencing with Students about Reading During Independent Reading
- Digital Reading Platforms
- Family Literacy Events
- Flexible Groups

- Guided Reading
- Home Reading Programs and Reading Logs
- One School One Book
- Reading Buddies
- Reading Camp
- Small Group Instruction
- Summer Reading Program
- Word Study AND
- Words Their Way

Let's take a closer look at a few of these strategies.

Summer Reading Program

The Good Spirit Centralized Library Team coordinates a summer reading initiative. School libraries across the division open for a few hours twice in the summer to allow families access to books and to promote literacy and learning. Engaging activities, snacks, and the opportunity to read and take out books are all part of these openings. Good Spirit also partners with the Parkland Regional Libraries to have a summer reading contest. Every book that a student takes out can be entered into the contest. This year three students won \$100 gift cards to Indigo.

Small Group Instruction

Teachers support students with their reading through small group instruction. Together they read a shared text at the group's instructional reading level. As students read the book, they are explicitly taught the reading strategies they need to develop as readers. The teacher tailors the instruction to each student's strengths and areas of need.

Family Literacy Events

Schools hold a variety of family literacy events for their families and community members. Some examples include "Bagels and Books" where parents and caregivers come in for breakfast and read with their children. Other schools have author teas where students share writing in a formal way. Story and literacy walks have also become quite popular during these family literacy events.

One School One Book

One School One Book is a program where all students in a school listen to the same book. Research has shown that listening to stories helps students:

- listen better and longer,
- build their own vocabulary,

- have a better understanding of concepts, and
- feel better about books and learning.

The reading of the same book helps create community between students, parents, caregivers, teachers, and other school staff.

Questions To Ask

To find out even more about reading in your school, ask classroom teachers and the school principal some of these questions:

- How do kids learn to read?
- What are the biggest predictors of reading success?
- What strategies help kids who struggle with reading?
- How are kids challenged with reading if they are above grade level?
- How does the Fountas and Pinnell testing help students?
- Do most students in LLI groups move up to green or blue levels in their reading?
- What book is your school reading for the One School One Book program?
- What benefits do you see from the One School One Book program?
- What strategies do you feel provide the most support for students who are English language learners?

SCC Action Plan Ideas

Some ideas for SCCs to include in their action plans are:

1. to arrange for local authors and community members to come in and read to students,
2. to arrange family literacy evenings with draws for gift baskets of reading materials or give each family a book with a handout about how to promote reading at home,
3. to go into the school and listen to kids read,
4. to offer to go into a classroom and read aloud to students, and
5. to participate in a learning walk with a focus on literacy.

Writing Goal

The third goal of the division that focuses on high quality teaching and learning is, “By June 30th there will be 2% more Grades 4, 7, & 9 students writing at or above grade level compared to the data from the previous year.”

Goal Evaluation

The Provincial Holistic Rubric is used to assess Grades 4, 7, and 9 students on their writing. This 4-point rubric is used to assess student work overall, as opposed to only looking at individual components or criteria. Teachers look at multiple samples of a student’s work. For example,

teachers might look at the different pieces of student writing that are included in a student's portfolio to determine the student's level as a writer overall using the descriptors in the rubric as a guide.

Division Strategies

To assist teachers with supporting their students as they develop as writers, Good Spirit uses the following writing tools:

- a Writing Instructional Framework,
- the Provincial Writing Continuum, and
- Provincial Writing Rubrics.

Writing Instructional Framework

The writing instructional framework contains consistent language that teachers use for helping students work their way through the writing process. Ideas are also included for teachers to use in their classrooms at each stage of the writing process.

The purpose of the writing instructional framework is for students to view themselves as writers. The steps of the writing process include:

- planning writing and generating ideas,
- drafting and revising,
- editing for conventions, and
- publishing.

Provincial Writing Continuum

There is a provincial writing continuum that teachers can reference while they are working on the compose and create writing outcomes in their classrooms. This continuum provides teachers with an overview of the writing skills, text forms, and strategies that students should be able to use at the end of each grade level.

Provincial Writing Rubrics

Provincial rubrics have been created to assess the writing of students. These rubrics help teachers determine whether a student's writing is:

- at the beginning of their grade level,
- approaching grade level,
- proficient for their grade, or
- if they have achieved mastery at their grade level.

School Based Strategies

Writing strategies that are employed by schools in Good Spirit School Division include:

- Bookmaking
- Class Newsletters
- Conferencing
- Dialogic Units
- Digital Writing Supports
- EET Writing Strategy
- Gallery Walks
- Google Read&Write
- Guided Writing
- Mentor Texts
- Mini Lessons
- Quick Writes
- Sharing Writing
- Target Walls (rubrics, exemplars, etc.)
- Writer In Residence
- Writer's Notebooks
- Writer's Workshop
- Writing Exemplars
- Writing for the School Newspaper
- Writing Stations
- Writing Walls

Let's take a closer look at four of these school-based strategies that are found to help students become better writers.

Google Read&Write

Google Read&Write is a Google Chrome extension that can assist students with both reading and writing. It is a literacy support tool that offers help with everyday tasks like:

- reading the text out loud,
- understanding unfamiliar words,
- researching assignments, and
- proofing written work.

Google Read&Write includes the following features:

- voice to text,

- a word predictor,
- playback,
- voice notes,
- a dictionary, and
- help with grammar.

These options empower students while they create and learn.

Mini Lessons

Mini lessons are short, focused lessons that are presented to the whole class and are usually no more than ten minutes in length. Often mini lessons are based on a need that teachers discover when working with kids on their writing.

Mini lessons will depend on the age and writing ability of students. Mini lessons in younger grades might include:

- adding descriptive words,
- putting ideas in order,
- using periods, exclamation marks, or question marks,
- using transition words,
- thinking of ideas,
- thinking of a title,
- writing a complete sentence, and
- writing an opening sentence.

Mini lessons in older grades might include:

- crafting a conclusion,
- developing characters,
- organizing ideas,
- peer revising,
- proofreading
- using adverbs,
- using if...then... for opening sentences, and
- writing dialogue.

These are only a few ideas teachers might use in a mini lesson. The possibilities for mini lessons are endless.

Quick Writes

Quick writes are short pieces of writing that are usually written in ten minutes or less. They can be a spark for a longer piece of writing or stand on their own. While composing a quick write, students just focus on their writing and don't worry about editing and revising their work. Students write down their thoughts, feelings, or ideas about a topic or experience. Quick writes can develop writing fluency as well as provide teachers with information about what writing skills students have mastered and what skills still need more explicit instruction. Teachers can collect quick writes on a regular basis and compare pieces of writing to see what progress each student is making.

Writing Exemplars

Writing exemplars are pieces of writing that provide students with examples or models of writing assignments. Teachers can provide students with writing exemplars that demonstrate different levels of writing development.

Questions To Ask

Questions to ask classroom teachers and the principal are:

- How do you promote the writing development of kids at the school level?
- How do you promote the writing development of kids at the classroom level?
- How do you find time to conference with students?
- How is Google Read&Write used in your classroom?
- What skills do you work on when conferencing with kids?
- How has the writing stamina of students improved this year?
- What area of writing do kids struggle with the most?
- How can parents, caregivers, and the community help students with the development of their writing skills?
- How can parents and caregivers help with their writing development at home?
- What digital tools do you use to supplement writing in your classroom.

SCC Action Plan Ideas

Some SCC action plan ideas are:

1. Host a young authors evening and provide all authors with a bound anthology of their collected pieces of writing. Consider drawing names for one or more students to come and read at an SCC meeting.
2. Survey parents and caregivers about how they use writing in their lives. Compile a list of names of people willing to go into schools to discuss strategies they use when writing stories, manuals for work, letters, poetry, etc.

3. Provide parents and caregivers with a printable or digital handout on how to help their child with writing at home.
4. Become writing buddies with one or more classrooms in the school and commit to responding to letters written by students - once, twice, six times, or even monthly.
5. Go into the school and do a quick write with a class. Share your quick write with the students and listen to the students share their writing. By participating in a class quick write, you'll gain a deeper understanding for students and their writing.

Math Goal

The final student learning goal we will look at is the math goal. It states, "By June 30th there will be 2% more Grades 2, 5, & 8 students at or above grade level in math compared to the data from the previous year."

Goal Evaluation

The Provincial Holistic Rubric is used to assess Grade 2, 5, and 8 students on their understanding of the math number strand. This 4-point rubric is used to assess the specific number strand concepts learned at each grade level. Teachers consider multiple pieces of evidence that show student understanding. They look at work samples, make observations of students, and have conversations about the concepts. These pieces of evidence help teachers determine the math levels of their students using the descriptors in the rubric as a guide.

Division Strategies

Schools in Good Spirit use several different strategies to develop the math goals of their students. They use:

- formative assessment,
- number talks,
- thinking classrooms, and
- Mathology.

We'll take a closer look at formative assessment, number talks, and thinking classrooms.

Formative Assessment

The division uses a set of common assessments in Grades 1 to 9 math based on the number strand curriculum outcomes. Examples of concepts addressed in the number strand are addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, fractions, decimals, place value, and factoring. Teachers administer grade-specific assessments in the fall and in the spring. They use the information provided to help inform and guide their instruction.

Number Talks

A number talk is a short, ongoing daily routine that is designed to increase a student's fluency with numbers. These talks help reinforce concepts such as:

- all numbers are comprised of smaller numbers,
- numbers can be taken apart and put together,
- numbers are grouped in 1s and 10s, and
- there are many ways to think through solving a problem.

In a number talk, the teacher presents a problem to the class and asks several students to share their thinking. The class discusses the different ways of approaching the problem and then comes to a consensus on the answer.

Thinking Classrooms

Thinking classrooms are based on the book "Building Thinking Classrooms in Mathematics: 14 Teaching Practices for Enhancing Learning." This book focuses on helping students understand the mathematical thinking behind the concepts and skills they are learning rather than having students simply memorize the processes. Teachers develop thinking classrooms by:

- having students work together on whiteboards,
- gradually increasing the difficulty of problems,
- providing problems that allow different levels of understanding, and
- by having students take notes that they can refer to later.

School Based Strategies

Strategies used in schools include:

- After School Math Club
- Aski's Pond APP
- Authentic Math Opportunities
- Demonstrating Math Knowledge Concretely, Pictorially, and Symbolically
- Digital Math
- Flexible Groupings
- Hands On Math
- Manipulatives
- Math Centers
- Math Fair
- Math Inquiry
- Math Walls
- Monthly Math Conversations

- Number Talks AND
- Thinking Classrooms

Two of the strategies that we will look closer at are math centers and math word and instructional walls.

Math Centers

Math centers are places in the classroom where students can practice and refine their knowledge of a math skill or concept. Math centers in the primary grades might include:

- counting money,
- practicing math facts,
- sorting shapes, and
- telling time.

Math centers in higher grades might include:

- journaling about math,
- problem solving,
- real world math, and
- using a calculator.

Math Walls

Math walls provide students with information they may need to reference when completing their math assignments. There are two types of math walls and sometimes teachers combine both into one wall. There are word walls and instructional walls.

A math word wall is a collection of words that is updated each time students learn a new math term. Teachers create activities on a regular basis that involve students using the words on the word wall to help students retain the math vocabulary.

Math instructional walls are also known as math strategy walls or math focus walls. Math instructional walls contain tools that students can use to answer questions on their own. Instructional walls may include:

- a calendar and weather chart,
- a list of the standards or outcomes students are working on like “I can reduce fractions” or “I can add four-digit numbers,”
- the steps or examples to implement math strategies such as subitizing or adding decimals, and

- labeled shapes that show a pentagon has five sides and five vertices or that adjacent angles have the same vertex and one side in common.

Questions To Ask

Questions that you can ask teachers and the principal are:

- What types of math manipulatives are used in the classroom?
- How are students provided with multiple ways to show their thinking?
- How can I support my child with practicing mathematical thinking in everyday life?
- What does a thinking classroom look like?
- How is the math data used at the classroom level?
- What gains are made by students who struggle in math?
- What supports are given to students who struggle in math?
- Do you use a math word wall or math instructional wall in your classroom?

SCC Action Plan Ideas

Here are some SCC action plan ideas:

1. Plan a math Olympics for students and their families to attend one evening.
2. Engage in a learning walk with a focus on math.
3. Add books to the library that involve math.
4. Hold math family evenings where families can take part in activities that focus on different math skills.
5. Host workshops for parents and caregivers on how to work on math at home with their children.
6. Invite community members whose occupations focus on math into the classrooms to discuss how they use math in their jobs.
7. Be a math mentor for students. AND
8. Seek out community businesses that center around math like banks, accountants, stores, etc. as possible destinations for field trips.

Wow! That was a long one. Thanks for hanging out to the end. I hope you now have a more in-depth understanding of the academic goals found in Good Spirit's strategic plan and how schools and teachers are working to meet those goals. Still have questions? Talk to your school principal.