All K-8 students will achieve at or above grade level in reading, writing, and mathematics. They will be engaged in their learning and graduate as active participants in lifelong learning and as responsible, caring, culturally responsive citizens in the community, nation, and world. In pursuit of this goal, we will focus intensively on the engagement, achievement and graduation rates of First Nations, Inuit and Métis students.

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"Children learn to read by reading... but not without instructional support. It’s well known that in order to become thoughtful, strategic, proficient readers, children need to read a lot. When children read extensively, they learn about themselves, other people, and the world; they learn that reading is something they can do that empowers them to control their lives, connect with each other, and make the world a better place." (Miller & Moss, 2013, p.1)
Introduction

The goal of Literacy for Life is to have all students achieve at or above grade level in reading, writing, and mathematics with intensive focus on the engagement, achievement, and graduation rates of our First Nation, Inuit, and Métis students. This report provides an overview of significant actions taken this school year to realize this goal. The Picture Word Inductive Model, formative assessment, and differentiated instruction contributed to student reading growth. Classroom teachers and teacher librarians co-created criteria for conferring with middle years students. Grade four, seven and nine teachers benefitted from professional learning on writing. In mathematics, learning community members addressed computational fluency as a way to enhance confidence. Teachers differentiated instruction to address the wide range of learning needs in our diverse classrooms. More detailed student achievement results from the 2016-2017 school year will be shared in September 2017.

Literacy for Life Board Presentations

Data from the Previous Year (September 2016)
The annual review of reading data was presented in September 2016. By grade three, 76% of students were reading at or above grade level. The collaborative efforts of teachers, data leadership teams, and Collaborative Inquiry Teams (CITs) worked towards implementing strategies to enhance student growth.

Table 1 – F&P Results by Grade – “At or above” grade level (longitudinal)

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<thead>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grade 1</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 2</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 3</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The four year trend for grades two and three is consistently positive. The proportion of students reading at or above GE has increased by 11% for both grades over this period.

Brain-Based Learning (February 2017)

Brain-based learning refers to connections between brain science and educational practice. By integrating the most current developments in the science of learning, opportunities to maximize brain potential and foster student engagement for academic success is increased. Ultimately, this empowers students to take control of their learning to become flexible, resilient, joyful, and curious learners.

Professional Learning

Responsive professional teacher learning continues to be one of the most effective ways to improve student learning through the implementation of high impact strategies. The staff development team supported learning in the following ways:

Early Learning

Current research and Saskatoon Public Schools (SPS) historical evidence indicate that students who acquire knowledge of most of their letters and sounds in kindergarten arrive ready to learn in grade one. Children with strong oral language skills make reading and writing connections more easily. Ongoing attention to alphabet recognition will be a continued priority in kindergarten. "A large portion of instructional time for emergent and early readers is devoted to language learning - fostering each child's ability to process and produce spoken language in order to develop fundamental reading comprehension skills." (Fisher Frey & Hattie, 2017, Impact Teaching Literacy in the Visible Learning Classroom, p. 173).
During 2016-17, prekindergarten teachers and educational assistants continued to focus on implementing Hanen language strategies. These are highly effective strategies that provide young learners with developmentally appropriate oral language skills. Educators documented growth in language development.

New Teachers
A two year model of professional development was created for new teachers. Professional learning was been guided by the Assessment for Teaching Framework. Teachers focused on healthy classroom environments and strong instructional practice to foster their confidence and grow as professional learners.

Kindergarten to grade two teachers were taught to implement the Picture Word Inductive Model (PWIM) and visited model classrooms. Teachers were instructed in the five phases of PWIM and deepened their understanding of phonics and phonemic awareness. All teachers were provided with additional supports in areas such as technology, kinesthetic learning, English as an additional language, brain-based learning, classroom mentorship, and embedded mathematical practices.

Grades three to grade eight teachers developed shared beliefs and knowledge of powerful instructional strategies of the English Language Arts curriculum. Teachers reviewed the resource Cultural Teaching and the Brain as a foundation for understanding and teaching students through a holistic lens. Teachers were introduced to the consistencies of practice, specifically targeting the read aloud, talk aloud, and talk aloud for writing. Math games were introduced as a method to build a community of learners, to help develop a positive mindset toward mathematics and support instructional practices in computational fluency.

Learning Leaders
Learning leaders in fourteen Saskatoon Public Schools followed Jim Knight’s coaching model to assist teachers to develop strong curricular knowledge, and formative assessment and instructional skills. Learning leaders engaged in four sessions of professional development on writing. They supported data leadership teams and school staffs as they learned about the provincial writing expectations through a moderated marking process.

Collaborative Inquiry Teams
School-based Collaborative Inquiry Teams (CIT) explored ways to support our Indigenous students as well as students who struggle. Professional collaboration at Mayfair Community School led to increased academic performance. Using dedicated CIT and staff meeting time, the Mayfair team identified learning needs, co-assessed students to determine areas for growth, implemented strategic instructional plans, targeted specific students, and measured increased student progress. This process was enhanced by allowing students to purchase classroom library books, encouraging family engagement through a bedtime book club, and assisting students by accessing financial and personnel support from partners. Reading success was evident in many classrooms. Notably, in June 2017, 93% of grade one students at Mayfair Community School were reading at or above grade level.

Data Leadership Teams
Data leadership teams met five times with the goal of developing leadership skills and to support teachers as they analyzed student learning profiles. Staff responded with differentiated instructional strategies to improve learning outcomes for students.

I’ve had some students jump six reading levels this year from strategies I’ve learned here.
-Grade four teacher
First Nation, Inuit, and Métis Supports

In 2016-17, professional development and leadership sessions highlighted Indigenous ways of knowing as key to building strong relationships, enhancing family engagement and learning more about cultural competencies when planning for the success of First Nation, Inuit, and Métis students.

Many schools hosted ceremonies such as feasts, round dances, culture days and pow wows. The cultural knowledge acquired during these ceremonies, assisted teachers in improving First Nation, Inuit and Métis content into classroom story-telling, writing and math lessons. When children and staff see themselves in the work, there is a stronger sense of belonging and increased academic success.

Leveled Literacy Intervention teachers supported First Nation, Inuit, and Métis students at Confederation Park Community School and Pleasant Hill Community School. These sessions assisted children in acquiring reading fluency, comprehension and decoding skills. In addition, the Saskatoon Public Schools Foundation funded the Early Learning Tutor Program for students in grades one to five at 18 elementary schools.

During parent engagement sessions at Howard Coad School and at other School Community Council meetings, parents noted high academic expectations as essential for children to further their academic performance. Schools and families recognize the link between cultural identity, academic expectations, and ongoing success in reading and math.

French Immersion

A French Immersion learning community was developed to support new and second year teachers. The strategic intention was to provide opportunities to review consistencies in MIMI (i.e. reading and writing strategies, French Immersion vocabulary), explore French mentor texts, develop formative assessment practices, and share French Immersion resources. Elementary vice principals led additional professional development to enhance French language acquisition in the classroom.

Mathematical Literacy

Professional supports in mathematics instruction focused on computational fluency. The goal was to improve student ability to add, subtract, multiply, and divide grade appropriate computations through the use of research-based instructional practices. Key learning outcomes included acquiring flexibility in the use of computational methods, increasing understanding, and accurately identifying answers with efficiency. Several key steps were taken to help reach this goal:

First, division and teacher leaders studied research describing powerful instructional practices for computation and identified three promising practices: Number Talks, Hands on Activities and Games, and Purposeful Practice.

Second, teacher leaders in a distributed leadership model shared promising practices with all SPS elementary math teachers.

Mathematics Learning Communities focused on computational fluency through the lenses of mathematical mindset and cultural competence. These communities had a significant positive impact on:

- professional understanding of computational fluency, math mindset, and culturally competent teaching practices;
• implementation of new learning;
• increases in student learning, confidence and growth mindset as well as increases in student ability to have mathematical conversations and self-reflection;
• distributed leadership in schools through sharing of meeting information, leading staff meetings, sharing with CITs, ensuring resources are made available, and working with individual teachers.

Third, the SPS new online Math Hub was created to share resources and facilitate professional learning. The SPS Mathematics Quick Screeners are correlated to the Saskatchewan mathematics curriculum and designed to provide teachers with an overview of learning strengths and needs through individual learner profiles. Teachers used the screeners and the corresponding digital data tool to target instruction for young mathematicians.

Principals reported that the quick screeners precipitated changes to the way teachers teach mathematics by highlighting a need for flexible small groups, responsive stations, differentiated instruction, and re-teaching. Resource support, co-teaching, and peer tutoring opportunities are now being reported in schools as a response to the data from the quick screeners. Math screener data is also being used to inform teachers’ mathematical instruction and the use of the promising practices for computational fluency.

The Math Intervention Community used a range of knowledge and experience to focus on creating a research-based framework for mathematics intervention. The framework known as Roadways to Math was piloted at Howard Coad, Westmount, Dr. John G. Egnatoff, Lakeridge, North Park Wilson and Silverwood Heights Schools.

**Technology**

Digital data collection tools were created for both math quick screeners and Fountas & Pinnell assessments to give teachers the data they need to understand where their students are, and what supports those students need moving forward. STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math) education was integrated into reading, writing, and math curricula, through coding and robotics. During the Week of Code in December, and the Canada Learning Code Week in June, curricular outcomes were integrated in coding and robotics, as well as Treaty Essential Learnings.

The new literacy portal houses numerous learning opportunities for teachers in an ever growing and evolving online space that provides “just in time” supports based on current educational research.

Work continues with the Safe, Caring, and Accepting Schools core strategy to provide resources and support for digital citizenship for students, teachers, and parents within the community.

**Responsive Professional Development**

All grade four, seven and nine teachers received three professional development sessions focused on provincial writing outcomes. Teachers reviewed the Ministry of Education expectations for curriculum, the assessment rubric and engaged in moderated marking experiences to calibrate grade level writing. Data leadership teams will lead writing professional development on August 30, 2017 for all elementary SPS teachers.

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*I have seen big improvements in my students’ love of math as well as their confidence. This year my students solve addition and subtraction problems quicker, more efficiently and are able to explain their thinking.*  
-Math Community Member
Responsive professional development opportunities continue to be offered to teachers interested in joining a learning community. Consultants led book club study groups to deepen teachers’ understanding of language development, social justice, and technology.

Guided by the work of Fisher, Frey, and Hattie’s *Visible Learning for Literacy*, middle years groups explored the impact of various high yield strategies. The Literacy and Technology Cohort reviewed strategies such as Sketchnoting, and Word Cents to collect evidence on student learning and achievement. Several of the projects resulted in the development of the SPS portal, blogging, videos, and hyperdocs that will be used for teacher professional development in the years to come.

The connection between literacy and coding was modelled for teachers and students as they developed foundational coding and programming skills. Primary students used the Bee-Bot (tiny robot) to sequence key events as they retold a story. They planned out a route for the Bee-Bot, entered instructions into the robot, and debugged their code. Six Bee-Bot kits are available to be borrowed by teachers in the division.

**Literacy for Life Conference**

*Saskatchewan Stories* was the theme for the 12th annual *Literacy for Life* Conference which highlighted keynote speaker and Governor General award winner Dr. Bill Waiser. Saskatoon Public Schools Indigenous Ensemble enthralled the crowd of parents and educators with their beautiful performance which blended song, dance, and drumming to deliver a powerful message on reconciliation. Thousands of students gathered at the University of Saskatchewan for two days to be inspired and learn from Saskatchewan authors, storytellers, musicians and illustrators. The Willow Awards Gala was hosted at École Forest Grove School and live streamed across Saskatchewan. A literacy appreciation event was held to thank Saskatoon Public Schools’ partners in literacy.

**Future Planning:**

During 2017-2018, through a culturally responsive lens, the *Literacy for Life* priority will:

- develop language strategies for early learning as identified through the Early Years Evaluation and Speech and Language kindergarten screener;
- develop a literacy community of learners;
- develop SPS proficient readers with a focus on word knowledge as identified through EYE and Fountas and Pinnell assessment;
- develop SPS proficient writers as identified through the provincial writing rubrics;
- develop SPS proficient mathematicians as identified through the math screeners;
- continue to emphasize *Sask. READS* and *Sask. READS for Administrators* as key resources;
- introduce middle years teachers to the *Saskatoon Public Schools READS* document;
- use conferencing as a form of formative assessment in reading, writing, and math;
- continue to focus on enhancing technology to support student and teacher learning;
- continue to develop the literacy and numeracy portal for professional development.

*Literacy for Life* will continue to grow and evolve in response to student, family, teacher, and community needs.