The South Slave Divisional Education Council's mandate is to provide the best possible education for all South Slave school age students. The Council also recognizes the United Nations Declarations of the Rights of a Child that entitles each child to receive an education, "…which will promote his general culture and enable him, on a basis of equal opportunity, to develop his abilities, his individual judgment, and his sense of moral and social responsibility, and to become a useful member of society. The best interests of the child shall be the guiding principle of those responsible for his education and guidance; that responsibility lies first with his parents." Further, it is clear from the research and related literature that student success in literacy, numeracy and social responsibility is necessary for personal success, the fullest range of career and life choices, and a positive and productive society. As such, these focus areas, and related parent involvement, will always be a priority of the Council.

This Key Priorities policy intends to focus all SSDEC staff on the essential components of effective and improving schools, and maximum student literacy achievement, including; research-based instruction and assessment strategies, measurable goal(s) and targets, frequent progress monitoring and data based decision making, ongoing job-embedded professional development, and strong leadership, teamwork and parent involvement. Research in northern school improvement and student achievement suggests that Council prioritize the following:

- *assessment* - collect baseline and comparative data to see if efforts are making a difference and to inform future decisions. This implies the need for SMART targets (specific, measurable, achievable, responsibility, timeline) to be established,

- *multi-level alignment* - schools can have their own goals and targets but they must also include and establish baseline and targets for the regional goals so as to maximize wide-spread effort and likelihood of success,

- *professional learning* - each regional committee, each school (professional learning committee), each collaborative learning team, and each administrator and program staff member in schools needs to focus on 1) what students need to learn (essential outcomes), 2) how we will know if they have learned it (assessment), and 3) what we will do if students haven't (interventions). Instructional coaches in each school facilitate ongoing job-embedded professional development for program staff, and learning teams set short-term instructional goals and celebrate small wins every 6-8 weeks. This focus of ongoing learning, collaboration and results (action research) is the process by which we best meet collective and individual student leaning needs.

- *servant leadership* - we all do everything in our power to supplement our expectation for results (pressure) with significant focus on how we can best help our professionals, partners, and students achieve (support).

For the purposes of this policy, the term "literacy" is not confined to reading and writing in English only, but also includes local Aboriginal languages and French, and such other recognized "literacies" as oral language, numeracy, computer and media literacies.

REGULATIONS

The following regulations apply:

1) Specific literacy priorities of the Council are chosen according to the following:
   a. *Results*: A few key priorities, with carefully selected strategies, and a long term commitment to results (typically a minimum of 5-7 years per key priority)
   b. *Dedicated Funding*: These priorities are funded first before other budget allocations are determined, and
   c. *Alignment*: Local schools and DEAs are required to align goals and targets, and are also encouraged to identify other locally determined priorities as per Council Policy AEA – *Community Schools Education Plans*.

2) Framework and Planning:
   a. Council will set the literacy goal(s) and update the SMART targets (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and with responsibilities and timeline) based on regional student achievement data,
   b. The Superintendent will:
      i. develop and update a comprehensive regional framework and set of guidelines in consultation with school principals and/or their designates; and
      ii. ensure school principals develop and implement a coherent school-based program/model consistent with the regional framework.

3) Student Instruction, Assessment, Reporting and Data Based Decision-Making
   a. The Superintendent will ensure that:
      i. All students are supported to independence through a gradual release of responsibility approach that includes universal research-based instruction, and tiered interventions as needed,
      ii. Regular, on-going and meaningful assessment For, As and Of learning will be an integral component of both the regional framework and each school-based literacy model/program,
      iii. Schools and school staff will provide each student and parent/guardian with student achievement data relative to the regional priority, along with opportunity to have input into the setting of their child's improvement targets and timeline,
      iv. Collaborative data-based decision-making occurs through school-based and multi-school professional learning communities (PLCs) who meet frequently (at least quarterly) to analyze data, and set short-term goals and plans, and
      v. Annual regional and school-based plans include improvement targets for the percentage of students who achieve grade level expectations and the percentage of students who achieve at least a year's growth in the key priority area.

4) Staff Professional Development, Training and Performance Assessment
   a. The Superintendent will ensure that:
      i. Regional Program Coordinators and school-based Literacy/Instructional Coaches and Program Support Teachers are provided with, and provide in turn, research-based, ongoing and job-embedded professional development to school staff,
      ii. Each regional and school based administrator and program staff member includes a goal and related action items, aligned with the Council's key priority and for improved student achievement, in their individual growth plans, and
      iii. Program staff evaluations include reference to contributions to the regional and/or school priorities.
   b. Council evaluations of the Superintendent will be based on the Superintendent's job description as per Council Policy CBA – *Role of the Superintendent*, and will include improvement targets for the percentage of students who achieve grade level expectations and the percentage of students who achieve at least a year's growth in *the* key priority area.

Reference: *Education Act*: Preamble, Sec. 5, 7, 78, 117.1(a)(n)(p)(q)
             United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Child, 1959
             Put Reading First – The Research Building Blocks of Reading Instruction, 2001
             Reading Next - A Vision for Action & Research in Middle & High School Literacy, 2006
             School Leadership in the Canadian North: A Case Study of School Improvement in the South Slave Divisional Education Council, 2009
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