



MEMORANDUM

October 8, 2024
Regular Board Meeting

TO	Board of Trustees
FROM	Shauna Boyce, Superintendent
ORIGINATOR	Mark Francis, Deputy Superintendent
RESOURCE	Dean Bernard, Northern and Indigenous Relations
GOVERNANCE POLICY	Board Policy 2: Role of the Board Board Policy 12: Role of the Superintendent
ADDITIONAL REFERENCE	BP 2: Education Planning and Programming Board Annual Work Plan <i>Education Act</i>
SUBJECT	ATHABASCA DELTA COMMUNITY SCHOOL REPORT

PURPOSE

For information. No recommendation required.

BACKGROUND

Parkland School Division (PSD) assumed operation of Athabasca Delta Community School (ADCS) effective September 1, 2022 as the interim operating authority. Throughout the 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 school years, PSD has worked in partnership with Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation, Fort Chipewyan Métis Association, Mikisew Cree First Nation, and the community of Fort Chipewyan to provide a quality education while a community education authority is established.

REPORT SUMMARY

The Superintendent employs a Division Principal to be responsible for Northern and Indigenous Relations with an initial purpose of facilitating the operation of ADCS and developing relationships and partnerships with Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation, Fort Chipewyan Métis Association, and Mikisew Cree First Nation as partners in education.

This report provides an update to the Board regarding finances, enrolment, staffing, school infrastructure, staff housing, technology, programming and services for ADCS students, during the second year in the role of Interim Education Authority.

Administration would be pleased to respond to any questions.

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ATHABASCA DELTA COMMUNITY REPORT

OCTOBER 2024

Presented to the Board of Trustees, October 8th, 2024

Mark Francis, Deputy Superintendent

Resource: Dean Bernard, Division Principal

Tammie Sarauer, Principal of Athabasca Delta Community School

Our Students Possess the confidence, resilience, insight and skills required to thrive in, and positively impact, the world.

BACKGROUND

In September 2022, Parkland School Division (PSD) became the Interim Education Authority for Athabasca Delta Community School (ADCS) in Fort Chipewyan, Alberta, under Ministerial Order 011-2002. Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation, Fort Chipewyan Métis Association, and Mikisew Cree First Nation are actively working to establish a Community Education Authority, and PSD is collaborating closely with the local community to operate ADCS until this new authority takes over. The 2024-2025 school year marks the third year of PSD's role in this interim capacity.

ADCS SCHOOL VISION

"Our vision at Athabasca Delta Community School is to cultivate a safe and nurturing learning environment that honours our community's values and traditions while meeting Alberta's educational standards. We are committed to fostering a growth mindset in each student, ensuring they feel accomplished and equipped with the tools necessary to forge their own paths. By integrating indigenous knowledge and focusing on the holistic development of every learner, we strive to empower our students to succeed and contribute meaningfully to their community and the wider world."

OPERATIONAL SUPPORT

Finance

Funding for Athabasca Delta Community School (ADCS)

ADCS operates within the budget allocated by the Government of Alberta (GOA) and under the provisions of the 1987 Tuition Agreement between the Nations, the Federal Government, and the local School Authority.

Conditional Grants

The Parkland School Division (PSD) receives an annual conditional grant of \$200,000 from the GOA. This grant covers the increased administrative costs of a Divisional Principal and additional travel required for PSD staff to support ADCS and foster community relations. Additionally, in the 2022-2023 school year, PSD received a \$2.0 million conditional capital grant to fund maintenance and renovations of teacher housing in Fort Chipewyan, along with \$300,000 to address health and safety concerns at ADCS. These funds are still being utilized to complete necessary maintenance and renovation projects.

Northern Allowance

In the 2022-2023 school year, PSD made a special request to Alberta Education for additional Northern Allowance funding, similar to the allowance granted to school divisions in the Fort McMurray area. This allowance has been approved for ADCS and will continue for the 2024-2025 school year.

Facilities

School Infrastructure

Upgrades made in 2023-2024 include:

- Completed a mould remediation project in 3 instructional spaces and 1 vestibule
- Replaced concrete surfacing outside of the front entrance
- Replaced all classroom projectors
- Replaced all water main valves and main water meter
- Installed a new compressor for the walk-in fridge in the commercial kitchen

Staff Housing

Parkland has 15 houses/duplexes to accommodate staff. Teacherages are needed to accommodate teaching staff in a community with limited rental options. When available, support staff/non-teaching staff may be provided housing if available.

PSD added 1 basement suite in the 2023-2024 year and renovated 2 other units. PSD is in the process of adding 1 more basement suite to accommodate future growth and programming needs with anticipation that it will be complete in the fall, 2024. PSD is also planning to renovate 2-4 existing housing units once the winter ice road is established. The number of units renovated will depend on the amount of time that the winter road is open for and the availability of materials and contractors.

Technology Services

Over the past year, Technology Services has supported ADCS, improving the overall learning environment and expanding opportunities for students. Notable upgrades include the installation of projectors throughout the school, enhancing of classroom presentations and interactive lessons. To ensure safer and more controlled internet access for students, GoGuardian licenses were purchased, supporting the school's digital learning needs. Additionally, new Chromebooks were acquired over the summer, increasing student access to technology across all grade levels.

ADCS will receive a Surface Hub projector system, donated by Compugen. This system opens up new opportunities for high school students to earn dual credits and provides valuable training resources for junior high students.

Human Resources

Addressing concerns related to cost of living, the northern environment, housing, work conditions, hiring timelines, and professional development has been a priority in improving staff retention at ADCS. Initiatives such as enhancing compensation through additional Northern Allowance funding, lowering rental costs for staff, and improving the quality of housing have made a significant impact. As a result, only one employee transitioned to Parkland South after two years of service, and two other staff members have moved on from the school.

The timing of hiring has also improved, with a strategic focus on recruiting teachers immediately after they complete their university programs. By having new teachers join ADCS during the last two months of the school year, we were able to onboard two staff members who will play a key role in the elementary wing. To sustain strong recruitment efforts, we are actively exploring new strategies, including reaching out to universities in Newfoundland and the Maritimes to attract talent from those regions.

In addition, we have empowered our staff by establishing a Professional Development (PD) committee, ensuring that they have a say in their growth and that their individual PD needs are effectively met.

Transportation

For this year's report, there have been no changes to the transportation situation at ADCS. The school continues to operate with two buses: a primary bus for daily routes and a spare bus, which is available in case of mechanical or safety concerns. The spare bus is also equipped with a wheelchair lift to ensure accessibility.

In addition to the buses, Parkland School Division has two trucks designated for use in Fort Chipewyan. One truck is assigned to the maintenance worker, while the second is allocated for general school use.

STUDENT SERVICES

Student Services

ADCS embraces diversity and recognizes the unique contributions each student brings to the classroom. The Division Student Services Team, in collaboration with schools, provides necessary supports and services to address the needs of diverse learners, including those with complex learning challenges. These Student Supports and Services include, but are not limited to:

- The implementation of Individual Education Program Plans (including Individual Program Plans, Behaviour Support Plans, and Individual Care Plans)
- Providing Speech-Language Therapy, Occupational Therapy and Physical Therapy Services to identified students within ADCS through a partnership with Tamaca Services. These services require the consent of the student's guardian. A Speech and Language Pathologist (SLP) oversees these supports through regular screenings, assessments, and a blend of onsite and online services delivery. A Speech and Language Assistant (SLPA) implements the Speech and Language support plans under the supervision of the SLP.
- Providing Psychological assessments, as required, to identified students. Psychological Assessments can provide valuable insights into a child's unique learning and emotional needs. By identifying strengths, challenges, and potential areas for support, these assessments enable tailored educational strategies that foster a nurturing and effective learning environment.
- Building capacity around evidence-based practices for supporting diverse learners through online and onsite support from the Division Principal of Student Services.
- Last spring the Early Needs Facilitator spent a week supporting the Kindergarten teacher around best practices in early childhood and play-based environments.

Comprehensive School Health

Staff at Athabasca Delta Community School understand the interconnectedness of student learning and health, recognizing the school's role in fostering healthy school communities as the foundation for optimal learning. A healthy school community supports the well-being of students and staff through the application of a Comprehensive School Health (CSH) approach. A CSH approach focuses on the three tenets of active living, healthy eating, and mental well-being.

By providing holistic support through skilled professionals, targeted strategies, and partnerships, ADCS nurtures a caring, inclusive environment where students' mental health is a priority. With ongoing initiatives and future plans, the school remains dedicated to enhancing students' emotional well-being, allowing them to thrive academically, socially, and emotionally.

Comprehensive School Health Supports include, but are not limited to:

- Universal and Targeted Mental Health Strategies: ADCS implements a continuum of mental health support. Universal strategies benefit all students, promoting overall well-being, while targeted strategies focus on specific groups and individuals, offering personalized services.

- Mental Health Capacity Building (MHCB) Initiative: ADCS partners with Alberta Health Services to deliver the MHCB Initiative. The initiative supports the development of school-based mental health programs that focus on promotion, prevention, and early intervention. Since 2006, ADCS has titled its project "Helping Hands to Success," and two staff members oversee its planning and implementation with the support of the Division Principal of Wellness and Community Partnerships. The program serves children and youth under 19 and their families throughout the community in Fort Chipewyan. Highlighted prevention activities over the past year included:
- spruce gum salve making with Grade 5 students and jingle dance lessons, and
- various activities for youth and families in the community including the annual Mental Health Fair and a series of catered mindful dinners where community members were invited to share a meal and mental health resources.
- Individual Counselling Supports: ADCS is supported by a qualified School Counsellor with a Master of Counselling. The Counsellor provides individual mental health support to students, with guardian consent. During the 2023-2024 school year, the School Counsellor made 14 trips to Fort Chipewyan to work with students. 15 trips are scheduled for the 2024-2025 school year, which will continue to ensure students' well-being is supported.
- ADCS is partnered with APPLE Schools (A Project Promoting healthy Living for Everyone in schools) and Breakfast Clubs of Canada, which is an innovative school-focused health promotion initiative. A school-designated Health Facilitator supports Comprehensive School Health within ADCS, which focuses on Healthy Eating and Physical Activity. During the 2023-2024 school year, the Division's Health and Wellness Facilitator travelled to Fort Chipewyan to support the CSH tenet of Mental Well-Being during the annual Mental Health Fair.
- School Staff have access to the Division's Mental Health in Schools website, which provides teachers with lessons to support student well-being as well as tools for staff to use to support student regulation. The Health & Wellness Facilitator met with School staff during the 2023-2024 school year to review the website and resources.

Crisis/Trauma Response:

PSD's Divisional Trauma Follow-up Team works with the School Administrators to support students and staff following a crisis or traumatic event. The purpose of the Trauma Follow-up Team is to help those impacted by a critical incident to begin the process of re-establishing a positive emotional state.

The Division Principal of Wellness and Community Partnership and Division Psychologist are available to School Administration by providing consultation and support in the areas of crisis/trauma response and suicide Intervention protocols as required.

INSTRUCTIONAL SERVICES

Literacy

During the 2023-2024 school year, the Instructional Services team collaborated closely with the administrators and literacy lead teachers at Athabasca Delta Community School (ADCS) to develop and implement a comprehensive literacy plan. This plan focused on creating a shared understanding of literacy priorities, outlining professional development opportunities, and setting schoolwide literacy goals.

Key activities in the support provided include:

- **On-Site Visits:** The division principal and literacy facilitators conducted two visits to ADCS in October and February. During these visits, they worked alongside staff to enhance literacy instruction, focusing on small and whole-group reading strategies, phonological awareness, word study, and writing instruction.
- **Professional Development:** The team facilitated professional development sessions that aimed to strengthen teachers' abilities to implement comprehensive literacy programming. These sessions were designed to support instructional practice in reading and writing across different grade levels.

- **Data Analysis:** Staff were supported in analyzing student literacy data to inform instruction and improve student outcomes. This helped teachers better understand areas of student growth and where additional support was needed.
- **Resource Implementation:** The team provided guidance on the implementation of new literacy resources, ensuring that teachers were equipped with the tools needed to support student success in reading and writing.
- **Virtual Support:** In addition to the in-person visits, the literacy team offered ongoing virtual support throughout the school year. They answered questions, provided personalized coaching, and helped staff tailor instructional practices to meet student needs.

This collaboration has already shown positive results, and we look forward to building on this partnership. Recently, an online meeting was held to introduce new literacy facilitators, set goals for the upcoming year, and provide an overview of new literacy resources. The ongoing nature of this partnership continues to be mutually beneficial and impactful.

2024-2025 Literacy Plan at ADCS

The literacy plan for the 2024-2025 school year is designed to continue fostering a love of reading and writing among students while increasing the number of students performing at or above grade level. Our goal is to help students become confident and engaged readers and writers.

Strategies to Achieve This Goal:

- **Support New Curriculum Implementation:** We will provide professional development opportunities to help teachers effectively implement the new literacy curriculum.
- **Small Group Instruction:** A continued focus will be placed on integrating small group instruction practices into classrooms to offer targeted support for student literacy development.
- **Data-Driven Instruction:** Teachers will collect and analyze data to better understand student strengths and areas of growth, informing their literacy instruction.
- **Collaborative Opportunities:** School-based literacy leads will prioritize collaborative opportunities to support and enhance classroom instruction, helping to improve student outcomes.

Measurements for Literacy Development:

- **Continuation of Alberta Yearly Standards and Testing**
- **Student Self-Assessments:** Students will assess their personal growth, confidence, and enjoyment in reading and writing.
- **School-Developed Benchmarks:** These will be used to track literacy development and student progress.
- **Fountas and Pinnell Assessments:** These will provide key insights into student reading levels and growth.

Reading Benchmarks: Additional benchmarks will be used to assess reading proficiency across grade levels.

Numeracy

2023-2024 Numeracy Support at Athabasca Delta Community School (ADCS)

In the 2023-2024 school year, facilitators Tracy Onuczko and Kelli Holden, along with Division Principal Shaye Patras, provided essential numeracy support to Athabasca Delta Community School (ADCS). Their efforts included a range of activities aimed at enhancing numeracy teaching and learning:

- **Professional Development:** ADCS teachers participated in virtual PD sessions with Parkland School Division (PSD) South staff via Google Meet.

- **On-Site Visits:** The numeracy team conducted two on-site visits to Fort Chipewyan, one in the fall and another in the spring, spending a week each time working closely with teachers and students.
- **Virtual Meetings:** Ongoing virtual meetings with teachers and administration provided continuous support throughout the school year.

Key initiatives carried out included:

- **Screen Administration:** To alleviate the burden on teachers unfamiliar with the screening process, the numeracy team administered assessment tools such as the Elk Island Numeracy Screen, Kindergarten Counting and Subitizing Screen, Early Years Interview, Middle Years Interview, and MiPi.
- **Data Interpretation:** The team supported teachers and administrators in analyzing screen data to inform instructional decisions. While progress is being made, ongoing efforts are necessary to further refine data use.
- **Resource Training:** Teachers received training on the application of various numeracy resources, including Digiblocks and Cuisenaire Rods.
- **Modeled Lessons:** Lessons were modeled in classrooms on topics such as small group instruction and Building Thinking Classrooms, helping to improve teaching strategies.
- **Lesson Planning and Routines:** Facilitators assisted in developing lesson plans and numeracy routines based on screen and assessment data, aligning instruction with students' needs.

As a result of these collaborative efforts, improvements in teacher pedagogy are reflected in student assessment data. For instance, ADCS Grade 1 students saw their numeracy scores increase from 80% in September to 91% in May, highlighting the positive impact of this focused support.

2024-2025 Numeracy Plan at ADCS

The numeracy plan for the 2024-2025 school year aims to build on the successes of the previous year by further enhancing students' confidence and engagement with mathematics, while expanding their problem-solving skills. Our goal is to ensure that students are both confident and capable in their numeracy abilities.

Strategies to Achieve This Goal:

- **Support New Curriculum Implementation:** Professional development opportunities will be provided to support teachers in effectively implementing the new numeracy curriculum.
- **Small Group Instruction:** Continued emphasis will be placed on building small group instruction practices into classrooms to provide targeted support for students.
- **Professional Development in Building Thinking Classrooms:** Teachers will continue to receive professional development to deepen their understanding and application of the "Building Thinking Classrooms" framework.
- **Data-Driven Instruction:** Focus on data collection and analysis will help teachers identify student strengths and areas for growth, ensuring that instructional decisions are well-informed.
- **Collaborative Opportunities:** A school-based numeracy lead will prioritize collaborative opportunities to support classroom instruction and teacher development.

Measurements for Numeracy Development:

- Continuation of Alberta yearly standards and assessments
- Conducting Early Years Numeracy Interviews with each student
- Monitoring progress through Alberta Education Assurance Measures

ATTENDANCE

It is challenging to compare attendance between the first two years of Parkland School Division's role as the interim operational authority for Athabasca Delta Community School (ADCS) due to the evacuation in the first year. However, in the second year, programs such as the leadership initiative and MyPath North were introduced, contributing significantly to fostering positive relationships between students and the school. Building strong connections is central to the school's approach to addressing attendance issues. Moving forward, the ADCS team will continue to build on these relationships, with a particular focus on grades 5 and 7, where attendance did not show notable improvement. Strengthening the bonds between teachers and students in these grades will be a priority to address the attendance challenges from last year.

SCHOOL INITIATIVES

MyPath North Initiative

The MyPath North Initiative was developed through extensive engagement with the community, staff, and students at ADCS to create a comprehensive afternoon program. This program was designed to support students as they navigate both the traditional and modern worlds, equipping them with skills to thrive in the unique environment of a fly-in community while enhancing their mastery of the provincial school curriculum in meaningful ways.

In the 2023-2024 school year, the MyPath North Initiative offered the following educational structure:

Morning Sessions:

- Core subjects (Language Arts, Math, Science, and Social Studies) were taught in alignment with provincial educational standards.
- Traditional Languages (Cree and Dene) continued in the morning, allowing students to engage with their cultural heritage and language.

Afternoon Sessions: The afternoon programming under MyPath North focused on offering diverse educational pathways tailored to the interests and needs of students, fostering holistic development. These pathways included:

1. **STEM with a Concentration in Robotics and 3D Printing:** Students were introduced to cutting-edge STEM education, focusing on technical proficiencies like robotics and 3D printing, aligning their learning with future industry demands.
2. **Outdoor Education:** An outdoor classroom was established in the school's backyard, providing students with an immersive learning experience facilitated by elders, knowledge keepers, and certified outdoor education staff. This environment promoted experiential learning and cultural knowledge sharing.
3. **Cultural Fashion and Beading:** Students had the opportunity to explore Dene, Cree, and Métis traditions through cultural fashion and beading, fostering creativity and a deeper connection to their heritage.
4. **Foods:** This pathway emphasized Fort Chipewyan culture, teaching students traditional food preparation, preservation techniques, and healthy culinary practices rooted in local culture.
5. **Art:** Students expressed themselves through cultural art, drama, and storytelling, drawing inspiration from traditional methods used by the Dene, Cree, and Métis communities, providing a rich exploration of cultural expression.
6. **Music:** A drumming and singing program was established, where students learned to play, build, and maintain drums, deepening their appreciation for the rhythmic traditions of the community.

Transition to a school with community input: A pivotal aspect of MyPath North has been the vision of transitioning ADCS into school that has the help of community to learn valuable skills from knowledge keepers and elders. This transition aims to empower the local community by involving them in decision-making processes, class options, Key elements include:

- **Community Involvement:** Committees and working groups were established to ensure community engagement in the transition process.
- **Empowerment and Ownership:** Students has a say about the things they wanted to learn which allowed them to feel they were part of the process of their education

The incorporation of traditional practices in the curriculum is designed to contribute significantly to the holistic health and well-being of students. Beyond academic growth, this initiative aims to foster a positive and supportive school culture where students feel valued and supported in their journey towards overall well-being. By emphasizing cultural teachings related to physical and mental health, the program addresses the broader aspects of student development, promoting a more holistic approach to education.

The 2023-2024 school year saw significant progress in the implementation of the MyPath North Initiative, with students experiencing a unique blend of academic rigor and cultural enrichment. The initiative will be a strong foundation for student success in both traditional and contemporary contexts, contributing to their holistic well-being and fostering a stronger sense of community ownership.

Student Leadership Field Trip

This leadership trip was designed to provide Junior High and High School students with valuable experience and knowledge, helping them explore new opportunities and discover their unique paths as they continue their education.

Students from Athabasca Delta Community School (ADCS) visited Parkland South to bridge relationships between northern and southern students while learning about different educational opportunities. During the trip, they toured various schools, including Memorial Composite High School, Spruce Grove Composite High School, Greystone Centennial Middle School, the Center for Education, and Amiskwaciy Academy. The students observed core and complementary programming, experienced student life on campus, and explored extra-curricular activities.

In addition to their academic exploration, ADCS students played exhibition basketball games, observed athletic tournament play, and connected with the sports and athletic programs within the Parkland School Division. This trip was a comprehensive learning experience that benefited both the student leaders and athletes of ADCS, helping them envision broader possibilities for their future education and personal growth.

Indigenous Ways of Knowing

In the 2023-2024 school year, Athabasca Delta Community School made significant strides in fostering Indigenous Ways of Knowing and Perspectives in alignment with Parkland School Division's commitment to cultural understanding and education. The school has continued its efforts to promote the teachings and traditions of the Métis, Dene, and Cree nations within the community. Through meaningful engagement with Elders, integration of Indigenous languages, and the expansion of land-based learning opportunities, ADCS has deepened its connection to these essential cultural practices. Students from Kindergarten to Grade 9 receive language instruction in either Cree or Dene, with these lessons enriched by visits from Elders who teach traditional skills such as working with a moose head, making drums, and learning about traplines. The land-based learning programs are thoughtfully designed to respect Indigenous cultures and traditions, ensuring that students in this fly-in community learn in ways that honour their heritage while building a strong educational foundation.

LOOKING FOWARD

As we move into this school year at ADCS, our School Development Plan highlights three key areas of focus:

1. **Enhancing Student Engagement:** We are committed to fostering a deeper connection between students and their education by creating an environment where every student feels motivated and supported to participate actively in their learning journey.
2. **Strengthening Literacy and Numeracy Skills:** Our goal is to boost both literacy success and numeracy confidence, ensuring that students develop the foundational skills necessary for academic achievement and personal growth.
3. **Honoring Community and Holistic Development:** In alignment with our community's rich traditions, we aim to nurture the whole student. Our approach goes beyond academics, supporting students' personal well-being and confidence as they prepare for their future endeavors.