

Report on ISD Hutterian Schools Improvement Planning Goals for 2014-15

Every year, the ISD Hutterian Schools come together to create a School Improvement Plan that will help staff focus on specific ways to improve student achievement. Our plan for 2014-15 has four areas of focus, all of which match the ISD Divisional Strategic Plan goals. The following outlines what our Hutterian Schools were focused on over the past year. The results represent statistics for all 245 ISD Hutterian students. Individual school's results may differ somewhat from those reported below, but it is very difficult to collect data for very small groups. For that reason, growth is measured for the group as a whole.

Literacy

We created literacy goals for students in grades 3-8 that targeted general literacy growth, and we chose strategies that would help students become better readers and, more importantly, better at understanding and communicating what they have read. At the grade 3 and 4 level, our goal was to ensure that the trend of positive growth in standard scores from grade 1 and 2 (almost exclusively EAL programming) to grade 3 and 4 (where students are entering and leaving the final stages of EAL programming) continues, by improving classroom reading instructional practices for all students. Our SMART goal was to see this growth in at least 75% of our students. We have been successful in doing this, with 88% of students improving on their literacy assessment score from September.

At the middle years levels, we looked at previous achievement data (report card, final grades) which showed us that students who were achieving at a basic or limited level (2 or 1), tended to remain at that standard over multiple years. We looked specifically at student achievement in comprehension and focused on improving teaching practices in order to help students better understand what they were reading. By June, 64% of our grade 5-8 students showed an increase in their reading comprehension assessment results from their September score. Our SMART goal was to see 75% of students improve on their September scores. While we did not meet this goal, the information we gathered about the needs of students will help us refocus our strategies for next year, and continue to work toward improved student reading comprehension at these grade levels.

Numeracy

Our numeracy goals for students in grades 3-8 targeted general improvement for students in all categories of the provincial report card. Teachers attended a number of professional development sessions that focused on using better teaching strategies for numeracy, in general, and also had direct support from the Divisional Numeracy Lead teacher. Our SMART goal was to see 75% of students improve by one standard grade (from a 1 to a 2, from a 2 to a 3, etc.) in Knowledge and Understanding, Mental Math and Problem Solving. We were successful in achieving this goal in two of the three categories. 76% of students improved by one or more standard grades in knowledge and Understanding, and 82% of students increased in Mental Math skills. Only 42% of students were able to show increased achievement in the Problem Solving category. These results, along with the new Divisional Initial Assessment that will be used in September, will give us a focus for instruction and improvement next year.

At the Grade 9 level, a review of the previous year's grades by category, indicated that students were achieving below grade expectations in problem solving, and in particular, their ability to explain or justify their thinking with clear mathematical language. The SMART goal we created for this group targeted improved achievement in these areas. Our goal was to have 75% of students in Grade 9 achieve at least 60% in the Problem Solving portion of their final grade for the course. In 2013-2014, the average student grade in this category was 54%. By targeting this area with improved teaching practices, 77% of Grade 9 students achieved a Problem Solving grade of 60% or higher. We are happy to see this progress and will look for further improvement next year.

Positive, Respectful Learning Environment

Our staff believes in the benefits of nurturing positive, respectful relationships among students, teachers, school leaders, parents, and community members. To support this belief, our schools have focused on modelling, reinforcing and engaging in practices that build and sustain a safe and caring environment. By doing so, we believe that students will adopt these practices as part of their own character. This will contribute to a school climate grounded in respectful and meaningful relationships. Our SMART goal in this area was to have 90% of students report that they feel school is a positive, safe, and respectful place to learn. By using a tool developed specifically for Hutterian Schools to measure students' experiences and feelings about their environment, we were able to gather student opinion on this subject. The survey results showed the 93% of Hutterian students felt respected by their teachers, safe amongst their peers, and that the learning environment was very positive. Our survey did indicate, however, that high school students feel less positive about school than younger students, and we will be looking for ways to improve upon the school experience for these students.

Intellectual Engagement

Intellectual Engagement is all about a student's personal investment in learning. It is the level of interest students have in learning and the reasons why they do, or do not believe what they are doing in school is important. Teachers strive to nurture engagement by deliberately planning for student interests, learning preferences, and readiness levels. In Hutterian Schools, cultural considerations should also be reflected in all aspects of school life.

All of our school improvement goals this year have contributed in some way to improving student engagement in school. Improved literacy and numeracy skills should help students feel more successful. Coming to a place where they believe the staff wants to help them improve and is willing to support their learning needs is another way to improve intellectual engagement. Providing more project-based, hands on assignments also creates engagement for students. Culture is considered and reflected in the instructional decisions teachers make, and programs like Apprenticeship and Precision Agriculture are offered to provide high school students the opportunity to meet their cultural responsibilities, while still earning credits toward graduation. Our SMART goal in this area was to have 80% of students report that they felt intellectually engaged in school. Our survey results indicated 82% of students felt engaged, but again, the upper middle years and high school students reported lower interest. We will continue to work towards making school meaningful for all students, and finding ways that will help them see it as a place that provides interesting and valuable lessons for their future.

Final Words

As another busy school year draws to a close, we wish to extend our sincere congratulations to David and Sara Anne on their graduation this year! We admire their commitment to learning and their determination to work hard to achieve their academic success. We will miss you in our school next year, but we wish you great success and happiness in all that the future holds for you!

We would like to thank the parents and the community for your support and encouragement in helping all the students succeed in school. They say, "It takes a village to raise a child." We really couldn't do it without you! As the report on our school goals above shows, the students have worked hard and have been very successful in many areas this past year.

Finally, we want to extend best wishes to Mr. Ross as he and his wife embark on a new chapter in their lives! We hope your move to the Lake of the Prairies brings you all the happiness you deserve. Thanks for all you have done for our school and the students over your years here! We will miss you but we are very happy for you!