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STANDING TALL

STANDING TALL

THE PROGRAM - FINAL RESEARCH REPORT

“ I touch my grandchild on
the shoulder and tighten my grip.
Then I feel the hand of my ancestor
on my own shoulder.
I know then what I must do.”

— Na Kara Pukitapu



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INTRODUCTION

Standing Tall was developed by the Manitoba Metis Federation (MMF), as a three-year pilot project to research the effects of community involvement in education. As a result of the preliminary findings of the pilot, there has been additional funding to continue the research and determine the next steps. During this transitional phase, the MMF began developing an expansion plan with the support of research from the pilot project. The Standing Tall program continues to run successfully through the Louis Riel Institute (LRI), the culture and education authority for the MMF.

HISTORIC BACKGROUND

The concept “Standing Tall” was based on an educational concept from New Zealand, created by and for its Indigenous people. It is an adaptation of the Maori program, “Tu Tangata,” translated literally means “standing tall”, which denoted the pride the Elders in the Maori community had for its younger people. “Tu Tangata” was initiated because the Indigenous community could see its children were struggling in the public school system. There was poor attendance, high suspension and drop-out rates, an increase in gang involvement, and drug and alcohol use.

GLOBAL PARALLELS

Statistics show Maori people have made gains in terms of educational attainment however; they continue to attain lower educational rates than non-Maori. Additionally, the drop-out rates for Maori are 6% higher than for non-Maori, (Statistics New Zealand). Canada and New Zealand may be on opposite sides of the world, but the statistics regarding its Indigenous people are similar. Aboriginal students in North America are seen as “at risk” in the public education system. Metis students fall under this umbrella. As the political voice for the Metis in Manitoba, the MMF used knowledge gathered through the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry and the Royal Commission for Aboriginal Peoples, to seek out international programming that would support the Metis people.

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

The MMF spent time researching the model in New Zealand. They invited the founders of the program to Canada and began to develop the Standing Tall model. Consultations were held with numerous stakeholders in education as well as leaders in government. The project was initially funded through the Urban Aboriginal Strategy via the Winnipeg Partnership Agreement; Currently, the Standing Tall program is funded through the Aboriginal and Northern Affairs (ANA) Manitoba Secretariat.

OUR VISION

The vision for Standing Tall is to create, build and support healthy Metis families. The primary goal of this innovative program is to have a positive impact on the self-esteem of Metis students, while increasing participation of the Metis community in the public school system. It should be noted that although the Metis originally initiated this program, it supports all students, particularly Aboriginal students.



OUR VISION

THE PILOT

When researching sites for the pilot, it was important to choose schools that not only had high Aboriginal populations, but also administrators who supported the concept. There was also a strong collaboration between the MMF and the Winnipeg School Division (WSD). The project was piloted in two inner city schools in Winnipeg, Niji Mahkwa and William Whyte. Through collaboration with the school administrators, it was decided that the focus would be in middle-years classrooms.

EMPLOYEES

The New Zealand prototype began with volunteers from the school community who were interested in helping students succeed. The program founders discovered that the success of the program required a commitment to employment. Therefore, in our program, eight adults from the Aboriginal community continue to be employed, along with one Provincial Coordinator. The majority of the funding provided through Aboriginal and Northern Affairs (ANA) Manitoba Secretariat and the MMF Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy (ASETS), is used to pay the salaries of the program employees.

STUDENT SUPPORT

The eight full time employees, who work directly with project participants, spend the majority of their time supporting students. They spend each day in the classroom, working alongside students, helping them succeed academically and socially. If students need support outside the classroom, they use the Cultural Learning Nest, a comfortable furnished room developed for the project.

THE COMMUNITY

Standing Tall employees are considered a bridge to the community. Even though the initial staff was considered a part of the larger Aboriginal community, they were not as closely linked. The current staff live in the immediate neighbourhood and are either parents or grandparents of children in the community. The Metis community supports cultural programming.

THE NEST

The NEST was a concept that originated in New Zealand. Project schools created a community room within the school to encourage families to be a part of the school setting. These rooms had their own private exterior door where parents would come and go during the day and into the evening. Since both project schools had parent rooms with active parent programs, this concept was adapted to support student learning and cultural awareness.



THE COMMUNITY

METIS CULTURE

A key element that sets Standing Tall apart from other educational initiatives is that it has a cultural component. In New Zealand, the employees were Elders who brought with them a wealth of information about their culture. Unfortunately, adults of the Aboriginal community do not always have this knowledge. It was considered vital to have additional cultural support as part of the project. This translated into inviting elders, guest speakers and entertainers who shared their knowledge with students and project employees.

EMPLOYEE TRAINING

Ongoing training continues for the staff of Standing Tall through the LRI's Provincial Coordinator. Through this training, employees learn about their culture, the public education system and how to work with students. Initial training focused on gathering data for the project. As the project developed and employees changed, the training moved toward Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR), to Mature High School Diploma courses. These courses were offered to employees and other parents. Ongoing training provided to parents and employees increase their knowledge in dealing with some of the issues and challenges they face daily in the community, such as gang awareness, CPR, First Aid and suicide prevention.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

It has been challenging to gather data for the research component of this pilot project. There have been issues relating to many topics, such as the legal rights of privacy, the skill level of the data collectors and the logistics of the instruments.

EVOLVING INTENT

Initially, the intent of the data collection was to support learning for the students. In New Zealand, they tracked factors such as student attendance and suspensions to inform parents. Data was collected daily and posted to a website that was accessible by parents. Without access to the New Zealand website, compounded with the hesitancy of the school administrators, the focus of the research moved from tracking students to looking for ways to assess the success of the project.

EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

Before implementing the pilot, an extensive evaluation framework was prepared by an independent researcher. This framework used very technical terminology to lay out a plan to gather information. Most of this data would be gathered internally by project staff then analyzed and synthesized externally. In the first year, the focus was problem solving the role of the Standing Tall employees, who were expected to track students' progress. It soon became obvious that the task was logistically very difficult for the employees to manage; therefore, the process was modified.



RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

STANDING TALL WEBSITE

Meeting the expectations identified in the evaluation framework, was further made difficult with creating the Standing Tall website. As mentioned earlier, a prototype had been developed in New Zealand, but it was inaccessible, as were its creators. Two websites were attempted by two separate contractors, both with very little results. An internal database was set up, where data collected by project staff, was maintained by an independent contractor. This data collection continues to be done internally with the support of the MMF statistician.

DATA COLLECTION

Standing Tall was a unique pilot project with unique research needs, and mindful of its sensitive yet often researched subject, the Aboriginal community. Since it was the first pilot of its kind in Canada, there were limited sample instruments to adapt. Most instruments were created to match the intent of the research. During the course of the pilot project, the data collection process changed.

COLLECTION PROCESS

The data collection process is both formal and informal. Information is collected formally through planned interviews and focus groups; Informal data is collected through small group discussions and intimate conversations. The data is organized and timely, making the process efficient. There is a variety of instruments used to gather data.

RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

Quantitative instruments included checklists and tallies. Some qualitative instruments, including surveys and questionnaires with open-ended questions, were adapted from the New Zealand model. Additional project-specific recording sheets, such as the Daily Summary and the Monthly Summary, were created to quickly tally daily interactions and interventions. Other outlines and guidelines, such as the Quarterly Report, were created to provide uniform reporting.

ANALYSIS PROCEDURES

A preliminary analysis was done both internally and externally. Data is analyzed by project staff, and then reviewed externally by an MMF statistician. Final analysis is summarized internally by the project coordinator. An interim analysis was provided mid-way through the pilot. Near the end of the pilot, an independent contractor was hired to review the entire program to legitimize the initial findings and provide an objective perspective.



COLLECTED MATERIAL

Data collection started even before the pilot project began and continues to be compiled, creating a substantial amount of material to be analyzed. The project continues to be funded, the data collection continues and the material increases.

NUMERICAL DATA

There is a substantial amount of numerical data related to the Standing Tall program. Primarily, there is a multi-year database showing the number of students involved in the project to the types of interactions between project employees, students and parents. In addition, there is a quarterly tally of monthly community participation at school events. There is a record of employees that have come through the program, but more significantly, there is a record of students that have come through with comparative value.

EMPIRICAL DATA

There has been a significant amount of empirical data collected during the program, including daily journals, electronic and written presentations and formal reports. The most significant piece of empirical data is the Standing Tall video, which is professionally designed for promotional purposes. It explains the impact of the project from various perspectives including employees, teachers and administrators.

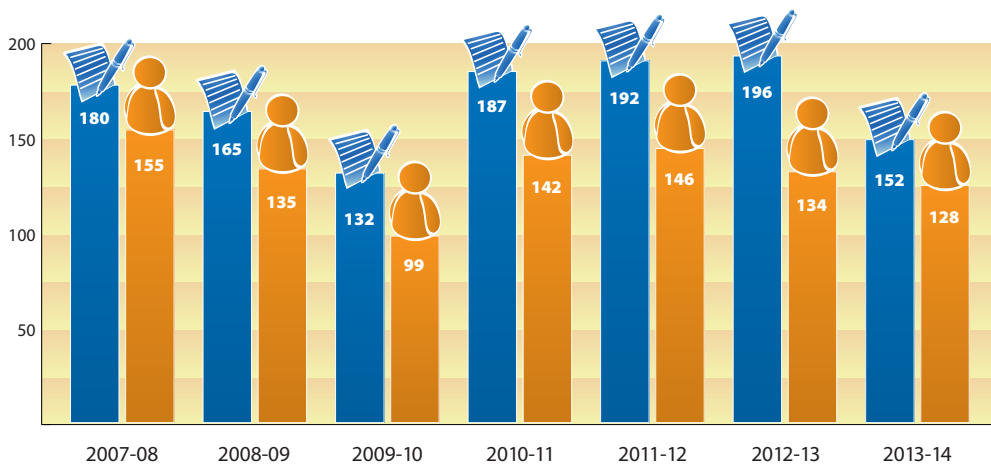
SUMMATIVE REPORTS

There have been numerous reports documenting the ongoing developments during the program. As part of the financial obligations, monthly, quarterly and annual progress reports are prepared and submitted to funders. Although detailed, these reports are written for different audiences and rarely include a formal analysis. The most comprehensive analysis developed thus far is the Evaluation Report.



STUDENT STATISTICS

Registered vs Attending



- In 2006-2007, there were 145 students registered with 119 attending.



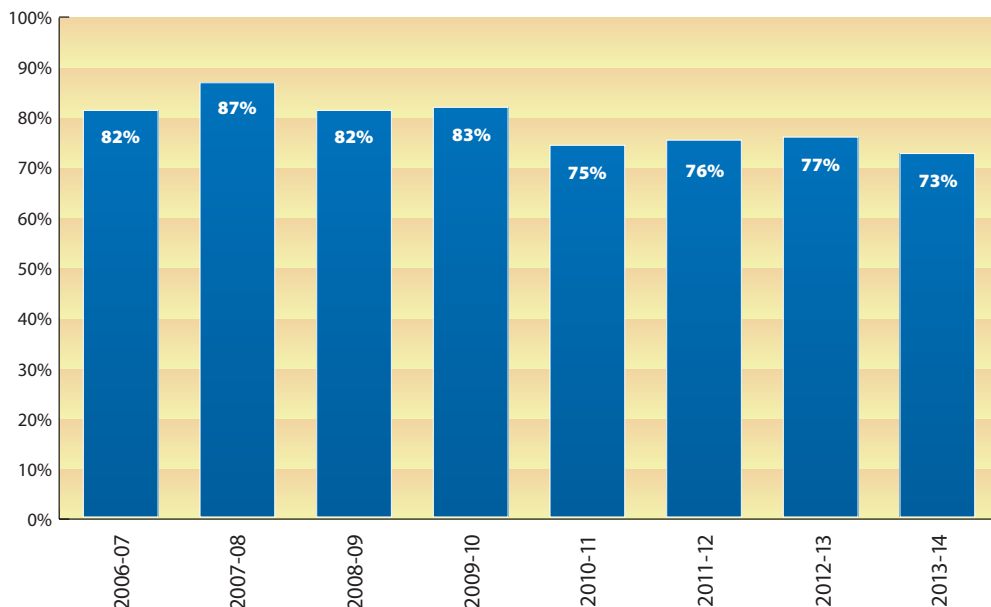
One of the primary goals of the project is to support student success. The goals are measured by tracking attendance, suspensions and graduations. The number of students attending in-and-out, does not necessarily reflect success due to the transient nature of the school communities. Therefore, it should be noted, attendance varies monthly and yearly. The following chart summarizes students who were attending versus the number registered. Considering the number of students who move in and out of the inner city, these numbers are more than positive.

ATTENDANCE RATE

Further analysis of student success through attendance, required comparing the number of students registered in the Grades 5 to 8 classrooms, with the number of students attending in those classrooms. The following chart shows the percentage each month since 2006.

Even with the variance, the number of students that have attended at both schools has increased since the project began. The attendance has remained at 70 – 80 % for the past three years. These numbers are based on monthly attendance averages.

Attendance Rate

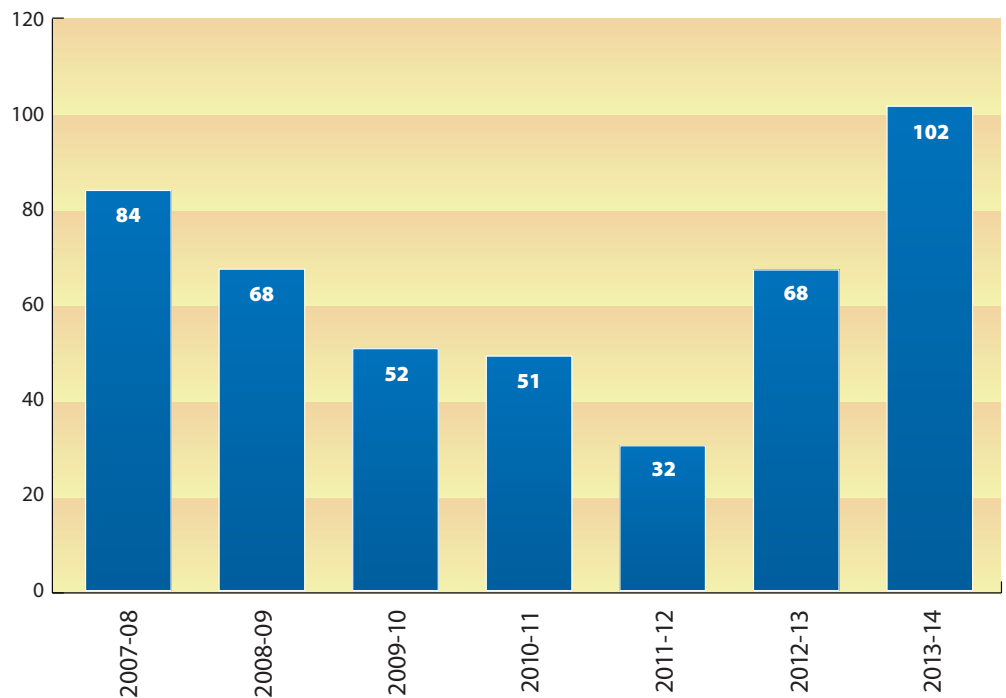


STUDENT STATISTICS

SUSPENSION RATE

The overall suspension rate, and attendance rate has contributed to higher graduation rates in both schools. In most cases, Standing Tall staff can intervene with students and resolve issues before it becomes a suspension. This is due to the trust built between Standing Tall staff, students, school staff and parents/guardians.

Suspensions by Year

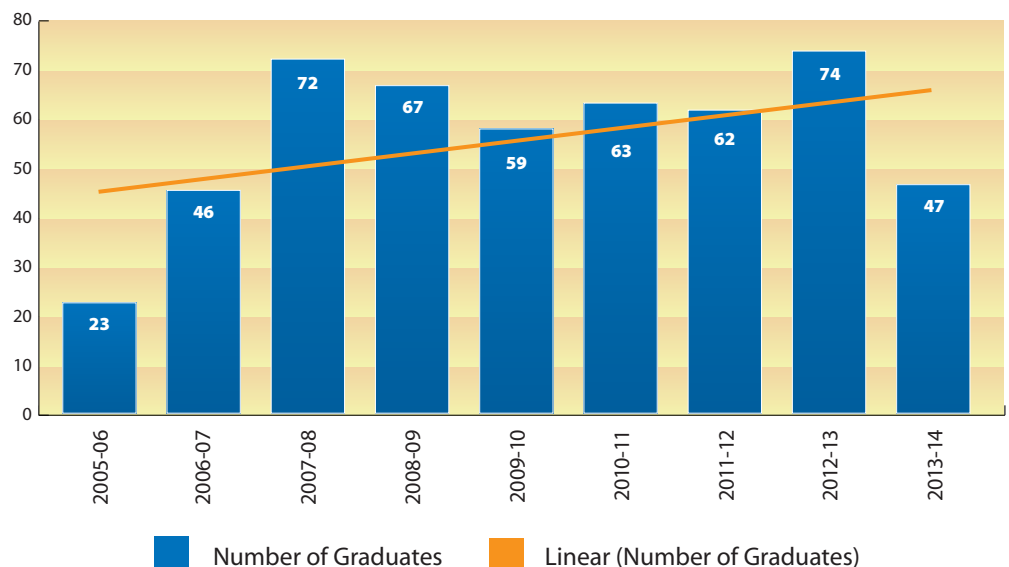


GRADUATION RATE

Graduation rates continue to be a significant indicator of student success. Overall statistics reveal an increase in attendance, decrease in suspensions, and more students writing the final exam.

The following chart shows the number of students graduating from Grade 8. Within the first three years of the program, graduation rates doubled and in 2013 we had our highest number of graduates.

Standing Tall Program Graduates



Although there continues to be students who transfer in and out of the school on a regular basis, the majority of students attending are also graduating.



STAFF INTERVENTIONS

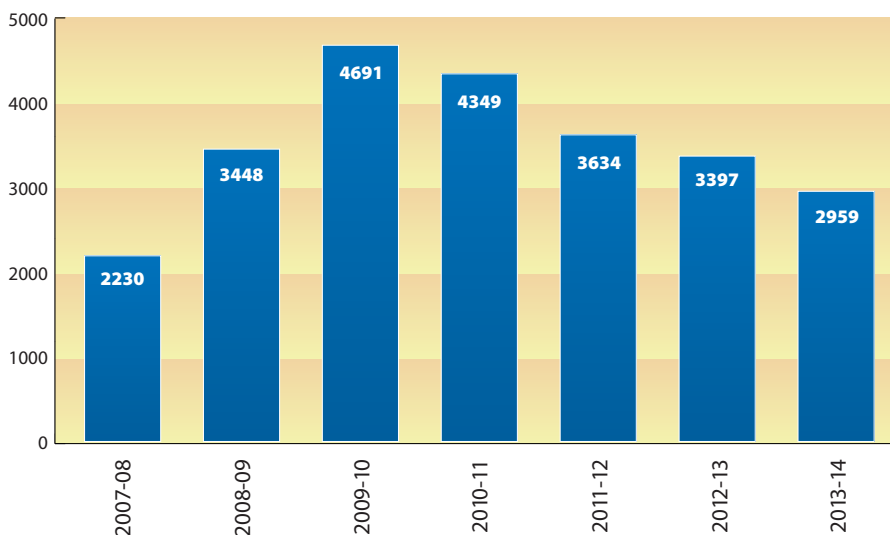
Student success achieved throughout the year is in part attributed to direct, purposeful interventions by program staff. Three different interventions, including one-on-one, small group and student pullouts have been tracked over the years. These interventions were tracked monthly and compared yearly.

ONE-ON-ONE

The following chart shows the yearly one on one interventions recorded by the Standing Tall staff. It demonstrates how the Standing Tall staff has continually increased the number of one-on-one interventions over the past eight years.

One on one intervention is a way to keep students on task when they cannot do so on their own. It also provides struggling students with extra attention when needed.

Yearly One-on-One

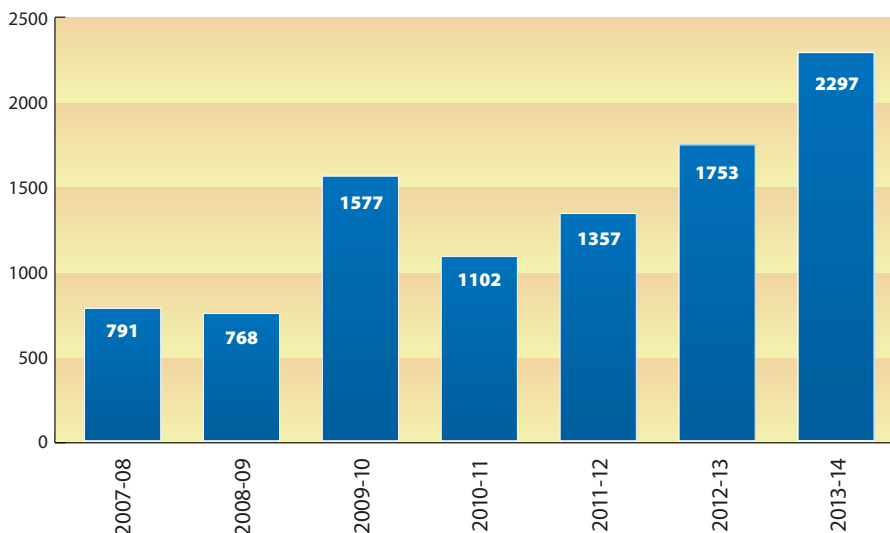


SMALL GROUP

Small group interventions usually consist of helping a small group of students with similar needs, particularly with school work, such as daily assignments or projects.

The following chart shows the small group interventions recorded by the Standing Tall staff. It demonstrates that small group interventions continue to increase from the first year of the pilot. Small group interventions support student learning.

Yearly Small Group



An example of small group interventions is putting students with similar needs into small groups together, as a way to mentor and learn from each other, under the supervision of Standing Tall staff. Students who have missed or fallen behind can also be put together. Small group interventions are a great way to get students caught up on school work.



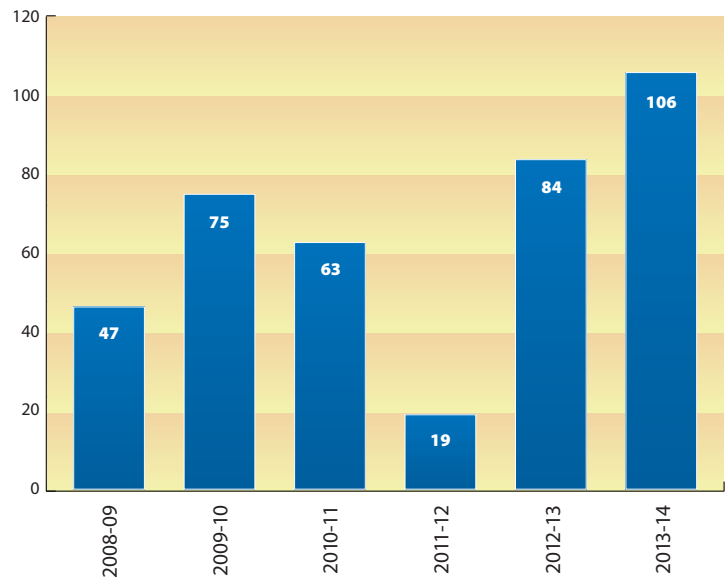
STAFF INTERVENTIONS

PULL OUT

The following chart shows the number of interventions that are recorded by the Standing Tall staff.

Students may be “pulled out” for a number of different reasons, including sickness, as a chance to rest. If a child is upset, they may be removed from the classroom to discuss and solve the situation. Pulling a student out is a way to connect and build trust.

Yearly Pull-Out



PARENT INTERACTIONS

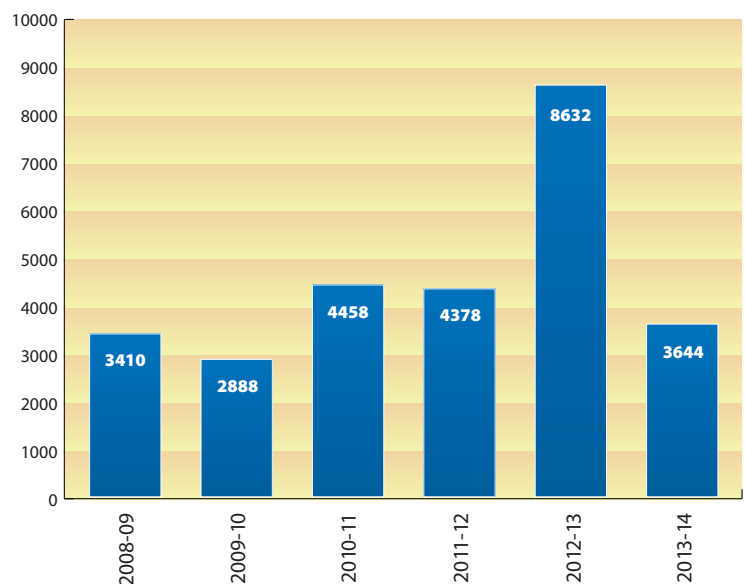
An important goal of the Standing Tall program is the involvement of parents. The immediate form of involving parents was recorded through the number of phone calls and home visits done by Standing Tall staff.

PHONE CALLS

The following chart shows the number of phone calls to parents each year over seven years. Considering there are 200 students participating in the project and 20 days in a month, with a possibility of 4,000 interactions, these numbers are more than positive.

Phone calls by Standing Tall staff are made for many reasons, including attendance concerns, invitations for parents to events or to update them on their child's progress. Phone calls generally end with a positive result.

Yearly Phone Calls



Note: There were less phone calls in 2013-14 as there were fewer attendance issues and more home visits.



PARENT INTERACTIONS

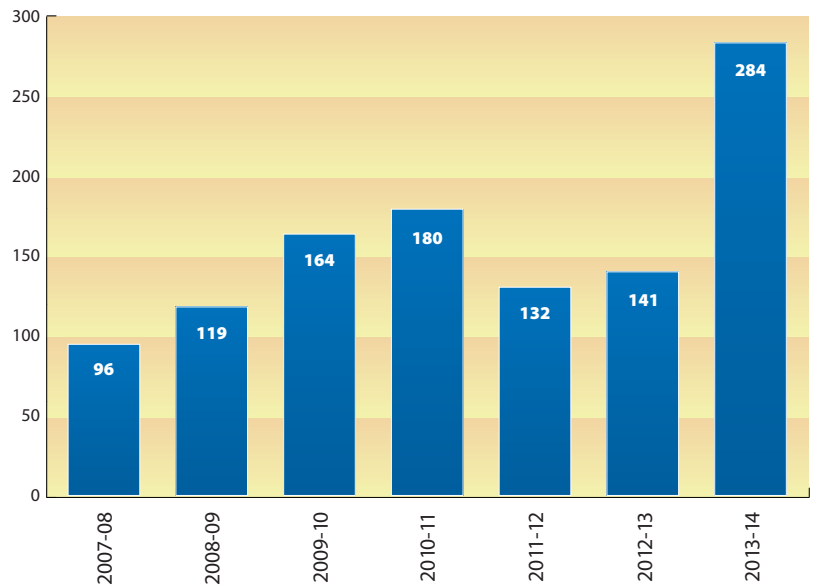
HOME VISITS

If issues arose and parents were unavailable by phone, project staff, with the support of school staff, would visit the parent's home.

The following chart shows that the number of home visits varied from year to year. The number of home visits that could be made each month is approximately 4000.

Realistically, not all parents can be contacted; however, it does offer a valuable avenue of connecting with parents.

Yearly Home Visits



SCHOOL/COMMUNITY EVENTS

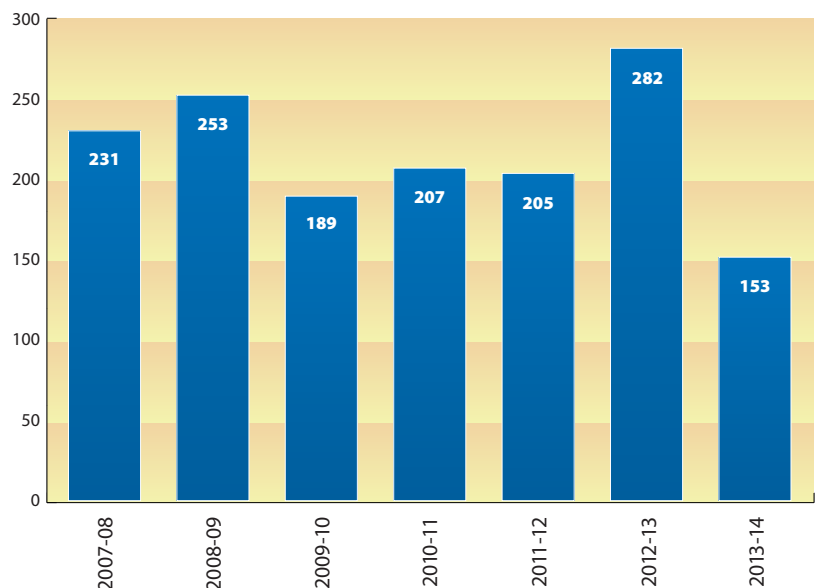
Parent involvement is measured by the number of possible interactions made by the program staff while in attendance at larger school-related events.

Community/School events are ALL events that occur within the school to encourage community involvement.

The following chart shows the number of possible interactions with parents at school-related community events on a yearly basis.

Events can include Student Led Conferences, "Meet the Teacher" barbeques, feasts, the Heritage Fair and assemblies. These events are an important part of the Standing Tall Program, as they enable parents to feel comfortable entering the school and they become more involved in their children's academics.

Yearly Community & School Events



ANALYSIS - EFFECTIVENESS

In analyzing the effectiveness of this program, it is necessary to reflect on its five goals. Overall, the goals of the program have been met. In some cases, there were unexpected results, such as the capacity development of program staff.

GOAL 1: CULTURAL ENHANCEMENT

Since the MMF initiated the project, this goal seemed very achievable. Both pilot schools involved had very high Aboriginal populations yet unique qualities, making the support challenging. Both schools recognize the positive support and increased cultural awareness for both students and staff by encouraging staff involvement in cultural activities.

GOAL 2 & 3: STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Over the course of the project, the number of students graduating from grade 8 and moving into high school are increasing every year, and are completing their grade 12 requirements. However, due to the limited time that the project has been running, successful grade 12 completions is not yet measurable for the students that took part in the program. Program management is currently working on obtaining data for grade 12 graduation rates.

GOAL 4: PARENT TRAINING

Standing Tall started with skilled young Metis people, four being single mothers, previously on Social Assistance. Currently, five employees are single mothers, one father who lives in the area, a single male and a grandmother. They are developing employable skills, learning about bank accounts, how to budget and remain self-sufficient. Three Standing Tall Support Workers have moved to new positions. Their employment opportunities were a direct impact of all the experiences and employable skills they developed while employed with Standing Tall.

GOAL 5: CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

Over the course of the pilot project, there have been 18 employees hired from the Metis community. Of these 18 employees, 12 have moved on to further their careers in Education and Justice and as Support Workers, taking on roles with more responsibility. This staff growth model has allowed further development for people from the school communities. The people who are moms or grandmothers, dads or grandfathers of students in the school are able to set excellent examples for others in the community. Their commitment to education and the project encourages both children and adults in the community.



INTERPRETATION

Three types of student interventions were tracked by the staff, including one on one, small group and pull-outs. In reviewing the data, it was evident there was a direct correlation between the interventions used by project staff, and the teacher with which the staff worked. Each teacher used different classroom management strategies and directed the project staff to act in accordance with that style. For example, one teacher believed all student behaviour issues should be dealt with inside of the classroom; therefore, very few pullouts, if any were recorded by the staff working in this room. Another teacher in a multi-age classroom often grouped the students according to skill level. Staff in this classroom recorded many small group interactions. Classroom placement of the staff did not seem to affect the number of one-on-one interactions recorded.

Student success is not only measured by the data collected by project staff, but also numerous other interventions taking place in both schools, such as cultural camps and parent activities.

FURTHER QUESTIONS

How do we know for certain that the marked student success observed during the program is due to project staff support? More adults in the classroom result in more students getting the individual support they may need to be successful. When behavioural issues arise, it allows one adult to deal with that student or group of students while the teacher continues to teach the rest of the class.

What is it about the program that makes it unique from other interventions? As most project staff lives in the community, they have much in common with the parents. They understand challenges parents face and can more easily make connections with them. Staff is not seen as part of the system and can be more candid with the parents when required.

TRUST - RELATIONSHIPS

Historically, Aboriginal families have had very negative experiences in the public education system. Therefore, they tend to be leery of the system. It is very difficult to get parents involved in the education, especially if you do not have a personal connection with them.

LIMITATIONS

There were limitations in the data collection process. The success of the staff, though positive, did have adverse affects on the consistency of the data collection. Each year, research methodologies are reviewed because each year there is new employees. Only two original staff members remain.

In addition, there were variances in one school, where students rotated to different teachers, Standing Tall staff rotated to different classrooms and both students and staff switched classrooms and teachers, making three different rotational changes. These changes allowed four staff to work with five classrooms, which increased student participation, but made data management difficult.

Although a great amount of data has been collected over the course of the program; problems in implementing a database and the issue of confidentiality affected the methodology of the data collection. Data collection tools have had to be adapted to accommodate these issues. In addition, not all staff had adequate skill or knowledge to collect data consistent with the methodology. With ongoing training of the staff, there is more efficient and reliable data collection. At a maximum of every three years, there will be new Standing Tall Support Workers; this will ensure we have ongoing training on data collection and input.



DISCUSSION

It was decided that with the transition of the Standing Tall program from MMF to LRI, the responsibility of the advisory committee would also be transferred from the TSN Steering Committee to the LRI Board of Directors.

The “Three Year Plan” for Standing Tall is moving forward, with the goal of having Standing Tall staff transition into their chosen careers. The Provincial Coordinator is working with MMF Human Resources Dept in developing a revised Contract for these employees.

COSTS

There are several costs associated with running the program including administration and training. The estimated overall annual cost to run the program in one school with four full-time employees is \$197,968.52. Of this amount, about \$45,000.00 is required for program administration and supplies. Training is significant at 197,968.52 and about \$10,000.00 is allocated to staff training.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In an external review of the project, an independent consultant determined that with clarification of project goals and objectives and with the support of the school, the program should be both extended at the current and expanded to additional locations. A number of recommendations were given.

Recommendations by a statistician suggest that a more accurate and frequent collection of data is required. Staff continue to track their monthly interactions.

CONCLUSION

The program has empowered students and community in great lengths. Community members are actively developing skills, improving their financial situation and that of their families, as well as, contributing to the success of many students. These students will move on to high school with more skills and self-esteem than they would have had prior to the program. This increases the likelihood and livelihood of their future success improving the overall well-being of the community.



STANDING TALL

THE PROGRAM - FINAL RESEARCH REPORT



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