



# **Grey Mountain Primary School Review Report April 2014**

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Grey Mountain Primary School  
April 2014

**School Principal:** A/Principal Kim Ramsay

**Date of Review:** April 22/23, 2014

**School Review Team:**

Simon Blakesley, Director, Student Achievement/Systems Accountability, D of E  
Jeanette McCrie, Primary Consultant, D of E  
Diana Knopp, Primary Teacher/LA, Elijah Smith Elementary School  
Debbie Janzen, Holy Family Elementary School Council

**Meetings with the School included:**

School Growth Planning team  
Grey Mountain School Council  
School Administration  
Teachers and support staff  
Students

**School Context**

Grey Mountain Primary School (GMP) is a primary school with approximately 62 students in Grades K-3. It is the only primary school in the Yukon, and has a calm and caring atmosphere. There is no busing at the school as most of the children live within the Riverdale area. Parents often meet their children at the end of the day, creating the opportunity for interaction between teachers and parents.

The children come from a wide range of cultural and socio-economic backgrounds. Increasingly, there are a number of single parent families and/or families with both parents working. The school has many supportive families and community members who add to the learning-focused nature of the school. Volunteers are encouraged to participate in all aspects of the school experience, including community service through classroom projects and as role models to promote leadership and citizenship. Character education, empathy-building and a safe and welcoming atmosphere are integrated to form a central aspect of Grey Mountain Primary's learning culture.

## **Student Outcomes Data**

### **Attendance:**

From September to December 2013, the average number of days a student is absent is 6.2 days. Only 5 students had missed more than 20 days. Eight students have IEPs.

### **Kindergarten Assessments**

Based on the Spring 2013 EYE assessment, 19 students were identified as “No Concern”. The Spring 2013 Boehm results indicated 4 requiring classroom intervention and 2 requiring further investigation.

### **Yukon Achievement Tests (YATs):**

Students at Grey Mountain Primary School do not write Yukon Achievement Tests as those assessments are for Grade 4 and 7 students only.

## **Norms and Culture:**

### **Characteristics:**

Continuously improving schools are socially and culturally inclusive with high expectations for each learner. A focus on continuous improvement is evident.

### **Observations of the Team:**

- There is a family atmosphere at the school where children feel cared for, and parents feel welcome to visit at any time
- There exists a mutual respect of the diversity of the community and student population
- The staff is supportive of each other and are flexible when colleagues need additional support. Not only is the staff congenial but, more importantly, collegial, in that they work together to move the school in a unified direction
- The team observed a consistent, common language used from K-3 when talking about expectations for behaviour and for learning
- Student work is clearly evident on all walls of the school and showcases student success. The team specifically remarked at the very high quality of some of the student projects (i.e. the grade 3 planet pamphlets)

- The team appreciates the school’s efforts to increase the inclusion of First Nations culture in the school

### **Recommendations for moving forward:**

- The team recognizes and commends the staff at GMP for their attempts to include more Yukon First Nations culture at the school. While approximately 1/3 of the student population self-identifies as having First Nations ancestry, continuing to include First Nations culture will benefit all students at GMP
- Given the many talents and skill-sets on the staff at GMP, identify and share who may be “go-to” staff members when help is required in a particular area (e.g. computers)

### **School and Community**

**Characteristics:** Continuously improving schools build a shared commitment to success for each learner. The school collaborates with parents, students, school council, First Nations and community to support student learning. Ongoing parent/community involvement is embedded in school culture and the school communicates about progress and challenges in multiple ways.

### **Observations of the Team:**

- The school makes a strong effort to communicate to the community through school newsletters and individual classroom letters. These are shared electronically, and where requested, in paper form to parents who may not use email
- Teachers are visible and approachable on the playground at the end of the day, and this helps to create frequent opportunities for parents and teachers to talk with each other
- The school is a valuable community resource in that it used by many user groups after school and on the weekend
- Students enjoy the playground, and often play at the school in the evenings and on weekends
- School Council members remarked with confidence that all teachers know all of the students at GMP
- School Council commented on the responsive leadership of the school: when there are questions or concerns, they are addressed quickly and thoroughly

## **Recommendations for moving forward:**

- Continue to ensure that communication of events occurs in as timely a manner as possible to teachers and the community
- Continue to identify and draw upon family and community volunteer resources and skill-sets in order to broaden the learning opportunities offered to students
- Explore the concept of a 40<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration of the school as a community celebration of culture, learning, and student successes
- Seek ways to engage detached parents in order to get them to be more involved with the school and their child's learning

## **School Organization**

**Characteristics:** Continuously improving schools organize structures, actions, and interventions to ensure success for each learner. Work in the school is coherent and aligned to focus on improvement. Actions and interventions include effectively differentiating resources, time and professional development to get results. The Department supports the school and makes connections across the Territory to build capacity.

## **Observations of the Team:**

- There are no buzzers or announcements at GMP, and this contributes to the calm atmosphere at the school
- There is a school-wide, organized focus on literacy and reading comprehension through the Daily 5, Foundations, Reading Power, and 6+1 Writing Traits
- The teaching staff are organized in such a way that there are two collaborative sessions every Thursday to review student-needs, engage in a professional development book study, and review the school growth plan
- School Council feels informed by the school administration and acknowledges that their participation is frequently invited in the development of the school growth plan
- The team noted that the school library is very well organized and has been de-cluttered: students shared their appreciation of the library as a nice place to be

## **Recommendations for moving forward:**

- While there are no bells and buzzer at the school, explore the idea of an intercom that can be used for emergency purposes only- such as for lock-down or evacuation of the school
- Examine the role of technology in the school across the K-3 continuum in order to plan ahead with regards to space utilization and equipment purchases
- Explore, using the Department of Education’s consultants, experiential education that sees students using the forested area around the school as a learning space. This could be done in support of increased inclusion of First Nations culture
- Continue the dedicated focus on the School Growth Plan reading comprehension goal and the data gathering/tracking of cohorts to inform progress

## **School Processes and Progress**

**Characteristics:** Continuously improving schools take responsibility for improving outcomes for students. They use evidence to guide decisions and actions and have processes in place to collectively monitor progress and make adjustments in key areas of their work. They demonstrate improvement over time – for individual students, groups of students, and the school.

## **Observations of the Team:**

- The School Growth Plan is on the agenda of each staff meeting and school council meeting
- The School Growth Planning team has grown to include the participation of two school council members
- The School Growth Planning team is focused on collecting and analysing their own data in regards to their growth plan goal to track cohorts of students as they move from Kindergarten to Grade 3
- Professional development is focused on the School Growth Plan, and there is a learning focus for all staff. This is evidenced through staff book studies, professional development, and the consultants and experts that the school invites in to help staff continuously improve
- Students identified in weekly meetings generate a quick response from the staff and receive support in a timely manner

### **Recommendations for moving forward:**

- Continue to solicit School Council and parental input into the development of the school growth plan
- Track GMP students as they transition to Grade 4 in other schools as a means of informing both their level of preparation as well as the future programming for GMP students
- Given the emphasis on project-based learning at GMP, formalize how projects are evaluated so that they do not get “absorbed” into broader reports. The development of criteria and small scoring rubrics may assist in this regard

### **In conclusion**

Grey Mountain Primary School is unique in that it is the Yukon’s only primary school. The team was impressed at the family-friendly atmosphere and the welcoming culture that readily creates and supports the conditions for learning at the school. The school celebrates its uniqueness inside the school through engaged, caring students and the abundant high quality displays of their work, and outside the school through close ties between teachers, parents, and the community. The team looks forward to returning in three years to observe the extent to which the learning goal of reading comprehension has been achieved, and of the school’s ongoing successes.

### **Practices to share:**

- GMP administration and staff organize the school so that Thursdays offer two collaborative sessions for planning, PD, and review of students’ needs
- GMP staff engage together in book studies and professional learning that is focused on their growth goals

### **Recommendations to the Department of Education**

- The school library is greatly appreciated by staff and students, though is currently maintained through volunteerism by a staff member. Given the school’s focus on reading comprehension and the enjoyment of learning in the library that students described, examine the allocation of library time to GMP