

DATE: June 22, 2021

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: Darrel Robertson, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Strategic Plan Update: First Nations, Métis and Inuit

ORIGINATOR: Nancy Petersen, Managing Director, Strategic Division Supports

RESOURCE

STAFF: Clarice Anderson, Marnie Beaudoin, Rachel Foley, Amanda Lau, Owen Livermore, Bob Morter, Ann Parker, Leanne Spelman, Soleil Surette, Nicole Tice

ISSUE

The purpose of this Strategic Plan Update report is to provide the Board of Trustees with an update on the Division’s efforts in support of First Nations, Métis and Inuit education and the academic progress of students who self-identify as First Nations, Métis or Inuit.

BACKGROUND

In 2018, Edmonton Public Schools formally reaffirmed the District Strategic Plan for the 2018-2022 term. The District Strategic Plan has three priority areas with supporting goals and outcomes. The plan provides common direction and alignment between the work of the Board of Trustees, the Superintendent of Schools and Division staff. The plan serves as the foundation for a Division culture of evidence-based decision making, assurance and accountability.

To demonstrate the Division’s commitment to transparency and accountability, Strategic Plan Update reports were introduced in 2016–2017 as an extension of the Annual Education Results Report (AERR). The reports are intended to provide the Board of Trustees with detailed progress towards the goals and outcomes of our Strategic Plan.

CURRENT SITUATION

This Strategic Plan Update report reflects the work in support of high quality teaching and learning for First Nations, Métis and Inuit students and is in direct response to Priority 1 of the 2018-2022 District Strategic Plan, Priority 1: Foster growth and success for every student by supporting their journey from early learning through high school completion and beyond.

KEY POINTS

This report further supplements the achievement results provided in the [Literacy and Numeracy Strategic Plan Report](#) from March 23 by reflecting on additional high school completion data for the Division’s self-identified First Nations, Métis or Inuit student cohort. Complementary to this data, the report explores the intentional work undertaken in the High School Completion Coach (HSCC) model in support of self-identified First Nations, Métis and Inuit students.

ATTACHMENTS and APPENDICES

ATTACHMENT I Strategic Plan Update: First Nations, Métis and Inuit

NP:mh

Strategic Plan Update:

First Nations, Métis and Inuit

June 22, 2021

INTRODUCTION

This Strategic Plan Update Report provides the Board of Trustees with an update on the Division's efforts in support of First Nations, Métis and Inuit education and the academic progress of students who self-identify as First Nations, Métis or Inuit. Priority 1 of the 2018-2022 District Strategic Plan calls for the Division to foster growth and success for every student by supporting their journey from early learning through high school completion and beyond. In alignment with the provincial Business Plan for Education Outcome 2: *Alberta's education system supports First Nations, Métis and Inuit students' success*, the Division's Priority 1 includes work to intentionally focus on the educational success for self-identified First Nations, Métis or Inuit students.

This report further supplements the achievement results provided in the [Literacy and Numeracy Strategic Plan Report](#) from March 23 by reflecting on additional high school completion data for the Division's self-identified First Nations, Métis or Inuit student cohort. Complementary to this data, the report explores the intentional work undertaken in the High School Completion Coach (HSCC) model in support of self-identified First Nations, Métis and Inuit students. Additionally, the report will highlight other efforts undertaken this year intended to support student success. The work highlighted reflects the Division's attention to the findings of the 2017 OECD report, *Promising Practices in Supporting Success for Indigenous Students*. The OECD report identifies six areas of policies and practices critical to improving achievement for Indigenous students: high quality teaching, leadership in schools, enlisting the active engagement of families, high quality early learning, regular monitoring and provision of tailored support.

The OECD research was introduced in the [February 20, 2018, Strategic Plan Update Report: Self-identified First Nations, Métis or Inuit Students](#), and further explored in the [May 14, 2019, Strategic Plan Update Report: Self-identified First Nations, Métis or Inuit Students](#) and [May 26, 2020, Strategic Plan Update Report: Self-identified First Nations, Métis or Inuit Students](#) reports. With this fourth report, we focus on the work being done in support of high school completion by the HSCC model through the active engagement of families, regular monitoring of student progress and the provision of tailored support, while recognizing the impact of disruptions to data collection caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

This work also fulfills requirements in Alberta Education's new Assurance Framework, which is a broader and more balanced approach to accountability for educational stakeholders, focusing on:

- Providing assurance and demonstrating responsibility.
- Continuous improvement based on evidence, engagement and learning.
- Flexibility and responsiveness to local context.

A component of the Assurance Framework is supporting First Nations, Métis and Inuit student achievement. Though this report is primarily framed around high school completion, there were several steps taken Kindergarten to Grade 12 to support student success. These include, but are not limited to:

- Prioritizing literacy and numeracy instruction within the challenges and disruption caused by the pandemic.
- Establishing a Division-wide scope and sequence to support continuity of instruction.
 - Complementary and supportive for teachers were the Teacher Support Packs and several high school resources including sample quarterly plans, scope and sequence documents identifying priority learning outcomes and High School Course Packs for select courses.
- Releasing materials and information to assist schools in their work with families to support positive school attendance patterns. These materials were:
 - Based on the foundation of building supportive relationships with families.
 - Informed by schools experiencing success with certain strategies.
 - Reflected additional evidence-based practices to support positive attendance.
 - Covered the three tiers of the pyramid of intervention: universal, targeted and specialized strategies and supports.
- Continuing to partner with Enoch Cree Nation in the area of early years.
- Implementing a coordinated approach to supporting mental health and well-being for students and families.

HIGH SCHOOL COMPLETION

Preparing students for their futures and equipping them to be productive contributors within society, whether as post-secondary students, members of the workplace or citizens in the community, is one of the priority outcomes of public education. Throughout Kindergarten to Grade 12, students are provided opportunities that focus on the development of knowledge, skills, competencies and attitudes that will support them in being successful in school and enable them to transition into post-secondary and/or the world of work. High school completion is a fundamental milestone that influences future educational paths, life goals and ultimately quality of life. As such, preparing all students to graduate and supporting the transition into post-secondary education, the world of work and life is a fundamental outcome of public education.

In the Division, students' journeys to high school completion are supported through Career Pathways. Through-out their Kindergarten to Grade 12 experience, students explore their interests and passions, set goals and develop the skills, knowledge and attitudes that will increase their readiness to successfully transition beyond high school. In Grades 10 to 12 this planning becomes even more intentional as students are that much closer to high school completion with an eye on their hopes beyond Grade 12. Through these continuing efforts, students are able to develop transferable skills, understand how their personal interests play an important role in exploring careers and reflect on the skills they excel at. To support the many paths that reflect the range of skills, goals, interests and talents of all students, the Division offers a broad range of supports, programming and learning options. These include, but are not limited to:

- A variety of alternative programs such as (but not limited to) second languages and academic programs.
- Locally developed courses in response to student interest and programming requirements.
- Knowledge and Employability programming.
- myBlueprint: Online, interactive education and career planning tools that personalize learning for Kindergarten to Grade 12 students through self-reflection, goal setting, portfolio building and exploring age-appropriate pathways and occupations.
- Campus EPSB: Students can attend another Division high school for a semester to access specialized courses to earn high school credits and industry credentials. They explore opportunities and get hands-on experience to help them plan their next steps.
- Flexible learning opportunities through Alternative High School Completion options, such as Argyll, Metro Continuing Education, Centre High and Outreach.

Despite the intentionality of supporting students towards high school completion, a variety of programming options and a range of supports and interventions, the path to high school completion remains challenging for many students, including a significant number of students who self-identify as First Nations, Métis or Inuit. This is evident when looking at our Division's results.

What The Data Tells Us

Similar to many things during the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a disruption to the data that speaks to student achievement for the 2019-2020 school year. Because of this, administration took a similar approach to looking at the data for this report, as was taken for the [March 23 Literacy and numeracy report](#). Each data set provides a five-year window of trend data factored together with the impact of high social vulnerability.

The Division defines and examines high social vulnerability through the Social Vulnerability Index (SVI). The SVI is a research and evidence-based measure that takes into account three factors that research has demonstrated have a direct impact on school success:

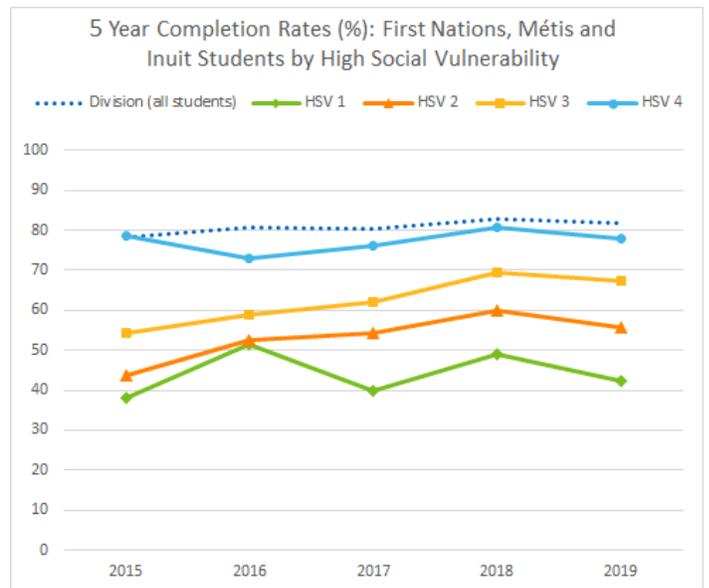
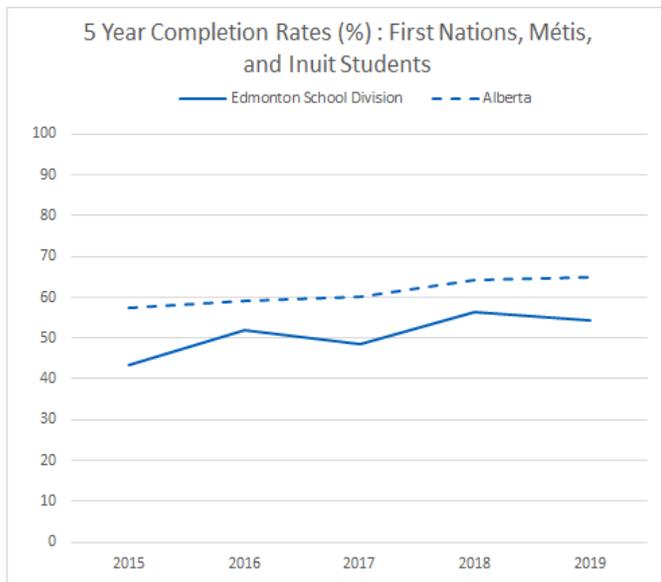
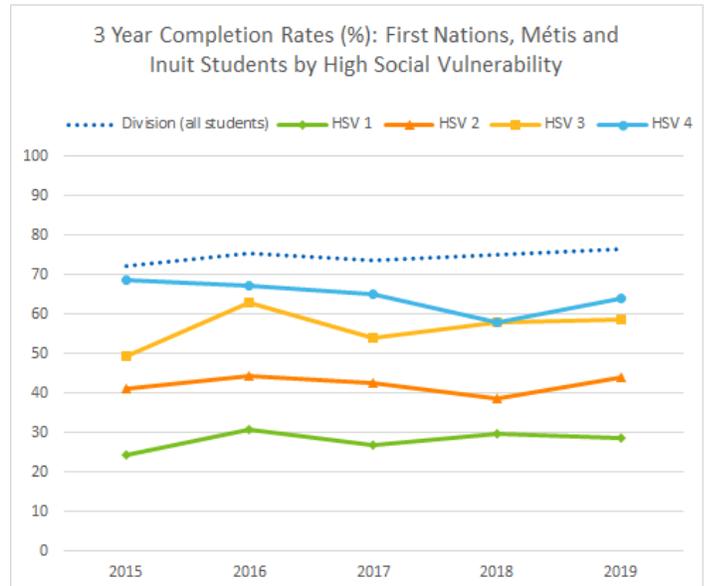
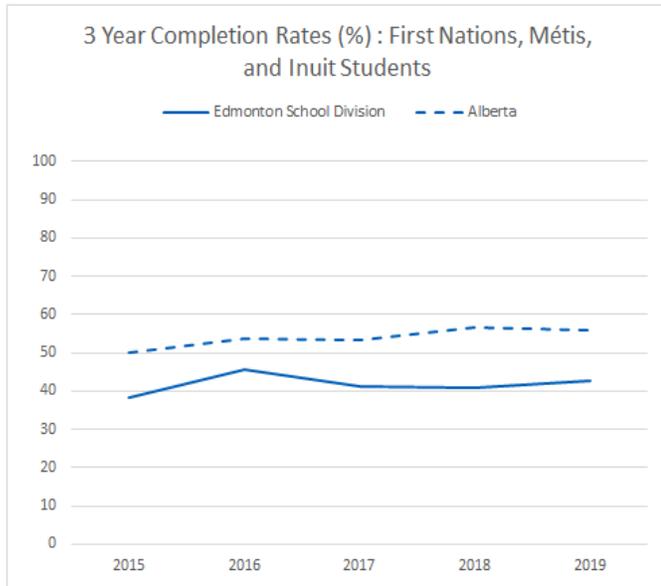
- Student mobility (Division data).
- Median family income (Census data).
- Lone parent family status (Census data).

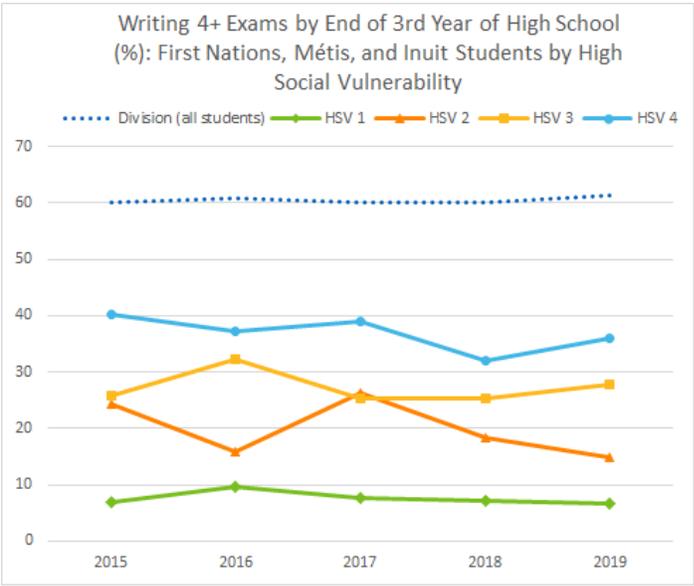
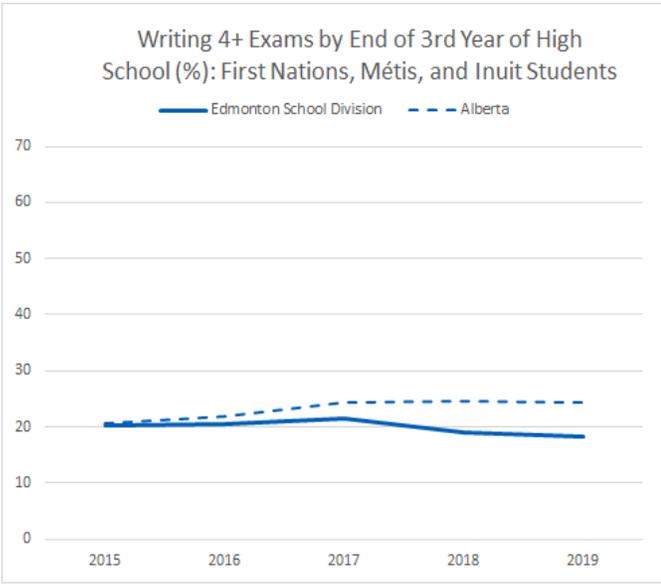
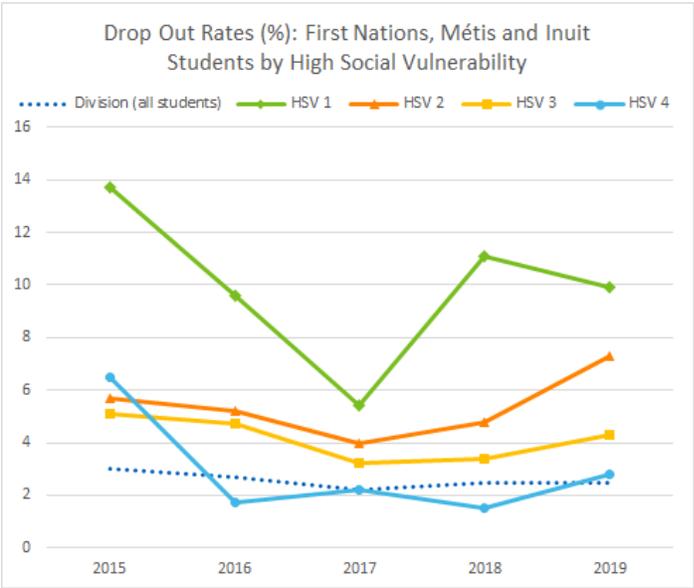
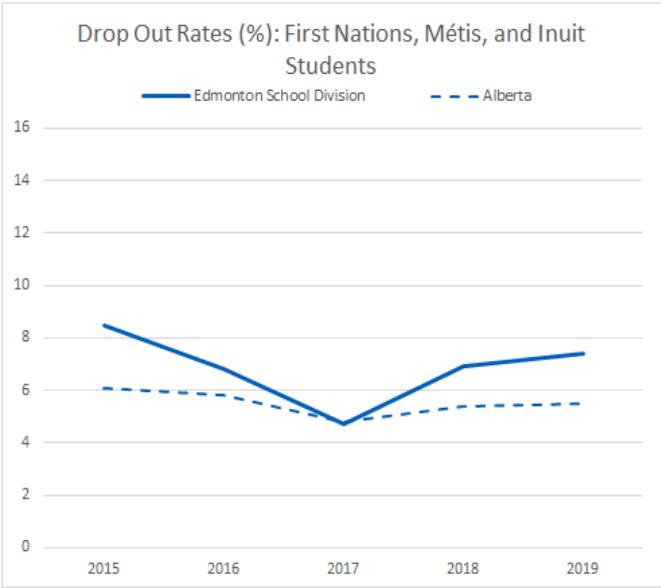
To inform a better understanding of the impact of high social vulnerability within the Division, these three factors are

applied to the demographic profile of Division students. Based on this information, all Division schools are then ranked, resulting in a listing of Division schools from the most to least socially vulnerable; this list is calculated on an annual basis. SVI1 represents the most vulnerable schools, with SVI4 representing the least vulnerable.

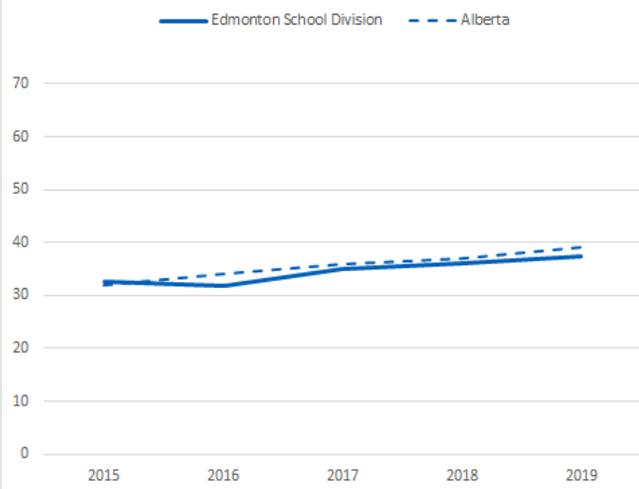
For each chart below demonstrating the results for Division students there is a chart on the left that provides a provincial comparison.

Five Year Data Trends for Self-identified First Nations, Métis and Inuit Students

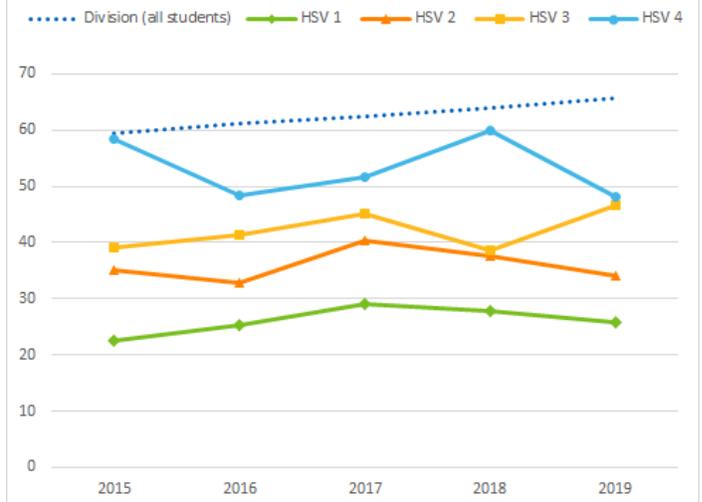




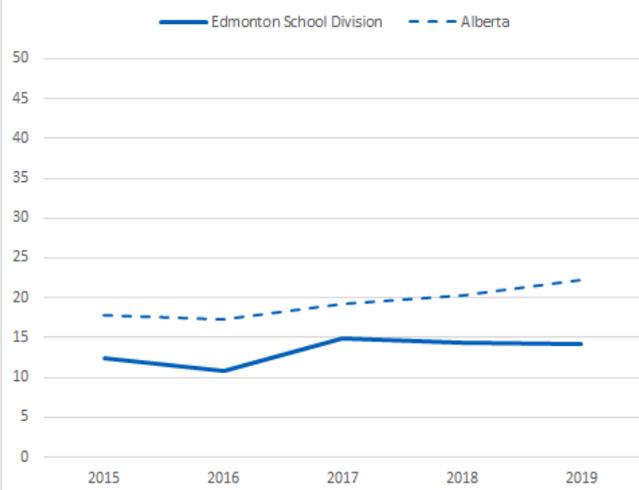
Rutherford Scholarship Eligibility (%): First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Students



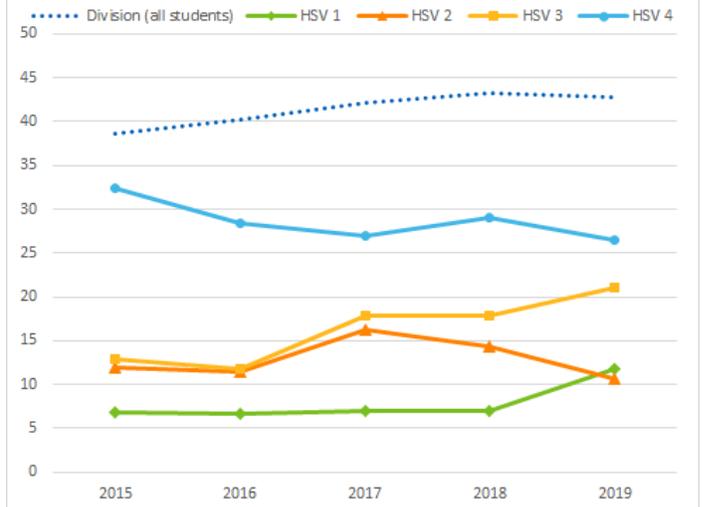
Rutherford Scholarship Eligibility (%): First Nations, Métis and Inuit Students by High Social Vulnerability

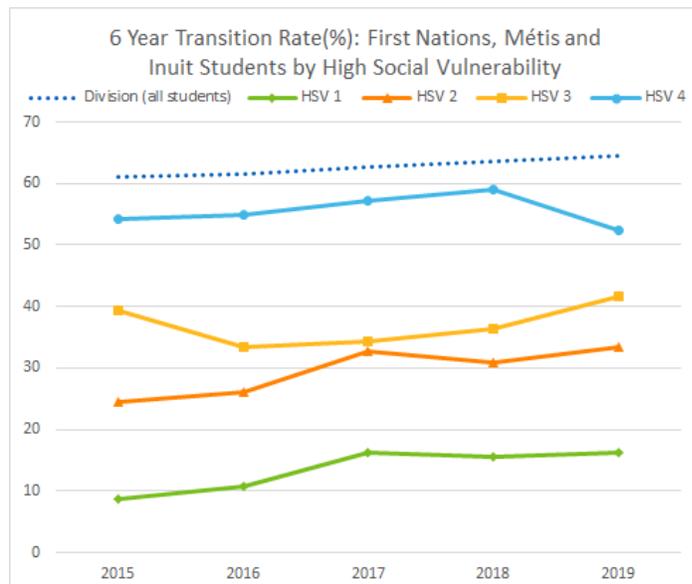
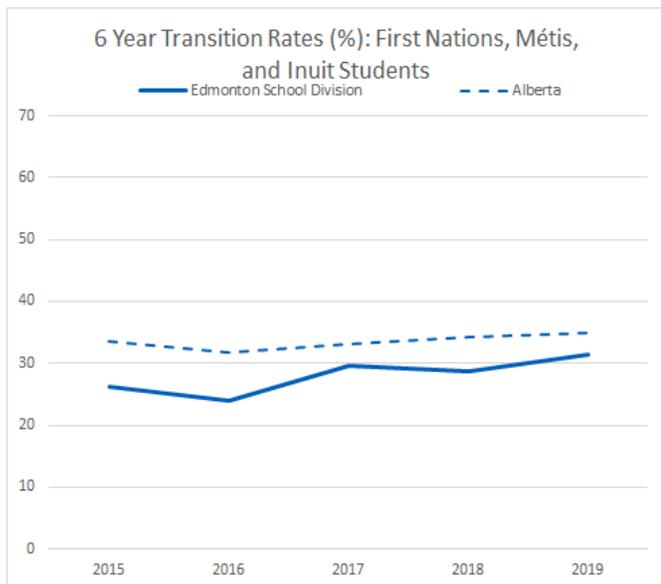


4 Year Transition Rates (%): First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Students



4 Year Transition Rate (%): First Nations, Métis and Inuit Students by High Social Vulnerability





Further context to the Division results are the provincial targets for five-year completion rates for First Nations, Métis and Inuit students over the next three years:

Table 1. Alberta Education graduation rate targets for First Nations, Métis and Inuit Students within five years of entering Grade 10

Year	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Graduation Rate	67.0%	68.0%	68.5%

Division results indicate that the cohort of students in High Social Vulnerability (HSV) 3 and 4 are on track towards achieving these targets. However, it should be noted that the majority of self-identified First Nations, Métis and Inuit students attend a school in either the HSV 1 or 2 groupings. There is much work to be done for the Division to meet provincial targets; Division results are currently 14.2 per cent below the 2023-2024 five-year completion target of 68.5 per cent.

Further reflection on Division results indicates the following:

- The multiyear trend for the six-year transition rate is one of improvement.
- Gains made in the four-year transition rate at the beginning of the five-year trend period are being maintained.
- Three-year completion rates improved in the most recent year of data, but overall have not shown a steady improvement trend over either the five-years or the three-years averaging.
- Rutherford Scholarship eligibility continues to improve every year.
- A downward trend for writing 4+ exams within three years of entering Grade 10.
- Dropout rates have increased over the past two years, and when averaged out over three years remain between six and seven per cent.
- Student achievement by high social vulnerability quadrants follows a similar pattern to the data in the literacy and numeracy report, with the most vulnerable students having the greatest challenge.

HIGH SCHOOL COMPLETION COACH MODEL

Overview

In 2019-2020, the Division established the HSCC model after closely examining OECD research and evidence from various successful models of high school completion across Canada. The initiative focuses on:

- Strengthening First Nations, Métis and Inuit student academic achievement in an environment that is welcoming and inclusive, where First Nations, Métis and Inuit cultures are visible and valued.
- Increasing high school completion rates by supporting students on their path to school completion with a systemic approach which includes a range of individualized, targeted and direct supports, as well as school-based efforts in collaboration with school leaders, teachers and families.

To support the implementation of a model that was focused on supportive and intentional steps in respect to student success, the model was developed to target many of the highest impact priorities identified in the Promising Practices in Supporting Success for Indigenous Students OECD report:

- Monitoring progress to inform practice.
- Providing tailored support.
- Engaging families.
- Facilitating learning activities.
- Sustaining dedicated rooms and providing access to cultural experiences.

More information about supports and ways with which the HSCC engage students and families can be found in the [May 26, 2020, Strategic Plan Update Report: First Nations, Métis and Inuit Students](#), as well as [Appendix A](#) to this report where work of the high school completion coach is mapped out over the course of a day, week, month and school year.

The HSCC model is currently in its second year of operation at Queen Elizabeth School and first year at Eastglen School. The unique circumstances resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic has not deterred the coaches. Coaches have remained persistent, responsive and agile throughout the year to ensure self-identified First Nation, Métis and Inuit students are receiving support whether they are learning in-person or online.

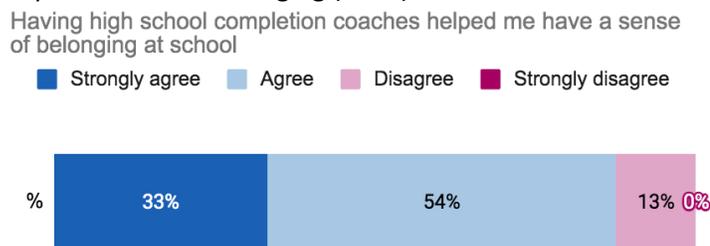
Preliminary Data

The process to collect and analyze data relevant to the success of each student in the program is a shared responsibility between the completion coach and school staff. This data is used to collaboratively identify specific intervention strategies that should be continued, modified, discontinued or initiated. This work reflects intentional and strategic efforts to support the success of self-identified First Nations, Métis and Inuit students throughout their learning journey. While “three to five years is a reasonable time frame in which improvements should be visible” (OECD: Promising Practices in Supporting Success for Indigenous Students, 2017, pg. 17), there are some early indications of the positive impacts the model has had for students.

Sense of Belonging

The HSCC model is rooted in the nurturing of positive relationships that center First Nations, Métis and Inuit identities. A foundational part of creating positive relationships is helping students feel a sense of belonging. In a questionnaire answered by 24 students who are part of this model, 87 per cent of students felt that having a HSCC helped them feel a sense of belonging at school (Graph 1).

Graph 1. Sense of belonging (n=24)



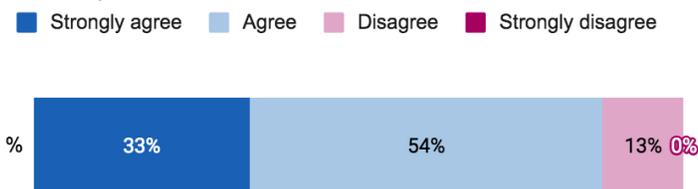
Students further responded to the open-ended question prompts and shared:

- The HSCC are: “Honestly some of the friendliest people I’ve met and they helped me feel more comfortable in the school and helped me get on my feet as a confused new kid.”
- The best part of working with the HSCC is: “the friendships and lifelong relationships I’ve made with the help of the completion coaches.”
- “I have had personal conversations with both of them and they have listened to me, and offer advice every now and then, based on their understanding of my feelings and what I may need to hear. There’s also always positive energy in their room, never any negativity from either of them and the other students there.”

First Nations, Métis and Inuit cultures are visible and valued

Coaches have been intentional in their support to align with the OECD’s priority of providing access to cultural experiences and the Division’s First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education Policy which lays the foundation for students “to thrive within a welcoming, inclusive, safe and healthy learning environment that is respectful of and responsive to students’ life experiences.” Eighty-seven per cent of students felt having a high school completion coach has helped to provide cultural experiences for students (Graph 2).

Having high school completion coaches has helped to provide cultural experiences for students



Attendance

Regular attendance is an important part of being successful at school. Research shows that chronic absenteeism (absent more than 10 per cent of the time) is a risk factor to school success and high school completion. Barriers to regular attendance can include unstable housing, unreliable transportation, food insecurity and family responsibilities; relative to the circumstances of learning during the pandemic, for online learners access to a device and reliable internet can also be a concern.

HSCC work intentionally with students and their families to help support consistent attendance. The coaches connect with students and families in-person, online or via a phone call to explore how they can support students with attendance. They assist students with such things as creating catch up plans for classes, following up with teachers and arranging for bus passes and Chromebooks to mitigate barriers. This year they have coached students who were struggling with online learning back to in-person learning, where there is a greater sense of connection and support. They encourage and support students academically, emotionally and mentally by connecting with them on a monthly basis at minimum, but also weekly and even daily to help them, as students indicate need. This ongoing relationship and trust building with families and students supports greater consistency in student attendance. Some examples of the work undertaken by coaches that supported school engagement and student success include:

- A student had fallen behind in their work. The coach connected with the teacher to support the student to catch up on the modules. With this support the student began attending more regularly, brought their marks back up and successfully completed the course.
- A student came to the dedicated coaches’ room daily for support. Their attendance improved a great deal, and as a result, they are feeling more connected. The student successfully completed Math and Photography.
- A student was struggling with attendance. The coach connected with both the student and their family, met with their Science and English teachers to make a catch-up plan and continued to closely track attendance. Through this intentional work and the building of relationships, the student successfully completed Science and ELA.
- A student was not experiencing success in the online learning environment. The HSCC worked with the student to consider a return to in-person classes. The Coach and the student worked together around any barriers to school success. This resulted in the student registering for in-person classes, reviewing their graduation plan and the coach providing the student with a bus pass. With this transition to in-person learning, the student’s attendance improved,

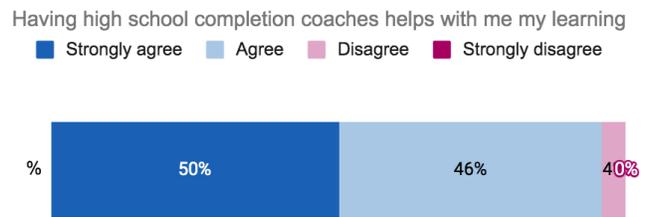
the coach continued to support the student in their academic work and the student successfully completed Social Studies and Art.

Academic Success

While it is early to fully understand the impact of the High School Completion model at a school-level, student voice and proxy measures like credits earned demonstrate the positive impacts the HSCC are having on academic achievement and readiness for success after high school.

Ninety-six per cent of students felt that their HSCC helped them with their learning (Graph 3).

Graph 3. Help with learning (n=24)



One student recounts the help the HSCC provided them during a difficult year impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic:

“First quarter was very difficult for me, as online schooling was not my strong suit. However, because of the high school completion program, I was able to ask for extra help from [my coaches]. Regarding school work, the coaches would give me ideas and help me review my work one-on-one. This adapts to my learning style, and gives me more insight than having to only listen to a teacher in front of a class. This helped me get through the entire year without too much stress, and I feel very confident in my success.”

Other ways students indicated having HSCC helped them with their learning:

- Acting as advocates for students, as well as connecting and collaborating with teachers and school staff to ensure the student has access to appropriate supports such as tutoring, writing accommodations, etc.
- Providing a welcoming and safe environment in the school in a dedicated space where students can complete assignments, study for tests and receive tutoring.
- Creating academic plans to help students catch up on assignments, complete online credit recovery modules and progress from being at risk in a course to successfully completing the course.

To quantify this impact, data for Quarter 3 (Q3) of the 2020-2021 school year demonstrates that the coaches helped 92 per cent of the students they work with successfully complete at least one course (Table 2 below). The data also demonstrated that the coaches have helped 30 per cent of students who were at risk of not completing a course to successfully complete a course. The following table provides a summary of course completion for Q3.

Table 2. Eastglen and Queen Elizabeth course completion in Q3

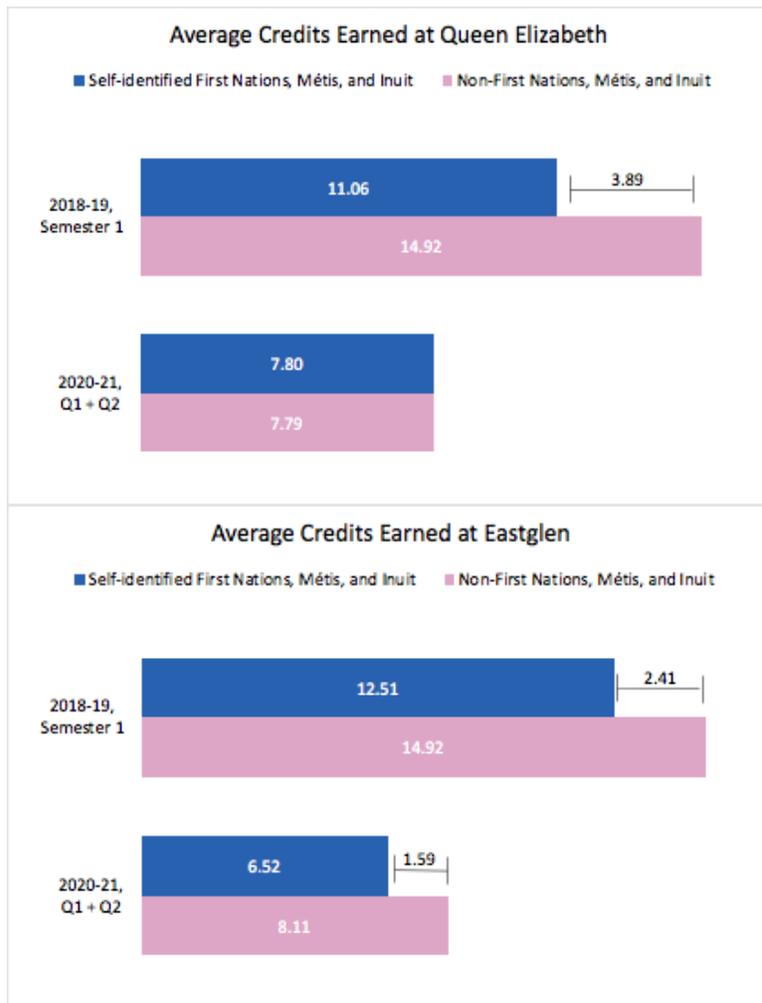
Course/Credit Completions	Number of self-identified First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students (n=182)
Students completing one or more courses in Q3	167 students or 92%
● Those who completed two courses in Q3	112 students or 62%
● Those who completed one course in Q3	55 students or 30%
Students moving from at risk of not completing a course to successfully completing a course	54 students or 30%

To further highlight the positive impact the coaches are having in supporting school success for the students they work with, the average credits earned were compared between each school's non-First Nation, Métis and Inuit Students and self-identified First Nation, Métis and Inuit Students (Graph 4.) Please note, as a result of COVID-19 a quarterly schedule was adopted in the 2020-2021 school year, when mapped against the semester schedule, it can be said that Semester 1 is the same as Q1 and Q2 combined.

A few observations can be made about the data:

- After the introduction of the HSCC Model (i.e. 2020-2021), the difference between average credits earned by Non-First Nations, Métis and Inuit students and First Nation, Métis and Inuit students decreased.
- For Queen Elizabeth High School in 2020-2021, First Nations, Métis and Inuit students are earning, on average, 0.01 more credits than their Non-First Nations, Métis and Inuit counterparts.

Graph 4. Average credits earned by non-First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Students and First Nation Métis, and Inuit students at Queen Elizabeth and Eastglen Schools.



Planning for the Future

An important part of the HSCC work is helping students think about and plan for the future.

Ninety-two per cent of students felt that having a HSCC helped them think about their future (Graph 5).

Graph 5. Thinking about the future

Having high school completion coaches helps me think about my future (e.g. selecting course and exploring after high school plans)

Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree



Throughout the course of the year, coaches have:

- Provided career coaching.
- Organized presentations with post-secondary institutions and other career fulfillment companies.
- Assisted with and facilitated the use of myBlueprint to support students in the development and monitoring of a plan towards high school completion.

The following student testimonial highlights the HSCC intentionality and dedication to students:

“One day when I was meeting with my completion coach, I mentioned that I wanted to maybe join the military after I finished school. She told me about a program called The Bold Eagle Program for Indigenous students in Grade 11. She printed the forms and helped me fill out all of the paperwork for the program; she even mailed it in for me. So far, I have gone through all of the testing and interviews and I should be attending the program all summer of this year. It is cool because I am getting great training but I am also getting my food and accommodations covered and am getting paid to go. I was really happy about that because after I graduate, I want to join the military. I find the staff at my school to be trustworthy and reliable. My completion coaches’ room is relaxing and very helpful.”

NEXT STEPS

The results provided in this report and those from the March 23 Literacy and Numeracy report reinforce the urgency and importance of the Division’s intentional work in support of student success. The further analysis of our achievement data alongside high social vulnerability data provides the Division with a clearer understanding of how best to prioritize resources. In the Division’s ongoing commitment to school success for all students, with an intentional focus on self-identified First Nations, Métis and Inuit students the following actions are a priority for the 2021-2022 school year:

- To support literacy and numeracy programming at each student’s place of readiness, implement the CAT-4 as a fall and spring assessment tool across Division classrooms Grades 2 to 9.
- To support schools in planning through the lens of the OECD research, explore modifying the budget planning template to allow schools to identify what they are already doing and what their intentional next steps to enhance success for self-identified First Nations, Métis and Inuit student success will be.
- To build upon this year’s work related to attendance, provide schools with phase two of supporting materials and resources; this group of materials and resources will be more targeted to tiers two and three of the pyramid of intervention.
- To support student well-being, implement the resiliency survey with all students Grades 4 to 12; continue to have professional learning that builds staff capacity in this area.
- To support well-being for students and families, continue to implement a coordinated approach to mental health in support of schools and catchments.
- To support school success and well-being for students impacted by high social vulnerability, implement the Division's High Social Vulnerability Achievement Project in 41 Division schools serving socially complex communities.
- To continue to explore the effectiveness of the HSCC, expand the model to an additional high school for September 2021.

APPENDIX

Appendix A: The Work of High School Completion Coaches

The work of the HSCC is very intentional, and continuously weaves individualized support, monitoring and engagement together in support of student success. The HSCC model is designed to provide tailored, individualized support to students and engage families in the public education system. As indicated in the OECD research, providing this kind of support and engagement benefits students with respect to their overall well-being, participation and engagement in learning and ultimately their school achievement. Together, these practices form the foundation for the work of the HSCC. Key components of this work include:

- Connecting with the self-identified First Nations, Métis and Inuit students and helping them see themselves as members of the school community through cultural experiences and relationships.
- Meeting with students regularly to discuss their participation, engagement and well-being in respect to learning.
- Connecting students to existing wrap-around supports within the school and the broader community.
- Uncovering barriers to participation and building plans for re-engagement with students, their family and school.

HSCC perform daily, weekly, monthly and ongoing tasks (Table 3) that work to continuously engage, monitor and support students on their path to a successful completion of high school.

Table 3. HSCC Tasks

Daily Tasks:
Connection: Welcome and connect with students throughout the day.
Weekly Tasks:
Timely, individualized support: Identify students that are beginning to show signs of risk and initiate timely, individualized mentorship and support.
Attendance: Monitor student attendance to inform timely, individualized support.
Academic support: Support students with educational planning, access to tutoring, homework help, credit recovery and workshops.
Leadership opportunities: Engage and encourage students in leadership opportunities.
Career Pathways: Support students with career planning, organize and promote career related workshops, guest speakers and events.
Access to cultural activities and learning: Organize and promote cultural activities and learnings
Engaging families as partners in student success: Connect with families to discuss successes, academic standing and the opportunities and supports accessed.

Monthly Tasks:

Newsletter: The monthly newsletter communicates highlights of the program from the previous month and informs families about upcoming events, activities and opportunities in the month to come.

Achievement: Monitor student achievement biweekly to inform and plan timely, individualized support.

Meet and mentor: Connect with each self-identified student at minimum of once every month.

HSCC collaboration meetings: Meet with all HSCCs to reflect and share ideas and strategies.

Semester or Quarter Transition Tasks:

Engaging families and students: Meet with new students and their families at registration to provide a welcome package and to orientation.

Course/credit completion data tracking: Update all students' courses and credits earned and any change in course enrollments.

Course completion support: Offer assistance with academic support and credit recovery to students.

Family events: host one family night approximately every quarter (3-4 per year) pandemic restrictions permitting.

Ongoing Tasks:

Invite school staff to HSCC events and highlight the HSCC initiative at the school's open house.

Participate in school-wide events/activities to support and include First Nations, Métis and Inuit student perspectives.

Help students explore post-secondary information, complete applications and access and apply for post-secondary scholarships and assistance.

Connect with Grade 9 students and families at orientation and transition events.