

MODEL SCHOOLS LITERACY PROJECT

Improving literacy skills in the first years of a child's schooling dramatically increases the likelihood that he or she will complete high school and move on to pursue higher education.

The Martin Family Initiative's Model Schools Literacy Project was designed to improve literacy levels among First Nation students, with a particular focus on children in Kindergarten to Grade 3 – the critical period for learning to read and write.

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The Pilot Project

The Martin Family Initiative's Model Schools Pilot Project project took place at two First Nations schools. The results were incredible. In 2009, 13% of Grade 3 students at these schools met or exceeded Ontario's standard for reading proficiency. Five years later that number had increased to 81% – higher than Ontario's province-wide average.

A sound level of early literacy has a wide range of benefits, one of which is greatly improved chances of graduating from high school. With First Nations high school graduation rates significantly lower than the rest of Canada, it is imperative that First Nations, Métis Nation, and Inuit children and youth are provided with the same opportunities to learn as other Canadian children and youth. This is a question of equity and Canadian values for the youngest and fastest-growing segment of our population in education.

For the last 16 years, Ontario has focused on improving the reading and writing skills of students and has been recognized around the world for its efforts in improving student success.

In 2009, the MFI launched a five-year Model Schools Pilot Project in partnership with Hillside School in Chippewas of Kettle and Stony Point First Nation and at Walpole Island Elementary School in Walpole Island First Nation. The program was modelled after Ontario's highly successful Turnaround Schools project, which provided targeted resources and support for some of the province's lowest achieving schools.

The project was focused on:

1. Establishing a literacy improvement plan for Kindergarten to Grade 3, which served as the school's primary focus
2. Providing teachers with ongoing professional development to establish effective teaching practices
3. Implementing effective assessment practices to inform teaching and determine intervention needs
4. Providing ongoing coaching for school principals
5. Establishing clear accountability mechanisms and measures to track progress and ensure success
6. Actively encouraging communities to reflect their language and culture in the schools' programs

STEVE STYERS, DIRECTOR/CENTRAL LEADERSHIP MENTOR/CULTURAL LIAISON

Please click the "CC" button on the video below to select either English or French subtitles



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